



PRIESTS FOR LIFE

Assisting God's people to respond to the evils of abortion and euthanasia.

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Encouraging Priests in the Pro-Life Cause

Website — www.priestsforlife.org

Number 3

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRIESTS

Dear Brother Priests,

Priests for Life strongly embraces, in its proper understanding, the *consistent ethic of life*. The US Bishops' 1998 document, *Living the Gospel of Life* quoted the following words which our Holy Father spoke in his homily in Giants Stadium, October 5, 1995 (See *25 Origins*, p. 305 October 19, 1995): "Both as Americans and as followers of Christ, American Catholics must be committed to the defense of life in all its stages and in every condition." Our website offers the texts of major addresses of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin on this topic (see www.priestsforlife.org/magisterium/consistentethicmaster.html).

The ministry of Priests for Life focuses above all on abortion. As both Cardinal Bernardin and the *Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities* affirm, "This focus and the Church's firm commitment to a consistent ethic of life complement each other. A consistent ethic, far from diminishing concern for abortion or equating all issues touching on the



Photo: Fr. Frank Pavone, Fr. Richard Hogan, Fr. Peter West, and Fr. Denis Wilde, OSA

MESSAGE FROM PRIESTS, Continued on page 2

ABORTION AS THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE: PART 1

The recent document of the US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life* asserts,

"Respect for the dignity of the human person demands a commitment to human rights across a broad spectrum.... Yet abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others." (n.5)

As Fr. Richard Hogan points out, many of the public policy controversies of our day deal with the question of *how* best to secure the rights of others, whose basic personhood is acknowledged. In the matter of abortion, however, the question at issue is not *how*, but *whether* those

rights will be secured at all, whether they even exist, and whether the human beings affected are indeed persons.

This brings the issue to a more fundamental level than "someone was killed." Many tragedies take human life, but not all deny it. The crux of the *Roe vs. Wade* decision was the statement, "[T]he word 'person,' as used in the Fourteenth Amendment, does not include the unborn." The child in the womb, in other words, is *legally* obliterated before being physically destroyed. The tragedy is not simply in the fact that the life is taken, but that such taking is declared to be a matter of no legal concern. No due process is necessary to end this life; it is

FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE, continued on p. 2

ABOLITION OF DEATH PENALTY

Priests for Life would like to strongly echo the Holy Father's call for the abolition of the death penalty.

Human problems call for humane solutions.

Death, whether of an unborn child or of a convicted criminal, does not bring us closer to a civilization of love, but rather feeds the mistaken and dangerous notion that killing is a solution to our problems.

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dignity of human life, recognizes the distinctive character of each issue while giving each its proper role within a coherent moral vision." (Pastoral Plan, 1985 Reaffirmation).

Beginning in this issue of *Priests for Life*, we intend to together address the reasons why abortion deserves priority attention. We do this in the context of our strong support for and eagerness to collaborate with every ministry in the Church which addresses human dignity and justice. We likewise affirm the distinctive charisms and vocations of the members of the Body of Christ, each of whom is called to a uniquely specific mission.

It has been our experience that there is a strong adherence within the Church to the affirmation that abortion is wrong and needs to be stopped. What is not as consistently acknowledged, however, is that it is

"the fundamental human rights issue for all men and women of good will" (NCCB Resolution on Abortion, November 7, 1989). We therefore offer our reflections to the consideration of our readers, convinced that a proper evaluation of the fundamental nature of the abortion tragedy is essential to its reversal.

With renewed fraternal respect and willingness to assist your ministry,

FR. FRANK PAVONE, National Director

FR. RICHARD HOGAN, Associate Director

FR. PETER WEST, Priest Associate

FR. DENIS WILDE, OSA, Priest Associate

Nor is it denied in *Roe vs. Wade* that the unborn is a human being. Regarding that issue, the Court simply pleads ignorance and irrelevance: "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins...[T]he judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer." One might think that in the light of such a statement, one would have to opt *not to destroy*, just as one would refrain from shooting what one was not sure to be a bear or a man, or would refrain from destroying a building if there were a doubt about whether anyone was still inside.

The Court, however, pleaded ignorance about the nature of the unborn, but then proceeded to strip him/her of legal personhood. This is a fundamental evil even prior to the taking of the life, and removes all other rights besides. ■

...to be continued in next issue...

COMING TO YOUR COMMUNITY...

Priests for Life is blessed to have four full-time priests on staff: Fr. Richard Hogan, Fr. Peter West, Fr. Denis G. Wilde, OSA, and Fr. Frank Pavone. We are available to visit your community for a wide range of activities.

We offer seminars for the clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, on how to handle the abortion issue in preaching, counseling, and parish activities. We conduct training sessions for lay people who want to become active in

the pro-life movement, or who have been active but are looking for new ideas and motivation.

We speak at pro-life conferences, address students in their schools and youth groups, give retreats, pray at abortion facilities, and conduct parish weekends which include preaching at all the Sunday Masses. We are also glad to offer individual consultation for the development of pro-life strategies and activities in compliance with the Bishops' *Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities*.

And aside from travel expenses, we have no required stipend!

A partial listing of the travel schedules of our priests can be found on our web site at www.priestsforlife.org/travel2.html.

To inquire about the availability of a *Priests for Life* priest, contact our Travel Office at P.O. Box 441, Front Royal, VA 22630, Phone: 540-636-4855, Fax: 540-636-4890, E-mail: 110733.124@compuserve.com ■

A Priests for Life INVITATION

Priests for Life is an officially approved Catholic association of priests, deacons, and lay auxiliary members. Members make a special commitment to spread the Church's teachings on the sanctity of every human life from fertilization to natural death. Members benefit from contact with others throughout the country who have a similar commitment and much experience. Priests for Life works closely with diocesan respect life co-ordinators and in accordance with local diocesan policies. The Board of Directors serve the organization with the permission of their Ordinaries.

Please join by sending us the following information:

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SUGGESTED DONATION: \$15

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DEMOCRATS FOR LIFE

BY LOIS KERSCHEN, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, DEMOCRATS FOR LIFE

Note: Priests for Life does not endorse candidates or party platforms. We are, however, committed to making people aware of all the groups active in the pro-life movement. Democrats for Life is an important aspect of the movement. The abortion issue transcends party lines, and no member of any party should feel out of place for opposing the killing of innocent children.

A survey of the media's treatment of abortion (Media Research Center, late 1995) revealed that one of the most invisible groups was pro-life Democrats. At the same time, a Torrance poll showed that 55% of Democrats — more than half — would either ban all abortion, or allow it only for rape, incest, or "life of the mother."

As the following article reveals, pro-life Democrats are not only alive and well, but becoming more visible by the day. —Fr. Frank Pavone

In January, a new national organization for pro-life Democrats was formed in response to an increasing demand for recognition for those in the Democratic party who oppose abortion. It is very important for people to know that you can be pro-life and a Democrat, despite the fact that the party supports abortion on demand. Indeed, it is essential to the pro-life movement that Democrats who are pro-life make their voices heard.

Pro-life members of the Democratic party must let their lights shine so that others might see. We must question the platform, advocate compromise, pique the consciences of other Democrats, and serve as a buffer against the more radical elements in the party.

Democrats for Life (DFL) has existed for several years in the form of state organizations in Indiana, Kentucky, and Texas. A previous national organization faded away in the 1980s, but has now been reborn to provide a forum for pro-life Democrats. In Texas, the experience has included sponsoring a booth at the state party convention every two years to gain exposure and to reach out to people. Sadly, there are still people who come up to the booth to say, "Thank God you are here. I thought I was the only one." The party has sent out such a strong and pervasive pro-abortion message that many pro-life people have felt silenced or alienated. Therefore, the purpose of Democrats for Life is to identify and connect pro-life Democrats. There are

strength and courage in numbers. Together we can promote a pro-life agenda within the party. Through organization and education, we can become the majority, and then we can turn the Democratic party around and make it pro-life once again.

After all, as the mission statement of Texas DFL says: "The Democratic Party's strong commitment to human rights leads naturally to a pro-life position. Just as we care about the welfare of children, the disabled, and the elderly, we care about unborn children and their mothers." Advocating the killing of a woman's child as a way to solve her problems is inconsistent with the traditional Democratic philosophy of compassionate government. Suppressing the pro-life voice within the party is also inconsistent with the image of the Democratic party as the party of tolerance and free speech. Pro-life Democrats must insist on a consistent ethic and must insist that they be allowed to take their rightful place in the party.

Surveys of various precincts and congressional districts across the country show a pro-life majority among Democratic voters. These results are not a fluke but may be truly representative of the party's membership. It is the leadership of the Democratic party that has gone astray

from its own people, but they have successfully painted a facade of being mainstream, and they claim that pro-life candidates can't get elected. But election results prove that rarely does anyone lose because of a pro-life stand. On the contrary, being pro-life usually increases a candidate's chances. The 40 pro-life Democrats in the U. S. House of Representatives are evidence of that fact,

and because of their united effort the Democratic party platform now includes a conscience clause that admits that some members of the Democratic party cannot support the pro-choice plank because of moral or religious objections. This language of inclusion is a big step forward for the pro-life movement. We must take advantage of this opportunity and make our presence felt by serving as



Lois Kerschen

precinct and committee chairs attending our precinct, county, state and national conventions and passing pro-life resolutions. It is also critically important that we support pro-life candidates and elected officials.

The Democrats for Life organization is proof that all people can and should be pro-life. It is consistent with the root principles of the Democratic Party to respect life and to encourage the development of everyone's full potential. Freedom and equality are not attainable if there is not first life. So, I call upon Democrats who are pro-life to make your opinion known. Democrats who are closet pro-lifers, I call upon you to stop being afraid to speak the truth. On Judgment Day you will not be asked if you are follower of the Democratic platform, but rather if you were a follower of the word of God. A little political power is not worth becoming an accomplice to the murder of millions of babies.

If you would like more information about Democrats for Life, please go to the website www.democratsforlife.org or contact Dr. Lois Kerschen, the national president, at llkerschen@aol.com; or (806) 289-5510; or Rt. 4, Box 215, Hereford, TX 79045. ■

PRIEST PROFILE:

FR. ROBERT J. SPITZER, S.J., Ph.D.

By ANTHONY DEStEFANO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D., recently selected as Gonzaga University's 25th President, has been compared at various times to a "whirlwind," and a "speeding locomotive." The 46 year old native of Honolulu, Hawaii, left a promising career in accounting almost 25 years ago to become a priest, and has been serving the Lord at near light speed ever since.

Fr. Spitzer possesses degrees in philosophy from St. Louis University, theology from the Gregorian University in Rome, a T.H.M. in scripture at Cambridge, and a Ph.D. from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He served as a philosophy teacher at Georgetown University for six years, and did an eight year stint at Seattle University as an associate professor of philosophy, a member of the Board of Trustees, director of the Institute on Character Development, and a holder of the Frank Shrontz Endowed Chair in Professional Ethics.

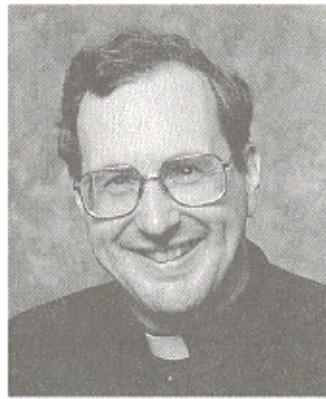
Fr. Spitzer is perhaps best known for writing the landmark text: *Business Ethics*. He gave a course based on this book to 50 different high-level organizations, and estimates that he put over 40,000 managers of various companies in the U.S. and Europe through the program.

Stories about Fr. Spitzer's talent as a teacher abound. In fact, many of his admiring students at Seattle University and Gonzaga refer to themselves as "Spitzerites." On the corporate level,

some of his fellow Jesuits jokingly call him, "Spitzer Enterprises," describing how he often gets an idea for a new program in the morning, secures funding for it by noon, and gets the program running by dinner.

Where does he get all his boundless energy? "The Holy Spirit," he unhesitatingly proclaims. "God supplies the energy and vision—as long as I exert myself and am attentive to the clues that He gives."

Though most of his time is presently being spent steering Gonzaga into the next millennium, Fr. Spitzer is deeply involved in an important pro-life project. While putting the finishing touches on his new book, *Life Principles*, he is developing an entire pro-life program utilizing the text, a 5-hour video series, and corresponding work books. His goal is to get the program into as many Catholic parishes around the country as possible.



Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D.

The idea of this program is to build a comprehensive pro-life philosophy, beginning with an in-depth discussion of "the basics." According to Fr. Spitzer, "there's no use talking about the abortion and euthanasia issues until adequate foundations are first laid." These foundations include understanding questions like:

"How do I define the quality of life?", "What is the purpose and meaning of life?", "What makes life worth living?", "What is the value of suffering?" and "What is a Right?" "Once people have a clearer understanding of these basic life-questions," Fr. Spitzer says, "the Church's teaching on abortion and euthanasia will resonate much better."

Priests for Life asks the Lord's blessing upon Fr. Spitzer's work. To find out more about the "Life Principles" program, and how to get it into your parish, you can call Ms. Camille De Blasi at (877) 345-LIFE. To contact Fr. Spitzer directly, you can write to: Gonzaga University, 502 East Boone Ave., Spokane, WA, 99258; or call (509) 328-4220. ■

GABRIEL PROJECT: WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

As you know, Priests for Life is strongly promoting the Gabriel Project. We invite all local leaders of the project throughout the country to continue to give us their input on how we can assist. Our efforts in no way *replace* local efforts. When parishes or dioceses express an interest in starting the program, we put them in contact with nearby local efforts. In every way, we intend to give *priority* to strengthening these local efforts which, after all, constitute the essence of the Gabriel Project. At the same time, we will give this movement unprecedented national attention. Visit our website for more details.

Material in this newsletter may be reproduced and distributed to spread the pro-life message.

PRO-LIFE PRAYER INTENTIONS

You are encouraged to remember the following intentions as you pray the Liturgy of the Hours:

MAY INTENTION:

That graduates may use their academic and technical skills to advance the pro-life cause.

JUNE INTENTION:

That more people may dedicate some of their leisure time to pro-life activities.