



CATHOLICS FOR LIFE SACRAMENTO DIOCESE

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Politicians get *the Gospel of Life* at Cardinal O'Connor's Funeral

New York's John Cardinal O'Connor was buried in St. Patrick's Cathedral on Monday, May 8, 2000 after a long battle with cancer. The cathedral was filled with 3,500 people (among them 1,000 clergy). Outside the church, hundreds of people stood behind police barricades in 91-degree heat, some repeating the prayers and hymns as the funeral Mass was broadcast over loudspeakers. The coffin was inscribed simply with a cross, a coat of arms and "John Cardinal O'Connor, 1920-2000. Archbishop 1984-2000."



Cardinal O'Connor had drawn up the guest list for his own funeral—like a will-reading party at which the expected heirs might be in for an unexpected shock. Politicians accepted their invitations, perhaps imagining they could get in a bit of stumping in this year of Catholic political controversy.



Boston's Bernard

Cardinal Law praised the late Cardinal O'Connor for making "this pulpit unique in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States....God gifted him with a keen and subtle intellect, an uncommon rhetorical skill, a knack for the dramatic gesture, a sharp wit and an outrageous sense of humor - all of which he used in the service of preaching.

"No one proclaimed what Pope John Paul II has called the *Gospel of Life* with greater effectiveness than Cardinal O'Connor....He was eloquent and unremitting in his defense of the life of the unborn, as well as his support of the value of human life to the moment of natural death. Perhaps his most lasting testament in support of life, will be the work of the Sisters of Life, a religious community he founded and loved so dearly.



"As he was dying last Wednesday, as the result of a disease with terrible consequences, he bore witness one last time to the moral evil of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide....He preached most powerfully by his example, the necessity of seeing in every human being, from the first moment of conception to the last moment of natural death, and in every moment in between – particularly in the poor, in the sick, in the forgotten – the image of a God to be loved and to be served. What a great legacy he has left us, in his constant reminder, that **the Church must always be unambiguously pro-life.**"



After a pregnant moment's pause, applause broke out. It sounded like the thundering of hail upon the roof of the Cathedral. Then a standing ovation spread from the back of the cathedral to the front. It lasted one and one-quarter minutes. Most politicians, however, weren't applauding (though they were smiling strangely).



Last to stand were the pro-abortion politicians, Gov. George Pataki and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, then finally the Clintons and the Gores, ignoring the applause and engaging one another in conversation, as if to distract themselves from the interminable moment of embarrassment.



"I see he hasn't left the pulpit," a smiling Cardinal Law said of Cardinal O'Connor.



Photo: Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life

It is unnecessary and immoral for us to “harvest” live embryos, lest living human beings come to be seen as products for sale within a for-profit enterprise. **The sacrifice of some human lives for the benefit of others must be defined as illegal, as it has been in the past.**

Medical progress is desirable. It is clear that researchers should have access to stem cells [developmentally undifferentiated cells with the ability to become cells of any organ, possibly able to replace damaged insulin-producing cells in diabetics or bridge spinal-chord breaks in paraplegics].

The issue is: why embryonic stem cells? There are many other sources of these vital human tissues (i.e. umbilical-cord blood, and adult stem cells) which give clear indication of their potential for positive results, and which would even avoid the possibilities of rejection inherent in the use of tissue not recognized by the host body.

We are involved in a frenzied pursuit based on fear of our own vulnerability. “Disabilities are the normal, expected, anticipated outcome of the risks and stresses of the living process.” Many of us don’t accept that reality. We are fragile creatures, who at best can only expect a *postponement* of our mortality.

We don’t cure our vulnerability. It is a positive, not a negative. We have gifts, we have weakness. Those intertwined weavings create the strongest social fabric. In some mysterious way which we cannot fathom, this variety in abilities and needs reveals some essential part of our Heavenly Father.

We may be born without disabilities, but we must anticipate that at some point in our lives we will be forced to recognize our shared vulnerability. That recognition can inspire us to acknowledge our need for each other and for the Creator.

Many of us unfortunately believe that disabilities are a cosmic accident which we must correct. Indeed, we must do what we can to reduce or prevent disabilities, using morally defensible means. Much progress has already been made in prevention, treating or even curing a variety of disabling conditions.

However, we could never completely eliminate the vulnerability of the human organism, **nor would it be such a great blessing if we could.** It is by God’s wisdom that the gift of life comes in fragile earthen vessels. Many of the virtues we feel are the best that humanity has to offer, such as love, faith, hope, mercy, and courage, are associated directly or indirectly with our vulnerability.

We need alternative lenses through which to view human vulnerability and disabilities, to re-compute our outmoded “scientific” formulae for assessing other people’s quality of life, which cannot be judged by outside authority. The intertwining threads that bind people and communities together are enhanced when we acknowledge our need for assistance or help.

We actually seek “excuses” to be interactive and to discard our sense of complete autonomy, to refresh our sense of being an essential part of a vital community. This interaction is a potent antidote to the rampant alienation which threatens so many of our neighborhoods and communities today.

We can escape from the ancient demons which haunt nightmares, the fears of human vulnerability that foster undue anxiety about what the future might hold. The worst thing in life is not disability, or pain, or even death. The **worst evil** is to create a society which sees itself as justified in treating people as objects to be used or discarded, as best fits the desires of the moment.

Extract of testimony given before the Subcommittee on Labor, H&HS and Education of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, April 26, 2000, by Mary Jane Owen, MSSW, Executive Director, National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities, www.ncpd.org. Mary Jane’s “CatholicAnswers” radio appearances may be heard at www.catholic.com/radio/guests_n-s.htm



From the PRESIDENT'S PROLIFIC PEN By Marie Sheahan Brown

Greetings, faithful readers and friends! As many of you know, having served from 1995 to 1999 as your diocesan respect life coordinator, I started my own business last year as a "Laborer for Life," spent last summer tending to family property and responsibilities in Oregon, and returned to California in September. At our January meeting, Catholics for Life members elected me to serve as your president.

I am delighted to serve with these other members of the newly elected Executive Committee of CFL:

William Keevers, First Vice President. A member of St. Mel Parish, Fair Oaks, Bill also serves as our newsletter editor. His knowledge of computers, love of writing, and thoughtful insights at general and Executive Committee meetings make him an asset to our group. Bill works in local government as a data technician. He and his wife, Devonne, have four children.

Mike Schaefer, Second Vice President. Mike and his wife, Mary, are founding members of Catholics for Life and have served in the pro-life movement for decades. They are members of St. Mel Parish, Fair Oaks. Mike is a past president of CFL and has coordinated the annual Respect Life Mass in January at the Cathedral. He is a civil engineer currently working as a consultant. Mike and Mary have six grown children.

Carol Schoner, Treasurer. A member of St. John the Baptist Parish, Folsom, Carol is serving her second consecutive term as treasurer. In recent years she has coordinated the annual Feast of the Holy Innocents Procession and currently also serves on the board of Bishop Gallegos Maternity Home. Carol brings a gentle, positive spirit to our discussions. She and her husband, Bob, have three grown children and three grandchildren.

Eileen Holleran, Secretary. Eileen has attended our meetings faithfully since she discovered CFL on January 22, 1999. She serves as parish contact at St. Ignatius Parish, Sacramento, working closely with the parish social justice committee. Eileen works for a public television station. She hails from a strong pro-life family background—her mother has been an activist in Stockton for decades. Eileen is single and has a beloved 14-year-old cat, Felicia.

Helen Boyd, Immediate Past President. Helen finished two consecutive terms as president last January, thus being "term limited out." Ever-gracious and encouraging, she is a member of St. John the Baptist Parish, Folsom. Helen works for the United States Postal Service and also Bob and Penny Lord's *Journeys of Faith*. One of nine children, Helen is a single woman dedicated to the service of God and the Church.

Christine Cipperly, diocesan Respect Life Coordinator. Christine, my successor in the diocesan position, is an ex-officio member of the CFL Executive Committee. She is becoming well known for, among other things, her appearances on "The Bishop's Hour"



radio program with host Bob Dunning (11 a.m. weekdays on 1620 AM), and for her letters to the editor. Interestingly, Christine and I both entered the Catholic Church in April 1987 at St. James Parish, Davis. She and her husband, Stan Dundon, have nine children.

The Executive Committee gathered at Mount St. Joseph in Loomis one Sunday in February for an informal time of prayer, conversation, and discernment of the Lord's leading. Among other things, we perceived the need to increase the regular attendance at our monthly meetings. To this end, we will continue to open each meeting with the Pro-Life Rosary, followed consistently by a 30-minute educational presentation. Regular reports from the Respect Life Coordinator, Public Policy Committee, Prayer Committee, and Bishop Gallegos Maternity Home will continue. We will try to keep committee business decisions during the meeting to a minimum, relying rather on reports from committees that do their work outside of the meetings.

Catholics for Life meets the third Thursday of each month (except August) from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 2110 Broadway, Sacramento (around back, through the cemetery). We look forward to seeing you!



"I have found a surprise hidden away in the heart of Sacramento, a spiritual oasis to refresh my Catholic faith. St. Elizabeth's is truly a jewel of the city, and on the first Saturday of every month, a prolife Mass is said there. After Mass, a Rosary procession winds through the streets to the nearby abortion clinic. The group is small and reverent, and sometimes Father walks with us and kneels at the clinic in prayer. This is a quiet time; there are no signs or confrontations. It is a retreat from the fast pace of my life, a chance to draw close to God in trust that He will turn hearts against abortion and close clinics across our land. I feel that God is truly present and walks with us in this morning devotion. The Fatima Devotion starts at 7:45 AM, Mass is at 8, and we return to church for Benediction about 9:45. St. Elizabeth's is at 12th & S in Sacramento. You are especially invited to join us and share the blessing!"

— An Anonymous Contributor

The Gabriel Project (Continued from Page 4)

More than anything else, Gabriel Project churches embrace each pregnant woman who comes to them as their daughter, their sister, their friend. (Sunday, March 12, 2000 was St. Mary's Gabriel Project Sign-up Sunday, at which time parishioners had an opportunity to obtain Project information after each Mass.) Please follow St. Mary and St. Peter's example, and say "Yes, I will live the Gospel message to love my neighbor," by becoming a Gabriel Church Volunteer. Project information, for your Pastor's consideration, may be obtained through the St. Mary Parish office, at (916) 452-0296.

The Gabriel Project

St. Mary's, East Sacramento, joins St. Peter's, Dixon, as Gabriel Project churches in the Diocese of Sacramento. As an alternative to public protest, parishioners should open their hearts and make time for women in crisis pregnancies, suggests St. Mary's Pastor Arnold Ortiz, OSJ, who runs the parish effort with Steve Fowler and Deacon Luigi Del Gaudio. From the "Church Chatter," February 2000:

Many mothers faced with crisis pregnancies feel abandoned by their families, the fathers of their babies and their communities. More and more, they are poor and in their teens. Some are homeless. Most feel afraid. For too many reasons, abortion seems the only answer. Churches and pro-life service groups have sought ways to expand their embrace of women in crisis pregnancies. Now comes a way they can do so together – a way to combine the special power of prayer with commitment to services – the Gabriel Project!

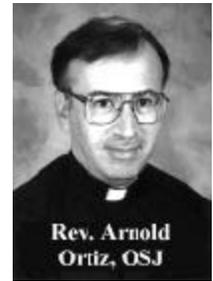
The Gabriel Project is an ecumenical movement of churches standing together in their commitment to offer assistance to women and families facing crisis pregnancies. Participating congregations advertise this commitment by placing a Sign of Life in front of their church. The Sign of Life, with its "800" number hotline, assures any mother that the local church community cares for her and is prepared to offer immediate and

practical help with her pregnancy. Callers to the hotline are sent to the nearest participating pro-life pregnancy centers for counseling. After making assessments, pregnancy centers then are able to refer clients to participating churches for the personal follow-up support they need.

The role of our parish is to meet with any mother referred to us for help, to pray with her and to assure her that Christ and our congregation love her. Our community simply responds in love by providing emotional, spiritual and material support to help meet her needs. For the many women abandoned by family at the time of a crisis pregnancy, the church community lovingly fills the void left by a missing family. Churches in the Gabriel Project stand ready to provide a mother with the kinds of assistance that she needs in caring for her unborn baby. This help may include:

- * Friendship & emotional support
- * Pastoral care & counseling
- * Medical aid & prenatal care
- * Financial assistance
- * Housing & adoption resources
- * Educational & employment opportunities

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Make Your Voice Count

Many people feel frustration at their inability to have a good effect on what goes on in government or in the media. Yet getting through is only a matter of staying alert, keeping informed and observing simple, common sense principles of communication.

* You can use your computer to get a daily update of pro-life news articles. "The Pro-Life Infonet is a daily compilation of pro-life news and information sponsored by *Women and Children First*. To subscribe, send the message 'subscribe' to: infonet-request@prolifeinfo.org."

* Letters to television and newspapers can be very influential, if they are short, to the point, and reflect a community understanding.

* Busy Senate and Representative staff only have time to tally how their constituents as a group stand on any given position. Write them, **clearly indicating**

- 1) the relevant bill name and number,
- 2) an extremely simple message like "No on Roe v. Wade," and,
- 3) your name and address

* When writing to Representatives or Senators, it is vitally necessary to refer to your home address. Their staffs will not take your communication into account if they believe you are not a constituent of their district or state.

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