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25 YEARS A PRIEST: FR. PAVONE'S LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATIONAL IN DEFENDING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, some of the many friends of Fr. Frank Pavone are tonight in Staten Island, New York, celebrating a significant milestone in the life of this extraordinarily brave and compassionate priest—his 25th year since ordination and 20 years at the helm of Priests for Life.

Fr. Pavone was ordained in 1988 by Cardinal O'Connor. By 1993 he became National Director of Priests for Life. His faith, determination and leadership ever since has been transformational in the cause of defending vulnerable people from violence, hatred and indifference.

Fr. Pavone's passionate defense of the child in the womb is rivaled only by his compassion and outreach to post-abortive women—the other victims. His homilies are not only incisive and well composed but extremely sensitive to the pain and agony unleashed by abortion. He is the author of two books: *Ending Abortion, Not Just Fighting It* and *Pro-Life Reflections for Every Day*.

Fr. Pavone has persistently called on us all to recognize, ask and receive the unfathomable love, reconciliation and divine mercy readily available from God. Priests for Life ministries—Rachel's Vineyard and the Silent No More Awareness Campaign—provide a roadmap for recovery and healing for many. Even Norma McCorvey, the "Jane Roe" of the Supreme Court's infamous 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* abortion decision, called Fr. Frank "the catalyst that brought me into the Catholic Church."

Underscoring the importance and relevance of Fr. Pavone's Priests for Life, last October twelve bishops and three cardinals, including Cardinals Schonborn, Martino and Keeler wrote: "His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI has stated that the Church is called 'to advance the common good and to show respect for the persons who are most defenseless, starting with the unborn.'" The letter continued: "Throughout the world, one of the ways the Church is responding to that mission is through the work of Priests for Life, which encompasses an entire family of ministries involving both clergy and laity. This ministry, which includes education, parish activation, training in pro-life spirituality, promotion of faithful citizenship and healing of women and men after abortion deserves the support of the entire Church...Established in 1991, Priests for Life has enjoyed strong support at every level of the Church."

Fr. Pavone radiates the love of Christ to the weak and disenfranchised yet shows no malice whatsoever to those who oppress and snuff out the lives of the littlest humans. Those in the abortion industry must be encouraged to rethink and reject the horror they do. They too are in need of God's amazing love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Join me today, Mr. Speaker, in giving thanks for the extraordinary commitment, faith and works of this tenacious priest.