

Archdiocesan Pro-Life Commission Newsletter

Volume 3, January 2004



A WORD FROM OUR CHAIRMAN.....

With the beginning of a New Year our thoughts shift from events of the past year to our hopes for the New Year. In October, more than 100 attended the annual Archdiocesan Pro-Life Seminar held at St. John the Apostle Church in Linden/Clark. The Keynote speaker was Father Mariusz Koch, former pastor of St. Teresa's in Linden and currently a member of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. Father Koch presented a vivid picture of the current culture in the United States and the challenges facing us. Mary gave a powerful and emotional presentation of the events leading up to her abortion, her feelings during the abortion, and the healing that she received by attending a Rachel's Vineyard Retreat. Her journey to healing began when she called the Respect Life Office phone number listed in her parish bulletin. A panel discussion on IVF (in-vitro fertilization), cloning, the death penalty, and the myths of overpopulation was given by Msgr. McGuinness and members of the Pro-Life Commission. The seminar ended with an excellent question and answer segment. Many of you who attended the seminar asked for the "didja know" facts – so we decided to put them in the Newsletter for all. They can also be found on the Archdiocesan Respect Life Website – www.rcan.org.

2003 was also a good year for the parish pro-life committees. Many Holy Hours for Life were held, seminars conducted, and other pro-life activities held. A Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act was passed by congress and signed into law last year. The law was put on hold by court challenges by pro-abortion organizations. We hope and pray that the legislation will eventually become the law of the land.

Our hope for 2004 is that a culture of life will take root within our homes, our parishes, our state, and our nation. May you and your family be blessed with a holy, healthy, and happy New Year.

Jim Sondey, Pro-Life Commission Chairman

From the Director's Desk- Msgr. Richard McGuinness

SOMETIMES IT'S NOT "NICE" TO BE NICE!

Being "nice" usually means being polite and kind, trying not to offend others. But if someone tells lies about you, and you don't do something to correct them, others may think that what was said about you was true. You could lose your good name and reputation. You have a right and a duty to correct them, to protect yourself. If someone says that tainted meat is perfectly safe, when you know it is not, and you don't speak up, others can suffer severe illness or even die because of your silence.

If someone says that abortion is merely removing a blob of tissue, not a tiny human baby, and we say nothing, instead of correcting them, because we want to be "nice", then we are failing to defend the right to life of tiny children who cannot speak for themselves. Failing to speak up against those who feel that the lives of the elderly, handicapped or terminally ill are not worthy of keeping alive, can likewise result in creating the impression that it is all right to "put them down" like an animal.

Failing to speak up for the right to life of others, for fear of offending others is not nice. It shows a lack of courage, a lack of compassion for those whose lives are endangered by our silence. When we stand before God to be judged, we will not be asked if we were nice. We will be asked, "Why did you not speak up to tell the truth - and to defend my little friends and my helpless friends?"

What will be our answer?

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THE DEATH PENALTY



By: Brian and Bonnie Ludwig

Did you know that:

.....The Catechism of the Catholic Church (paragraph #2267) makes it clear that the death penalty is morally unacceptable except in cases where there is no other means available to offer protection from a dangerous person. Such cases are practically non-existent in today's world.

.....One only has to look at the 12 states without the death penalty to understand that strong, swift and fair sentences restore societal order and provide justice. Generally, these states have consistently lower murder rates than states with the death penalty.

.....The risk of executing an innocent person is real. Nationally, more than 100 innocent persons have been released from death row since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. Altogether they spent 885 years in jail. Eleven were released based on DNA evidence, which is available in only a handful of cases. Wrongful convictions occur due to erroneous eyewitness testimony, prosecutorial misconduct, judicial error, the use of jailhouse snitches, among other reasons.

.....In 1999, Pope John Paul II called for an end to capital punishment in the U.S., describing it as "cruel and unnecessary." His words coincided with the beginning of a decline in public support for the death penalty, a trend that continues today. In May, 2002, a Rutgers-Eagleton poll showed nearly half of N.J. residents (48%) prefer life imprisonment over murder compared to a third (36%) who would choose the death penalty – a reverse in opinion from 1999. 66% support a moratorium and study.

.....As Bishop Thompson of South Carolina stated: "Capital punishment feeds the cycle of violence in society by pandering to a lust for revenge." And as Cardinal O'Connor said: "the death penalty is no more the answer to crime than abortion is the

answer for unplanned pregnancies. Death is never the answer."

.....With the use of the death penalty racial bias in the criminal justice system is often a silent factor. State studies on the impact of race on death penalty cases have exposed an alarming trend – that killers of white victims are more likely to receive a death sentence than killers of black victims. Nationally, over 80% of completed capital cases involve white victims even though only 50% of murder victims are white. In some states, the race of the defendant has also been shown to be a factor in death sentencing. These findings raise the grave question of whether the death penalty system can meet a basic criterion for justice: fairness.

.....The emotional cast of the death penalty is high. In addition to the wrongfully convicted "their families, jurors, lawyers, judges, corrections officials, political leaders, the families of the victims, the families of the condemned – indeed, all citizens – are impacted by the death penalty. The capital punishment system creates more victims. Some victims' families support the death penalty and others oppose it. But, in all cases, the lengthy process, which can not be shortcut without increased risk of killing an innocent person, re-victimizes the families as they struggle to heal.

.....Fairness is also in question when geography and economics are taken into account. The death penalty is disproportionately applied from county to county and state to state. 80% were from the south. Are many motivated by racial prejudice?

.....In the Gospel of Life, Pope John Paul II says we should demand respect for each and every human life, including the lives of those who fail to show that respect for others. The antidote to violence is LOVE, not more violence.

.....The financial cost of the death penalty system is high. Convicting a killer and putting him to death costs states four times more than imprisoning him for life with parole. An Illinois State University study, published 11 years ago, estimated that the



death penalty process costs N.J. taxpayers \$22.8 million annually over the cost of life sentences.

.....Police chiefs believe that the death penalty is not significant in reducing violent crimes. They say the most important issue is: reducing drug abuse (31%). Others are: improving job opportunities (17%), simplifying court rules (16%), increasing prison sentences (15%), having more police officers (10%), reducing the number of guns (3%), expanding the death penalty (only 1%).

.....After the state of Illinois released 13 innocent death row inmates, a blue ribbon commission on capital punishment made the most thorough study of the death penalty to date. The commission was evenly comprised of pro- and anti-capital punishment members. The report defined 85 minimum standards to reduce the risk of executing an innocent person. N.J. fails to meet 75% of those minimum standards.

.....When a conflict arises in a capital case, the state of N.J. hires a private attorney to represent the individuals accused – at an hourly rate of \$50. That rate is significantly below the national average of \$75 for capital cases – and even further below the \$150 average rate for private attorneys in N.J.

WHY DOES THE DEATH PENALTY HAVE TO BE THE ANSWER WHEN LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE EXISTS? ISN'T THE GREATER MORAL CHALLENGE TO RISE ABOVE THE ACTS OF THOSE WE CONDEMN?

Sources: Death Penalty Information Center, Wash., D.C. (www.deathpenaltyinfo.org; 202-293-6970); U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; New Jerseyans for a Death Penalty Moratorium (800-257-6204) (www.njmoratorium.org)

IN-VITRO FERTILIZATION DIDJA KNOW?....

By: Damon Owens

- "In vitro" literally means "in glass."
- IVF is just one of several Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) whereby human life is generated in a laboratory environment like a glass petri dish (e.g., IVF, GIFT, ZIFT).
- IVF begins when fertility technicians administer hormone treatments to a woman to hyper-stimulate the woman's ovaries to produce a number of eggs at one time. The eggs are collected from the woman's body and then combined with sperm.
- The resulting embryos are nourished in laboratory cultures and then the clinician will inject three or four unborn children into the woman's uterus via a vaginal approach. This is considered "one cycle" or "one attempt".
- Many embryos die in the transfer process since they are fragile.
- The national "success rate" of a single attempt of in vitro fertilization (IVF) is 16.8%²; that is, about 28.6% (i.e., 1/3.5). Since the national "success rate" of an average cycle is 16.8%, and only one out of three or four unborn children survive in a given cycle of IVF **it means that only 4.8% (i.e., 28.6% x 16.8%) of the babies actually survive.**
- This means that fewer than one in twenty unborn children survive the process.
- The Centers for Disease Control estimated that in 1998, 28,000 babies were born through in vitro fertilization in the United States. This means that over 555,000 human embryo victims were sacrificed that year alone.
- The remainder of the original 20 to 40 tiny unborn children are placed in a super-cooled freezer (kept at -196°C)³ in case the initial attempt (cycle) fails. [Of note, one third of the tiny frozen babies will not survive the freezing process].



- Some embryos are simply killed as they are washed down the sink.
- Williams Obstetrics (1997) notes that the cost of in vitro fertilization and delivery is about \$40,000 and increases to over \$300,000 for triplets⁴.
- 5% of the couples who use in vitro fertilization end up with triplets. So, the clinician will now offer the woman the "option" of "selective reduction" of one or more of her children.
- Some embryos are unwanted and "eliminated" because they are considered genetically "inadequate."
- Selective Reduction is accomplished by piercing a large bore needle through a woman's abdominal cavity or vagina and "injecting potassium chloride into the fetal thorax via a needle." [William's Obstetrics, 1997]⁴.
- It is a scientific fact that human life begins at conception/fertilization. From conception, a human embryo has a complete genetic code and his or her growth and development is totally coordinated from within.
- Embryonic adoption is possible, but also fraught with many moral problems: is one complicit in an immoral act? Do we provide moral "cover" for IVF? Is the process of embryonic transfer itself immoral?
- In an interview published in the Catholic World Report, Bishop Elio Sgreccia, a papal advisor on bioethical questions and vice president of the Pontifical Academy of Life pointed out 90 percent or more of these human embryos, once thawed, will not survive nor will they be strong enough to implant themselves in the adoptive mother's womb. And he says, "Even if it does work, there are no guarantees that the child won't have serious handicaps. The risk of handicap increases the longer an embryo is frozen: one or two years or five years."
- In vitro fertilization turns children into commodities.
- Even for the most loving of couples, there is no God-given *right* to a child through either normal conjugal relations or reproductive technologies.
- Love is not a product one "makes"; it is a gift that one receives, the gift of self. Similarly, a baby is not something that one "makes"; rather it is a gift from God. (William May)
- IVF is wrong because, like contraception, it violates our human dignity by separating human procreation from the marital act. In the process, couples make themselves the masters of human life instead of its stewards.
- Once IVF is accepted, there is no substantial reason to oppose cloning, eugenics, and experimentation on human embryos.
- While IVF does violence to the dignity of all those involved, the child conceived through IVF (like a child born out of wedlock) has no less God-given dignity.
- There are natural techniques which can help couples better understand the cycle of fertility and the optimum time for conception. The Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction has been on the forefront of helping couples and families within God's design with NaPRO Technology (Dr. Leonie Watson).
- It is a false perception that people can have babies at any age. Experts say that by 42, the chances of having a baby using one's own eggs, even with advanced medical help, are less than 10%.
- At 35 the IVF success rate per round is as low as 55% "Then it falls in a straight line; from the age of 45 the chances of success are zero," Dr Robert Jansen, Sydney IVF (quoted in "You can't have it all" Courier Mail, Sat. March 1, 2003).
- Enough babies have now been born so that some studies have been done on large groups. The findings are somewhat disturbing. It seems that there are more problems with these babies than those conceived and born naturally.
- According to two major articles in the New England Journal of Medicine, 3-7-02, pp. 725-730, 731-737, researchers report that infants conceived through IVF have "twice as high a



risk of a major birth defect as naturally conceived infants."

- Further, "The use of assisted reproductive technology accounts for a disproportionate number of low-birth-weight and very-low-weight infants."
- The Washington Post reported that Swedish researchers compared 5,680 children conceived by IVF with 11,360 children conceived naturally. The children conceived by IVF were twice as likely to be treated for a neurological problem and 4 times more likely to have cerebral palsy or a developmental delay. Other common diagnoses included congenital malformation, mental retardation, chromosomal aberration, and behavior disorders.
- In Britain, researchers have found a greater risk of Beckwith-Wiedemann Syndrome (birth defects and childhood cancer).

The Catholic Church, regarding couples who are infertile, does sympathize with their sorrow, and allows legitimate medical procedures to alleviate infertility, but teaches that a child is a gift, not a right. The child has the right "to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents" and "the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception"(CDF Donum Vitae)

OVERPOPULATION DIDJA KNOW?.....

**By: Msgr. Richard M.
McGuinness**

- ❖ At present, over 80 countries have birth rates so low that they are no longer replacing themselves.
- ❖ The reason population is still rising is because people are living longer because of medical advances. There are more older people than younger people.

- ❖ The United Nations predicts that every nation on earth with the exception of a few African nations will reach below replacement fertility within the next 20 years.
- ❖ Japan – 15 years ago reached a point where it had more people over 65 than it had children under 15.
- ❖ The world now produces more food on less land than ever before. The problem is not that there is not enough food – the problem is in getting it to the hungry!
- ❖ Starvation in the world today occurs – not from lack of food – but from bad policies or the use of starvation as a tool of war. For example, 4,000,000 Ukrainians were deliberately starved to death because Khrushchev withdrew all the food they had grown.
- ❖ The United Nations now believes that the world population will begin to decline by 2050.

For more information on overpopulation, go to:
www.pop.org

From the USCCB -Have another child to join with God in the creation of an immortal soul – Parents are given the incredible opportunity to assist God in the creation of an immortal soul. As the late Cardinal Mindszenty said, even the angels have not been given such a grace.

"The most important person on earth is a mother. She cannot claim the honor of having build Notre Dame Cathedral. She need not. She has built something more magnificent than any cathedral – a dwelling for an immortal soul, the tiny perfection of her baby's body...Even the angels have not been given such a grace! What is more glorious than this – to be a mother."
Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty



Include a new reason to have another child each month in the church bulletin.

To see the other nine reasons to have another child, visit www.usccb.org/prolife and click on the Respect Life Program.

IS ABORTION A CATHOLIC ISSUE?

By: Juan Ryan, Esq.

Hammurabi didn't think so. He was the Babylonian king who lived over three thousand years ago. His code of laws included criminal penalties for causing an abortion. Evidently his mind was not clouded by questions of when human life begins, perhaps because the thing that grows inside a woman and eventually is born is always a human child, a baby.

So how is it that our rulers, who have so much more scientific knowledge than the ancient Babylonians, have trouble with protecting life in the womb? The reason is that the modern pagans who rule Western society today are much more corrupt than the ancient pagans of the pre-Christian era.

And why is this so? The reason is that the moral teachings of Christianity have been presented to them and have been rejected. That is why the concept of freedom of religion has been perverted by our Supreme Court to mean that all religion and all belief even in the natural moral law must be removed from public life.

You see, the ancient pagans were not atheists, that is, enemies of God, but the modern ones are. They do not recognize any moral restraints on their conduct, even if it means taking innocent human life, and they see all of us who wish to protect the innocent unborn as their enemies.

All religious people see human life as a creation of God, having an immortal soul and therefore sacred. Some religious groups, however, have themselves been so affected by the corruption around us that many of their members fail to recognize the moral law and the moral imperative to oppose abortion. How unfortunate!

There are devout Protestants and Jews in the pro-life movement, but the backbone of it is Catholic. The Catholic Church has never wavered in its condemnation of abortion, and Catholics who support

the "right to choose", which is the right to choose death, should have the honesty to leave the Church.

In conclusion, abortion is a moral issue, not a Catholic issue, but Catholics must recognize it for what it is, the willful taking of innocent human life.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS ACROSS THE ARCHDIOCESE



St. John the Apostle Church, Linden - 3rd
Monday of every month - Holy Hour for Life
begins with 7:00 pm Mass.



Our Lady of Sorrows Church, South Orange-
1st Wednesday of every month - Holy Hour for Life
begins at 8:00 pm in the lower Church (St. John's
Chapel).



Our Lady of the Visitation Church, Paramus-
3rd Thursday of every month - Holy Hour for Life
begins with rosary at 7:00 pm in the Chapel.



St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Bloomfield-
4th Monday of every month - Holy Hour for Life
begins at 7:30 pm with Eucharistic Adoration,
Silent Meditation and Recitation of the Holy
Rosary. St. Thomas Rectory and Parish Center is
973-338-9190.



St. Raphael Church, Livingston – last
Wednesday of every month – Holy Hour for Life at
7:30 pm in the main Church. Contact Marge
Scanlon with questions at 973-226-3401.



Every Saturday between 9:15 am and 10:15
am the rosary is said on the sidewalk in front of 700
Broad Street in Elizabeth, NJ. For more
information call John or MaryEllen Mulholland at
908-322-2314.



St. Frances of Assisi Church, Ridgefield Park will be hosting the following events:

February 14 – 15, 2004 – Pro-Life Information Booth (see September description);

March 14, 2004 – Prayers and Pampers event (annual diaper drive for single mothers and their babies);

April 17, 2004– Novena Prayers for Life (for 9 consecutive Saturdays ending June 12, 2004).



St. Thomas Parish, Bloomfield has a “Spiritual Adoption of the Unborn” Program. For information call Pat Hamilton at 973-429-8755.



St. Teresa of Avila, Summit will have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament after the 12:10 mass on January 22, 2003 and will occur all day and end with Benediction at 7:30 pm.



Rally for Life and Youth Mass 2004 – the rally will feature hip-hop singing Fr. Stan Fortuna, recording artist and composer Steve Angrisano and the dynamic “Who Do You Say I Am” Band. Cardinal McCarrick and many priests, bishops and cardinals from across the USA will celebrate the Youth Mass at 10:00am. Doors open at 7:00 am. Location: Rally and Youth Mass at the MCI Center, 601 F Street, NW, Washington, DC Date: Thursday, January 22, 2004; Time: 9:00 am Contact Ellen Sarnecky, 301-853-4555 sarnecke@adw.org Fee: none.



On Tuesday, January 27th at 7:30 pm., the Respect Life Committee of St. Michael’s parish in Cranford will sponsor a talk on cloning. Dan Kraft, from the Diocesan Respect Life Committee, will be speaker. This talk is the second in a series of four

talks being given on life issues at St. Michael’s. The talk will be held in the parish center. For more information, please call Bernadette Young at 908-272-1943.

F.Y.I.....

New from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: **BOOK OF THE INNOCENTS**

This elegant book is an ideal gift to every parish community to help those who grieve the death of infants and the unborn. Each page contains inspirational quotes and blank lines to write the names of children who have died through miscarriage, stillbirth, or abortion. Place the *Book of the Innocents* near the altar to Mary or in another special location throughout the year. Order from USCCB #5-566 \$49.95 Call 800-235-8722

MARCH FOR LIFE TRANSPORTATION

On January 22, 2004, the annual March for Life will take place in Washington, D.C.

The following Parishes will be running buses as transportation:

1. The Knights of Columbus/St. John the Apostle, Clark/Linden contact St. John’s Rectory (908) 486-6363;
2. St. Genevieve’s Parish, Elizabeth, \$20.00 per person; contact Dick Sheils, (908) 351-0010 or John Trotter (908) 355-7686;
3. St. Agnes, Clark contact Flo Haas, (908) 654-3371;
4. The Knights of Columbus - Montclair Council, contact Tom Russo (973) 746-3867;
5. The Knights of Columbus is sponsoring 3 buses that will leave from Little Flower in Berkeley Heights, Our Lady of Peace in New Providence and St. Teresa of Avila in Summit. For more information contact John Vesper 973-218-9544.
6. Our Lady of the Mountains Council K of C / St. Philomena Parish, Livingston will be running a Bus. The Bus will leave from St. Phil's at 6:30 am and return about 9:30 pm. Cost is \$25.



Breakfast, lunch, and supper provided. Contact Dan Kraft at (973) 992 - 6132.

7. St. Mary's Nutley – 55 seat bus call Fr. George 973-235-1101

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:



ST. HELEN'S, WESTFIELD - RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY

St. Helen's Respect Life ministry under the Chairmanship of Cindy Petrucelli has adopted Rachel's Vineyard Retreat weekends (for post-abortive men and women) as their prayer focus. These "prayer angels" have been holding Holy Hours for Life with all night vigils to support Rachel's Vineyard retreats since November, 2002. Every time there is a Rachel's Vineyard weekend, St. Helen's holds their prayer vigil from 8pm on the Friday of the retreat weekend and goes through the night until Saturday morning, ending with 9am Mass.

They have two scheduled adorers for each hour plus many other adorers who come to pray for all those who are attending the retreat. Over half of those who come are from St. Helen's Parish, but people come from parishes as far away as Bergen County. Notices are sent to many parishes to put in their bulletins.

The "prayer angels" pray for the women and men on the retreat as well as the team, beginning the entire week before the retreat. They have even asked priest friends to offer their Masses for the retreat from as far away as Guam and Paris!

When asked why they do this, we were told that they feel it is a great way of supporting people who have had an abortion- not only those attending the retreats, but those who are still suffering in silence. Cindy asserted, "We hope that in a small way we are being used as an instrument of God to help bring healing....seeing the posters advertising the prayer vigils, we hope those hurting will realize there is hope and love for all." Their next Prayer Vigil will begin on Friday, January 16th. If you are interested in praying for an hour please call Cindy at- (908)233-5586.

Those attending the weekends are moved beyond words when they hear that people who don't know them are praying round the clock in front of the Blessed Sacrament, just for them. What a beautiful act of love! HATS OFF TO ST. HELEN'S RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY!!!

Pro-Life Commission Members

Most Reverend John J. Myers, Archbishop
Msgr. Richard M. McGuinness,
Director, Respect Life Office
Jim Sondey - Chairman
Dan Kraft
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