

A CONGRESSMAN'S MANIFESTO

The year is 1857, and the U. S. Supreme Court has just affirmed the constitutionality of slavery. In its Dred Scott v. Sandford decision it has ruled that Negroes can be bought and sold; they cannot vote or own property; and they are, in effect, not persons. Let us imagine that I am a Congressman defending my position on this matter, which has stirred up so much controversy:

I do not consider myself "pro-slavery." I am, in fact, personally opposed to slavery. I would not own one myself, but I do not believe in imposing my beliefs on others. I would rather think of myself as "pro-choice," and I feel everyone should be allowed to decide for himself whether or not he may own slaves.

The Court has spoken, and this is the law of the land now. Everyone, rich or poor, has a right to own slaves, and we have an obligation not only to respect that right but also to provide financial support for the slave owners who have had a bad crop, for instance, and would fall below the poverty level. The anti-choice people cannot seem to grasp the simple fact that there has always been slavery in the world and there always will be. They keep screaming for a statute outlawing slavery; but that would not eradicate it, because it would not eradicate the need for it; it would merely drive the business underground. The price of buying and keeping slaves would rise to the point that only the rich could afford them. Instead of having access to a nice clean market, buyers would be forced to obtain them from sleazy dealers working out of back alleys.

If my daughter came to me and told me she wanted to buy a slave, I would try to dissuade her, being personally opposed to slavery. Failing in this, however, I would respect her right to make her own choice and I would buy her one.

It upsets me that church leaders have been in the forefront of the anti-slavery movement. They, along with their fanatical anti-choice followers, insist that this is a moral issue, and they refuse to accept the fact that you can not legislate morality. They have no right to force their religious beliefs on the rest of society, who don't happen to believe as they do, and they seem bent on trampling on the hallowed tradition of separation of church and state.

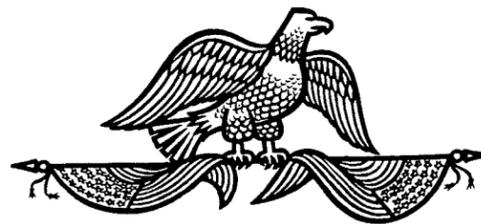
And speaking of morality, all of those do-gooders who are anti-choice all they are interested in is freeing the slaves; they don't give a thought to what

would happen to them once they were free. Just think of forcing more than three million slaves out into a society that is hardly prepared to receive them. Poor, uneducated, unwanted they would put a severe strain on the national economy, not to mention what would happen to the crime rate!

Furthermore, it galls me to see how those fanatics keep trying to reduce the debate to an emotional level. They go about showing slide-pictures of slaves working on plantations where owners beat them and mistreat them. They are simply appealing to emotions, instead of leaving the argument on the level of reason, where it belongs.

Yes, I am aware that my bishop is upset with me. But he should stay in the pulpit and out of the political arena. The Court has spoken, and as a lawmaker I intend to obey the law. Slaves are chattel. They are not persons. The only people concerned here are the buyer and the seller, and we have no legal or moral right to violate the privacy of their business dealings. They have a right to privacy so to speak, and their transactions should be of no concern to anyone else.

But, as I have said, I am personally opposed to slavery.



PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION

One of the important factors that led to the Civil War was the infamous Dred Scott decision, by which the U. S. Supreme Court said, in effect, that black slaves were not persons; they could be bought and sold, they could not own property, they could not vote in other words, they did not qualify for protection under our Constitution. In late 1862 President Lincoln, convinced that slavery was wrong, issued his famous Emancipation Proclamation.

We all studied this in American History and we were taught, correctly, that this was certainly Lincoln's finest hour. What we may have forgotten is that it had little immediate effect, for all slaves lived in the Confederacy, where federal officers were powerless to enforce it. However, it had a tremendous long-range effect changing the character of the War Between the States, improving our national image in the eyes of the rest of the world, and eventually leading to the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which abolished slavery in our country forever.

Just as there is a striking parallel between the Dred Scott decision and the Roe vs. Wade decision of 1973, legalizing abortion on demand and telling us that unborn babies were not persons and therefore outside of the umbrella of protection of our Constitution, there is likewise a close parallel between Lincoln's proclamation and President Reagan's Sanctity of Life Proclamation, signed on January 14, 1988. In all probability you have not heard of it. The secular press certainly has kept silent and has not reported it, and I dare say you will probably not read it in your church bulletin, nor hear it from the pulpit. The TV networks have ignored it; but let us be thankful for that, for they would have distorted it. No, you will have to search for it in Pro-Life magazines or newspaper or newsletters. I will summarize what he said in this official presidential decree.

Just as Lincoln had done, Reagan pointedly rejected the Court's interpretation of "non-personhood," and proclaimed "the unalienable personhood of every American, from the moment of conception until natural death." Using Lincoln's exact wording, he invoked "the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God" upon what he was doing. He argues persuasively and with sound logic that all medical and scientific evidence affirms overwhelmingly that unborn infants are in fact persons, and therefore fall under the

protection guaranteed by our Constitution, which every president is sworn to preserve and defend. The last paragraph of the preamble of the proclamation should be printed and posted in every public building and in every classroom in the country:

"Our nation cannot continue down the path of abortion, so radically at odds with our history, our heritage, and our concepts of justice. This sacred legacy, and the well-being and the future of our country, demand that protection of the innocents must be guaranteed and that the personhood of the unborn be declared and defended throughout our land. I have asked the legislative branch to declare the 'humanity of the unborn child and the compelling interest of the several states to protect the life of each person before birth.' This duty to declare on so fundamental a matter falls to the executive as well. By this proclamation I hereby do so."

History will record what effect, if any, this magnificent document had on our nation's headlong rush to exterminate our young and our infirm and our handicapped. Certainly it will be of no consequence if it continues to be ignored completely by the media. Even if it were publicized, as it should be, it would be naive to think that his statement would make much of a dent in popular opinion, at least for the present.

To return to the analogy to Lincoln's decree, the Emancipation Proclamation was not at all well received at first. Support for slavery was very strong in the Confederacy, and even in the north many whites were quietly sympathetic. But the president had the moral courage to voice his convictions in the strongest possible way.

A president's performance cannot be judged fairly by his contemporaries. Future historians and journalists will record Reagan's presidency with as much objectivity as these people can muster. I certainly do not feel qualified to evaluate his foreign and domestic policies, but I do not doubt for a moment his sincerity nor his courage in taking a strong pro-life stance, which will do little to enhance his popularity with the masses, and I feel that his Sanctity of Life Proclamation could be his most important legacy. To those of us who have taken the time and the trouble to inform ourselves completely on the abortion and euthanasia controversy, nothing he said was new. It was just thrilling to hear our president say it so passionately and so convincingly, and in such a forceful way.

OMINOUS PREDICTION

In a recent talk here in Lafayette, Father Benedict Groeschel made a chilling remark, purposefully spoken almost casually for dramatic effect: within one generation we will have no more retarded children in our country. He did not have to explain that this was not to be taken as good news, that within the next 20 years medical science will have discovered and eliminated the causes of mental or physical defects in preborn babies. What he meant was that with the continuation and build-up of the anti-life movement we are witnessing, we will be eliminating birth defects by routinely eliminating the birth of defective babies.

The medical procedure known as amniocentesis, whereby obstetricians can detect early in pregnancy the likelihood that the unborn baby has developmental problems, is being done more and more frequently. Even the conscientious pro-life doctor must explain and offer this procedure to the mother-at-risk, even if he is opposed to the idea and would never consider counseling her for abortion; for if he doesn't, and the mother delivers an abnormal baby, he could very likely be sued, and would probably lose the lawsuit. 98% of women who discover through amniocentesis that their baby may be abnormal will elect to be aborted. Those who strongly advocate this procedure claim that they are not advocating abortion. Then why do it, we ask? So the woman can prepare herself for the birth of an abnormal baby. Will some one please tell me how in the world a woman can "prepare herself" for having a defective baby? Amniocentesis early in pregnancy is encouraged for one reason, and one reason only.....to discover abnormal babies so that they can be aborted. In simple terms, birth defects would be eliminated by killing defective babies before they are born.

One of the most disheartening aspects of all this is how the media have kept us from educating the public. All kinds of surgery are being shown on television these days....laparoscopic gall bladder surgery, face lifts, coronary by-pass surgery....you may see virtually any surgical procedure on T.V. these days if you surf the channels, except the commonest surgical procedure of all....abortion. You will never see a suction abortion on your T.V. set, not on the networks nor on the federally subsidized public television channels.. And, for sure, you will never see a partial birth abortion. If that awful brain-sucking procedure had been shown just one time on the CBS

Evening News, the public outcry would have demanded an override of Clinton's ban. But this will never happen. And this is what makes our educational effort so difficult. With all the publicity we could muster, with paid newspaper ads and priests and ministers talking from the pulpits and in their parish bulletins, two weeks before the national election only 37% of adults surveyed had any idea what a partial-birth abortion is!

And, speaking of the news media, think of the wide coverage given the alleged murder of their newborn infant by the affluent young unmarried college students in Delaware. I have no problem with the front-page publicity it was given. Nor do I have a problem with the universal reaction of horror on the part of the American people. What amazes me is the certain knowledge that if the young couple had had their baby killed by the partial birth abortion procedure the day before the baby was born, there would have been no outcry!!! It would have been legal. In every state. Oh, there's a detail or two that would have had to be ironed out....like why did she do it? That's an easy one.. Was she in poor health? No, not really. Would the delivery of her baby have been a threat to her health? Yes, her lawyers could have claimed, .and they would have been right, legally.. The Doe v Bolton decision, overshadowed by Roe v Wade (announced the same day back in 1973) spelled out just how childbirth could be injurious to a woman's health: if childbirth deprives a woman of her preferred life-style, forces upon her a radically different and undesired future, requires her to endure the discomfort of pregnancy, requires her to abandon educational plans, to sustain loss of income, to forgo the satisfaction of career....any of these would constitute enough of a threat to her health to justify abortion, at any time during her pregnancy. If a woman, then, the day before her labor would begin, decides that it would radically change her life style to have her baby, that is a health reason. Read the Doe v Bolton decision. It is all there, in those words.

This young couple could have had their baby killed the day before she delivered; no law would have been broken, and only us pro-life extremists would have been upset. They killed the baby after the delivery. A nation goes into an uproar.

How can our society protect one baby and not the other? Does the process of birth change anything

about a baby? No. What magic occurs at birth? None. As Dr. John Wilkie has said, birth changes only three things about a baby...his dining habits, his airway, and his charm. Killing the baby on Monday is legal, on Tuesday it is murder. That's what the law says.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the spectrum, the devaluation of elderly human life continues, and escalates. We hear more and more about rationed medical care, "futile" care, physician-assisted suicide, and euthanasia. If the "culture of death" momentum continues, we may add another ominous prediction: in another generation we may have no need for nursing homes. And maybe Medicare won't go broke after all.



FUTURE SHOCK

In his popular book of the 70's, Alvin Toffler defines Future Shock as "...the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time," or "...the dizzying disorientation brought on by the premature arrival of the future."

In the area of respect for human life, I think we may be succumbing to future shock. There is a danger that we may become numbed into silence. The events of the past 25 years, not just in our country but all around the world, are nothing less than shocking. Especially vulnerable are those of us old enough to recall what things were like in the years before and after World War II. An expectant mother was "with child," a baby then was "a blessed event," abortion was "criminal abortion," and the few people who knew what "euthanasia" meant found the idea repugnant.

Just the events of the past year should send us into deeper shock. They seem unrelated, but they are not. They reflect the pervasive culture-of-death mentality that is worldwide, and diabolical, and spreading.

ASSISTED SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA. We have already detailed the two recent Appeals Court decisions on this subject in a previous column. In a few months the Supreme Court will be addressing them. We have little reason to be optimistic.

Expect to be inundated with "hard" case reports...the man in intractable pain begging to die, the woman with a crippling, fatal neurological disorder, the deformed child who will never walk or talk, and so on. They will focus your attention on these types of cases, but their sights are set on nursing home residents and the incurably ill, and anyone whose lives *they* consider to be "futile."

THE ABORTION PILL. R. U. 486. We have feared this was coming for years, and now all of a sudden it is upon us. It has been tested here in the U. S., a panel of "experts" has unanimously recommended its approval, and the FDA is to make its decision about releasing it in mid-September. You know what their decision will be.

Forget the side-effects of this pill; they are not apt to deter anyone. It is going to be widely prescribed. Many doctors will give in who would never have thought of performing a surgical abortion, or of referring a young lady to an abortionist. It will be pushed aggressively by the pro-abortion crowd, and

probably by the manufacturer. I can hear the euphemisms already: "In the privacy of your home," "A decision between you and your doctor," "safe and painless," etc.

True, it may mean the welcome demise of abortion clinics, but at what cost? The number of abortions will escalate. How high we may never know, for no one will be able to keep count.

THE ADOPTION OF FROZEN EMBRYOS. It was sad enough when we read last year of estranged couples fighting in the courts over their frozen embryos. Now we hear of *thousands* of tiny unborn lives being destroyed in England, en masse, because they were beyond their "expiration date." There is valid argument on both sides of the idea of childless couples "adopting" them, but I don't want to get into that. I just mention this to point out what scientists wrought when our society allowed them to play God.

CANNIBALISM. I promised myself that I would never mention this in a column, but perhaps you should hear it. It has been reliably reported, time and again, that human fetuses are being sold for human consumption in China. Think about that for a moment, and ask yourself if the human condition can plunge any lower than this!

How long has it taken us to sink to this low point in our nation's history? Less than forty years. One generation, actually. It happened so fast, and it's still happening. First went respect for authority, then civil law, then God's laws...and then we had the New Morality (which, as they say, is the old immorality). The *piece de resistance* was The Pill, which effectively removed the one great deterrent to sexual promiscuity, and the floodgates were opened. We were shocked when Roe v. Wade was announced. We should not have been.

How did it all happen? Who is to blame? We have to look for the answer beyond extremism, and atheism, and secular humanism, and go right to the source. When I used the word "diabolical" earlier, I meant it literally. If we ever for an instant have had doubts about the existence and the power and the cunning and the ubiquity of the Evil One, we have but to look at what has happened to morality in this country, and around the world. He is the reason. There can be no other explanation for the devastating sequence of events that are threatening more and more innocent groups of people with the loss of their most basic and God-given right.

All this is written not to discourage you, but to make you more aware of the terrible reality we are facing and how fast and how dark is the future that is coming toward us. The momentum is not going to change unless we change it. The good news is that we can accomplish this, and we can do it with prayer. We prayed for years for the conversion of Russia. Now we must pray for the conversion of our own people. We will never change laws without changing hearts and minds. We must pray, unceasingly, for the restoration of respect for life in our nation, and in our world.

Let us pledge to say the Rosary every day to Our Lady of Life, for the unborn and for all defenseless human life. We must remember them in our prayers at every Mass. Continue writing to your Congressmen and to your newspaper editors, keep voting for pro-life candidates, and keep speaking out for the innocent babies and keep supporting the mothers who are carrying them. But, more importantly, keep praying.



AFTER ROE V WADE

It has been 19 years since the infamous Supreme Court decision. To put this in perspective, this means that all our young people, through the senior year of high school, have never known a world without legalized abortion.

I was reminded of this recently when I read an article in the January issue of *Columbia* magazine. The graduating senior class last year at St. Agnes High School in St. Paul, Minnesota dedicated their yearbook to the many young people who should have been their classmates but who were aborted and never saw the light of day. The dedication read: "As we take our first steps into a world of possibilities, we find it necessary to pause and consider the greatest gift we have received, the gift of life. In doing so, we are reminded of the members of our class who were never given the opportunities we too often take for granted. Opportunities to learn, grow, share, care, hope, love, laugh, cry, win, lose; in short, the chance to live. We dedicate the yearbook to our absent American classmates. We are much poorer for never having known you."

What a mature perception these kids have of the gravity of the abortion holocaust and of the profound effect this is having on our country. It is appalling that virtually half of our "adult" population, if we are to believe the polls, are not solidly committed, either way, and remain lukewarm on the subject accepting killing of unborn babies for this reason but not for that reason. Ignorance can no longer be accepted as a valid excuse. Trying to straddle the fence on this issue is as illogical and absurd as remaining neutral on the subject of child abuse. And abortion is, after all, the ultimate child abuse.

It appears possible now that the Court's 1973 decision will be overturned, probably this year. Even the most avid pro-abortion groups realize this. While it is hoped that this will have a profound effect on the number of abortions performed in this country, it will by no means stop the killing. It is expected that the Court will turn the matter over to the individual state legislatures, in effect saying that women will no longer have a constitutional right to kill their young but each state will be empowered to pass its own laws on abortion. This means that, in our case, the battleground will simply shift from Washington to Baton Rouge. The struggle for the protection or the destruction of human life will go on, and probably intensify.

This is not to suggest that the opposition will abandon their efforts at the national level. Far from it. Last year both houses of Congress passed legislation overturning federal regulations barring abortion counseling and referrals in federally funded birth control clinics; only the President's veto saved the day. Three or four years ago that bill would have been defeated outright.

So the abortionists have picked up strength in both the House and the Senate. You can be sure that efforts will continue to pass the so-called Freedom of Choice Act, which would make abortion legal in all fifty states regardless of what the Supreme Court says on the subject. They have the votes now to pass it, but not quite enough to override a presidential veto. All it would take for passage would be a few more votes here and there, or the election of a pro-abortion president. That is scary.

The overturning of *Roe v Wade*, then, the goal so many have fought for and prayed for and dreamed about for so many years, may turn out to be a hollow victory. The abortion mentality is simply the centerpiece of a whole moral viewpoint that rejects the idea of absolute rights or wrongs, a reflection of our entire permissive culture which is based on the idea that there is no objective morality. Brooklyn Bishop Thomas Daily, a giant in the pro-life movement, said it well, when asked how abortion can be stopped: "Abortion is the primordial evil of our times. We can never be complacent about it. It is so evil, really, that only God can change it. As the Gospel tells us, abortion is the sort of evil that can only be cast out by prayer and penance." Let us pray.



THE ABORTION DEBATE: A NEW STRATEGY

It has been almost a quarter of a century since abortion-on-demand has been legal in our country. There has been increased activity on both sides of the abortion debate, but neither side seems to have momentum.

Statistically, things are pretty much as they were 20 years ago. The number of abortions performed each year is remaining fairly constant, and there has been no significant shift of opinion

in the state legislatures, in Congress, or in the courts. More importantly, in spite of all our efforts, we are not changing the minds of the majority of the American people.

Poll after poll, year after year, shows that one-third of Americans are strongly pro-life, one-sixth are strongly pro-abortion, and the vast majority lie somewhere in between. These figures are not changing. They will have to change, if we are to win the battle for the unborn. We will have to change the minds and the hearts of these millions of people, who are neither firmly pro-life nor pro-abortion, if we are to restore sanity to our laws and protection for the innocent unborn.

This is not to detract from the stand we have taken all these years, that life begins at conception and that every life is a gift from God and must be protected. We know this to be true, and we will never waver from this moral stance. But we are not winning people with this argument. We are going to have to shift the emphasis....to the other victims in abortion, the women.

In his book, *Making Abortion Rare*, David D. Reardon endorses this strategy and makes some suggestions. He says that we should start by accepting the fact that a lot of these people in the middle majority, perhaps most of them, really are "pro-choice but not pro-abortion." This may not come easy for some of us, but he makes a convincing case. These people know in their hearts that abortion is morally wrong, and they would never consider it an option for themselves or their family members, but they simply will not go along with those of us who would make abortion illegal again. They see this as being judgmental, and all of our arguments and our slides and videos and our rhetoric will not sway them.

Why? Dr. Reardon supplies the answer. Women's rights. These people we have to convert, this middle majority, simply place the rights of a woman above the rights of her unborn child, and our efforts to

dissuade them from their viewpoint have not succeeded, and will not. What is needed, he says, is a shift of the emphasis in the abortion debate from the baby as victim to the **woman** as victim. We need to focus on how the abortion industry, motivated not by compassion but by greed, has victimized women...and how often a frightened, anxious, and uninformed young woman is coerced by boy friend or husband or parents into making a "choice" that may well have disastrous immediate or long-term physical and/or emotional effects. Of particular importance is the Post Abortion Syndrome. Denied by the pro-abortion people, ignored by the media, it is a very real entity with devastating life-long effects on the victim.

Will this be effective? Yes, says Dr. Jack Wilkie, the father of the pro-life movement in the United States. He reports that he and his wife, Barbara, had been meeting with increasing hostility with their fetal development presentations on college campuses. So, for the past two years they have been prefacing their lectures with a five-minute talk on their concern, understanding, and compassion for women who have been through abortions, many of whom felt they had no other choice. At the end of each talk they conclude with information about post-abortion syndrome and post-abortion healing. Dr. Wilkie reports that "The result has been almost dramatic....The anger and combativeness are gone. We are listened to once again. They had no idea that we were compassionate to women. Now they must take a new and serious look at this issue."

After the dangers of abortion for women are fully understood by this middle majority, we can begin to open their minds and hearts to the unborn child. If women are not being helped, they will ask themselves, then why are we killing their babies?

THE RIGHT TO DIE

Dictionaries are constantly being updated, as our language keeps changing. Words and phrases may have a very different meaning or connotation today than they did a century ago, or even a generation ago. The word “awesome” is a classic example: formerly reserved for breath-taking works of art or wonders of nature, the kids of today may use it to describe a touchdown run or a slam-dunk. The right to life, for years thought of as a constitutional guarantee of governmental protection for U.S. citizens, is now synonymous with the anti-abortion movement. The “right to die” used to imply that we all have a right to die with dignity, as free of physical and emotional pain as possible. Recent court decisions have given this phrase an entirely new meaning, and I think the spin-offs from their rulings will be disastrous.

The first bombshell came from the west, when the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in early March ruled that laws prohibiting physician-assisted suicide were unconstitutional in effect, seeing in the Constitution something everyone had overlooked for 200 years: a person’s right to end his life with his doctor’s help. Read the ruling and you will find that their definition of the groups who would qualify for legal extermination is so broad as to include not just the terminally ill but also the handicapped, the senile, the mentally ill, the depressed, and the retarded. Anyone qualifies, in their own words, whose condition cannot be “significantly ameliorated by treatment”...even a person who perceives that the continuation of his life would constitute an economic and/or emotional burden to his family.

Then the other shoe fell. A month later, this time from the east, the Second Circuit Court sent out a similar message, ruling that the states in their jurisdiction had no right to prevent a doctor from assisting his terminally ill patient to end his life. Their ruling was not as sweeping, and their tone not as belligerent, but their meaning was just as clear.

The people who know all about these things are saying that the Supreme Court will probably hear these cases on appeal, possibly by the end of this year. Given the present make-up of that high court and their track record over the past 25 years, we have little cause for optimism that they will overrule these decisions.

Is assisted suicide the same as euthanasia? Not quite, in the legal sense; but morally and ethically they are the same. I see little difference between

Doctor A writing a prescription for a lethal dose of pills and Doctor B handing the pills to the patient with a glass of water. Nor do I feel that there is any moral distinction between giving the pills versus giving the patient a lethal injection of potassium.

The Ninth Circuit’s definition of who would qualify for early death is so broad as to include anyone with cancer, or a bad heart, or bad kidneys, or who is depressed. They would destroy the boundary between healing and killing, a radical departure from both medical and legal tradition in our country. Their pronouncement was so extreme as to prompt a word of warning from Derek Humphrey, of all people. In a letter to *USA Today*, Humphrey, founder of the Hemlock Society and author of the how-to suicide manual, *Final Exit*, warns that regulations must be carefully set in place. If Humphrey is prompted to sound a note of caution, what are we to think?

The proponents of this legislation will appeal to your sense of compassion by presenting the “hard” cases, wretched people with terminal cancer who are in pain and depressed. As Dr. Kevorkian has done, they will tell you that if you are really a sympathetic and caring person, if you really love the victim, you will kill him off to prevent suffering, much as you would have your dog put away who has been hit by a car. This is the big lie, that cancer patients all die in excruciating pain and under humiliating circumstances. My hospice experience has taught me that with judicious use of narcotics and adjunctive medications practically all pain can be abolished, or at the very least made tolerable, and good nursing care by professionals and families can help virtually everyone die with dignity. And our patients never ask for suicide. Never.

If you want to know where this is leading us, look at the Netherlands experience, where euthanasia has been openly performed for 20 years and invariably goes unpunished. Last year there were more instances of involuntary euthanasia than voluntary in that country. Think about that for a moment ... most of the cases have been “put to sleep” without their knowledge or consent. That is precisely in the direction we are heading. We may be nearer than we realize to the point where our elderly population, seeing themselves as economic and psychological burdens to their families, may well feel that electing to have their lives snuffed out is the decent thing to do. The right to die may become the duty to die. And,

scarier still, doctors may come to feel the same way. The Grim Reaper may perhaps no longer be depicted as an old man in a black coat carrying a scythe, but rather as a young man in a white coat carrying a stethoscope.



MEDICAL-MORAL DILEMMAS

It is no secret that our population is aging. Thanks mainly to advances in medical science, people are living longer. The people who used to die of heart attacks and infectious diseases and even cancer are now being saved, many to live on until they become helpless victims of the relentless process of aging. Nursing homes are full and new ones are on the drawing boards.

If and when the administration's health care reform comes upon us, in whole or in part, what will it say about these people? A lot of folks who are planning our destiny are saying some scary things, disguised in euphemisms like "futile care" and "meaningless life," and there is the strong scent of rationing in the air, although the word is rarely spoken aloud.

Of course, this is not meant to imply that all high-tech procedures should be available to every single citizen regardless of age and general health. Few would argue that a hundred-year-old man should be eligible for a heart transplant. Some lines will have to be drawn. But who will draw them? The patients themselves and their families and their doctors, or a lay bureaucrat behind a desk a thousand miles away?

What is the pro-life Catholic position on all this? There is no simple answer to that question. The problems are simply too complicated for anyone to come up with a simple statement that will cover all the bases. Certainly we can make some general remarks that we would all agree on....human life is sacred in all its stages; every person should be treated with care and concern and respect, and his or her dignity should never be compromised; life is a precious gift from God and we can never take it under any circumstances. We should never do anything to shorten that life, nor should we needlessly prolong the life of one who has entered the irreversible process of dying. This may well involve each of us examining our own views on death, and seeing it clearly in the Christian way: as not the end but the beginning.

One group I would like to focus on is the senile patients in the nursing home who stop eating. They are uncommunicative, they are not reachable, they can't be coaxed. There are many who feel that they should be tube fed; in fact, many states have laws which specify that if a resident loses a certain percentage of his or her body weight then forced feeding is mandatory. If you think momma should have a nasogastric tube inserted you should first

understand that more than 40 percent of such patients will pull out the tube, repeatedly, unless restrained. Lying on a bed, manacled, is not my idea of a dignified existence. I cannot think of a single medical or ethical argument that would justify such forced feeding. It is most definitely not a matter for the courts; decisions on cases like these should be reached between the family members, the doctors, and the priest. A lawyer need never be consulted!

The best way to avoid such heart-wrenching situations is for each of us to make out a Living Will. I have never known anyone who specified in their own Living Will that they would want "the works" under such circumstances. I certainly wouldn't. And I would like to think that we would all treat our elderly family members exactly the same way we would want to be treated.

There are other situations that we may have to face, more complicated than this group, and the rapid advances in medical technology are bound to present us with more difficult problems. We will simply have to individualize each case. We can't just call the rectory and ask for an answer. And the new Catechism won't tell you....I have already looked. Even our bishops are not in agreement over many aspects of the care of the sick elderly and the terminally ill.

Each of us may one day have to make a big decision, regarding our own life or the life of a spouse, or parent, or even a child. All we must do is pray for guidance to a God whose love and mercy we cannot begin to understand, focus not on death but on the resurrection, and remember the Golden Rule.

WILL IT BE CAIRO, OR CHI RHO?

As I write this, the U.N. conference on population control is still in progress in Cairo. I am not holding my breath in anticipation of what this international charade is going to accomplish. It has already afforded the Pope-bashers their best opportunity in years to do what they do so well, and they have been coming out of the woodwork all over the world to bask in the media spotlight as they attack their favorite target.

Anti-Catholicism has been around forever, but it has never thrived as it has the past few decades. It seemed to flare up after *Humanae Vitae*, then really escalate with Rome's reaction to *Roe v. Wade*. It peaked before and during the Cairo conference. This may be largely due to the vast improvement in our communications system world-wide, plus the consistent bias of those that report the news. A casual remark by one of our Church representatives at 10 o'clock this morning in Oshkosh could be on the 6 o'clock national news tonight....and for a commentary the anchorperson might well interview an ex-priest to give "the Catholic side."

Notice the coverage, and the tone of the coverage, of an alleged sex scandal when a priest is involved, as opposed to a scoutmaster, or a school teacher, or a fundamentalist minister. And it doesn't have to be that sensational. Let the Church do almost anything....close a parish church, pray before a football game, put up a creche in December in a visible location...and everyone comes out firing: syndicated columnists, TV anchorpersons, talk show hosts, all with an axe to grind. Among the most virulent are the editorial cartoonists who do so love to ridicule and vilify our Church, and especially the Vicar of Christ, whom they so often portray as a doddering, chauvinist, woman-hating celibate.

It is bad enough when the attacks come from without, but it is much more intolerable when the slings and arrows come from those within the Church. When the Pope speaks, the steady stream of anti-Catholicism in the media will quickly become a torrent, flushing out the "dissidents" in our Church....the theologians ("What the Pope really means to say was...."), the nuns and the priests and even some of the bishops....who take their turns firing broadsides at the Vatican. They can make "Magisterium" sound like an unprintable word.

We might find some reasoning for all this, and some consolation, by focusing on the fact that when you are Number One, you can expect to be picked

on. No one hates the San Diego Padres or the New York Jets; it's the Yankees and the Cowboys that draw the fire! Maybe I have become a little paranoid on the subject, but I don't think so. If there is any strong anti-Methodism going about, or much Presbyterian-bashing, I am not aware of it. Perhaps we should look upon the animosity directed our way as a left-handed compliment. But it still smarts.

Back to the debacle in Cairo. Never before in 16 years as Pope has John Paul II's light shone brighter. Like Jesus, at the moment of his greatest travail, when he most needs help from his friends, many are not supporting him. He is standing virtually alone against the world-wide anti-life forces, led shamefully by the once proud United States of America and its pro-abortion president, a malevolent consortium of nations who would have us believe that the way to save the planet Earth is to prevent the birth of human life when possible, and kill it when prevention fails. He speaks out for the sanctity of every life, for the moral worth of every human being, no matter how poor, and for the value of everyone's work, no matter how humble. He is a rock. We must pray for him, every day.

DIALOG ON ABORTION

The late Lee Atwater, in an effort to mollify pro-abortion members of his Party, stated that the Republican "tent" was large enough to include voters on both sides of the abortion controversy. Is the Catholic tent big enough to accommodate both camps? No, it isn't. Our Church has never deviated from its official teaching on the sanctity of human life. However, we are living in a time when dissension from Church teaching is very much in vogue, and avant garde theologians seem to be questioning every tenet of our faith, including this one.

Some bishops, too, have added their voices to the chorus of dissension. The archbishop of Milwaukee, in a public interview last year, stated that a good Catholic could hold a "pro-choice view on abortion," a shocking statement that was seconded by the bishops of Detroit and Richmond. The news media, of course, thrive on dissidents in Roman collars. If 50 bishops say one thing and one bishop says another, guess which one will be featured on the 6 o'clock news!

Of course, attacks on our Church are hardly newsworthy, for they have been taking place for centuries. That is because she preaches the truth, not what everyone wants to hear. That's why Jesus was so unpopular. Someone has said that the worst thing to have printed on your epitaph would be, "Everyone loved him." So we should not be too upset when we draw fire from other denominations, or from ex-priests who rant against celibacy, or laymen who have left the Church for another denomination. This is to be expected. No one speaks glowingly of a broken relationship, be it a church affiliation, a business partnership, or a marriage.

The people I have a problem with are those still within the Church who would advocate, or even allow dialog on abortion shepherds such as those I mentioned, priests who never mention the subject from the pulpit, and women religious whose passionate concern for women's rights has pushed them to come to rest in the pro-abortion camp. How much weight do they carry? What effect do they have on the thinking and beliefs of the average Catholic? I suspect that anyone who takes the time to read these columns in the diocesan paper is probably staying informed and not likely to be swayed by such misguided thought. It is not you that I worry about, but rather the vast number of Catholics whose only exposure to Catholic teaching, aside from the 10-

minute Sunday homily, is doctrine which has been interpreted for them by *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, or a talk-show host whose credibility on delicate moral matters is based on the fact that he is "a former altar boy"!

Dialog is certainly not harmful. In fact, it is usually welcome, and beneficial, depending on the subject. There is certainly room for discussion, and disagreement, in our Church over celibacy, ordination of women, and contraception and divorce, and conceivably Rome could relax her stand on any or all of these subjects. But not on abortion. For we are talking here not of Church law, but of God's law. Debate will not change this, nor will polls or referenda.

We can never be reminded too often that life is God's most precious gift to us, and we have no right to take it at any stage of its existence. A generation ago, that statement would have provoked no argument at all in Christian circles. But 20 years of legal abortion have dulled our senses. Repetition tends to diminish, and then eliminate, our capacity for being shocked. Witness what has become routine fare in movies and on television.

It is even more obvious in the decline of respect for human life. Abortion, once referred to only in whispers as "criminal abortion," is now a household word, an acceptable alternative to dropping out of school or missing a vacation. Euthanasia is gaining respectability and may soon become legal. Pressure is mounting for fetal experimentation, transplantation of tissue from aborted babies, conception on an agar plate. The once admirable drive to eliminate birth defects is degenerating to a push to eliminate babies who will be defective. "Fetal deformity" is even creeping into anti-abortion legislation; the birth of a handicapped infant is becoming perceived as a medical and societal defeat of the highest proportions and should be avoided at any cost, including the cost of the life itself.

How differently we have come to look at life than God does. God loves every life into existence, rich or poor, deformed or intact. And yet we have elected to devalue and compartmentalize human life this one may live, this one should die. Unwantedness, imperfection, and even inconvenience have become acceptable reasons for killing it not just in its preborn stage but also at the other end of the spectrum: when it is elderly and suffering (or makes us suffer!),