



# Pro-Life Network Newsletter

Issue 4

September 2009

**Prayer is our greatest weapon against the culture of death. We must work in all kinds of ways, but PRAYER can not only move mountains, it can change hearts.**

## **National News – The passing of Edward Kennedy: Complex legacy of a Catholic.**

*(Note: The following is not an endorsement of Sen. Kennedy...merely food for thought What does it mean to be Catholic? What of those who say they are not only Catholic, but 'practicing' Catholics, yet their beliefs and lifestyles seem to be against Church teaching? Are they arrogant, misguided, or simply ignorant?)*

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy received his First Communion from a pope and had his funeral Mass celebrated at a Boston basilica, but one of the nation's most identifiable Catholic politicians was also among its most controversial.

Kennedy was raised in a devout Roman Catholic household; his parents were friends to popes and cardinals; yet he became a staunch supporter of abortion rights, a stance that earned him the hostility of Catholic conservatives who sometimes demanded he be excommunicated, even to the hours after his passing, when they protested his public Catholic funeral Mass.

Kennedy hadn't always been pro-choice. In fact, in 1973 he denounced Roe v. Wade; however, by the 1980's he had changed his position. Although claiming to still be pro-life, he felt he could not impose his religious views upon his constituents. Throughout the years Kennedy often committed transgressions that were contrary to Catholic teaching, yet he continued to profess a strong faith in the Church.

In a 2005 interview with ABC, Kennedy said, "The most important influences are my family and my faith. All of the members of my family, we're very, very spiritual. It's been a very central part of my life. In my faith, resurrection is the spirit of hope, it's the spirit of optimism."

Because of his political position, the nation very publicly saw the predominantly private way that Kennedy practiced Catholicism. He attended Mass daily for a year after his mother died; he sought help from a "healing priest" when he was diagnosed with cancer; on his deathbed he consulted with his local priest; and for his funeral, chose the basilica where he had regularly prayed for a miraculous cure for his cancer-stricken daughter.

Some ask whether it is fair to judge a man solely on his stance regarding abortion. Kennedy was opposed to the death penalty and focused intently on poverty, championing the poor, the disabled, the immigrant, and the elderly - issues of great importance to Catholics. It was a political and personal mission of social justice that earned him the respect of figures such as Pope John Paul II and Sean Cardinal O'Malley.

"For nearly half a century, Sen. Kennedy was often a champion for the poor, the less fortunate and those seeking a better life," O'Malley said in a statement. "Across Massachusetts and the nation, his legacy will be carried on through the lives of those he served."

"The common thread that runs through everything he accomplished was his belief in building things for the benefit of others, particularly those most in need," said Dr. Patrick Whelan, a pediatrician at Massachusetts General Hospital and president of Catholic Democrats. "I believe this is the essence of being a good Catholic, and I think it's right at the heart of Senator Kennedy's entire legacy."

Yet others have not been so generous with praise. "He will be remembered as one of the most scandalous Catholics in the history of the church," said Judie Brown, president of the American Life League, an organization that repeatedly, and unsuccessfully, called for Kennedy to be excommunicated. "I'm horrified by him getting a Catholic funeral, because he spit at the church regularly. For 50 years, the Kennedy brothers struggled to reconcile their Catholic faith with the public square. Sen. Kennedy's legacy will, sadly, remain compromised in the eyes of faithful Catholics."

Unfortunately, Kennedy's views on abortion, although controversial, are far from unusual. Many prominent Catholic politicians are abortion-rights supporters, including Vice President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Polls suggest that, despite the fact that the sanctity of life is the first principle of Catholic Social Teaching, American Catholics are divided over abortion, and many feel that Catholic faith and identity doesn't rest solely with one's views on abortion.

There are no easy answers: Kennedy's legacy as a Catholic is complex and debatable. We cannot judge nor know the state of his soul upon his death. All we can do is pray and work toward a conversion of heart for the politicians making the critical decisions for our nation.

## **National Pro-Life Updates**

### **ABORTION PROVISIONS IN HOUSE'S HEALTH CARE BILL UNACCEPTABLE, SAYS CARDINAL IN LETTER TO HOUSE**

WASHINGTON—Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia urged preservation of "longstanding federal policies that prevent government promotion of abortion and respect conscience rights," and called current House health care legislation "seriously deficient" on the issue of mandated coverage and funding of abortion. He cited his concerns in an August 11 letter to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Cardinal Rigali reaffirmed the bishops' position that genuine health care reform that respects life and dignity is urgently needed. He also welcomed provisions in



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America's Affordable Health Choices Act (H.R. 3200) that do not preempt state laws regulating abortion or current federal conscience laws on abortion.

But he criticized the bill for delegating to the Secretary of Health and Human Services “the power to make unlimited abortion a mandated benefit in the ‘public health insurance plan’ the government will manage nationwide.” He called this a “radical change” since federal law excludes most abortions from federal employees’ health benefits, and no federal health program mandates coverage of elective abortions.

Cardinal Rigali also criticized the bill for bypassing the Hyde Amendment and other longstanding provisions that prevent federal funding of abortion and health benefits packages that include abortion. He called the provisions to separate funding for abortion created by the House Energy and Commerce Committee a “legal fiction,” one that would force low-income Americans, who may only be able to afford the public plan, to subsidize abortions for others and abortion coverage for themselves “even if they find abortion morally abhorrent.”

The full text of the letter can be found online at: <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/CardRigaliHealthCareReformLetter-08-11-09.pdf>



## Resources

The 2009-10 Respect Life Program is now available in preparation for Respect Life Sunday, October 4. This year's theme is “Every Child Brings Us God's Smile”.

The Respect Life flyer explores this theme and provides a fascinating timeline of fetal development along with photos showing the humanity of unborn children.

Topics addressed in this year's Respect Life Program reflect the diversity of pro-life concerns:

- the way ahead in building a culture of life (by Cardinal Justin Rigali)
- the essence of human dignity
- assisted suicide
- facts about contraception
- infertility
- same-sex marriage

Articles are available as printed pamphlets, on the Website of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities ([www.usccb.org/prolife](http://www.usccb.org/prolife))

## Wisconsin Pro-Life Updates

### Key Points on Pro-Abortion Provisions in Obama-Backed Health Care Bills

**#1.** Both of the health care bills backed by the Obama White House – H.R. 3200 in the House, and the “Affordable Health Choices Act” (unnumbered) in the Senate – create two big new federal programs that would cover abortion for any reason: (1) a national health insurance program that would be run entirely by the federal government, called the “public plan” or “public option,” and (2) a huge new program to provide subsidies to help tens of millions of Americans buy health insurance.

**#2. Both bills will result in government funding of abortion.** As the independent FactCheck.org reported in an August 21, 2009, analysis, “Despite what Obama said, the House bill would allow abortions to be covered by a federal plan and by federally subsidized private plans.” FactCheck.org also wrote: “Obama has said in the past that ‘reproductive services’ would be covered by his public plan, so it's likely that any new federal insurance plan would cover abortion unless Congress expressly prohibits that. Low- and moderate-income persons who would choose the ‘public plan’ would qualify for federal subsidies to purchase it. Private plans that cover abortion also could be purchased with the help of federal subsidies.” This is all also true of the Senate bill.

**#3. Abortion is explicitly mentioned 17 times in the current House bill.** On July 30, the Democrat-controlled House Energy and Commerce Committee added to H.R. 3200 an amendment written by staff to Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Ca.) and offered by Rep. Lois Capps (D-Ca.), both of whom have consistently pro-abortion career voting records. This “phony compromise” amendment explicitly authorizes the “public plan” to cover all abortions. This means that any citizen who wants to take advantage of the public plan will be compelled to purchase coverage for abortion on demand. **This is clearly government funding of abortion – the federal government would be running a nationwide insurance plan covering abortion on demand.**

**#4. The proposed provisions are a radical departure from the status quo.** Currently, the federal government does not pay into any health plans that cover elective abortion, and the federal government certainly currently does not run a national abortion insurance program. *Time* magazine reported (August 24, 2009), “The health-care reform proposed by House Democrats, if enacted, would in fact mark a significant change in the Federal Government's role in the financing of abortions.”

**#5.** Under the Senate bill, there is an additional problem: Both the “public plan” and, in time, most private insurance plans, would be required to cover all “essential benefits.” These must include (but are not



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limited to) ambulatory patient services, hospitalization, and preventive services. Under numerous past federal court decisions, such broad categories will include elective abortion unless Congress adds an explicit exclusion for abortion – but the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee rejected such an exclusion. **Thus, under the Senate bill, many private health plans would be required to pay for and to provide local access to abortion, and many state laws that regulate abortion could be invalidated.**

For additional information and documentation, or for an up-to-date report on the status of this legislation, go to <http://nrlactioncenter.com> or <http://www.nrlc.org/AHC/Index.html>

## Say NO! to Obamacare

### HOUSE AND SENATE TO VOTE ON HEALTH CARE REFORM BILLS AFTER LABOR DAY

Time is Short. You **MUST** act now to support real reform and prevent disaster

**IMMEDIATELY CONTACT CONGRESSMAN DAVE OBEY**

Call his Wausau office at 1- 715-842-5606 or his Superior office at 1-715-398-4426  
Urge him to oppose H.R. 3200 as it will force taxpayers to pay for abortions and will deny health care to the elderly and other vulnerable people.

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### What is Infanticide?

It is a dreaded fear of every parent – to give birth to a child with a disability. It changes the family for a lifetime. Difficult as it is, most parents learn to love and care for this precious child as they would one without a disability.



Yet for others, death would be better than a life of incapacity and the burden it brings to daily living.

Infanticide is the practice of killing a child, usually a newborn, who has a disability. Death is intentionally caused by injection of a lethal substance, obviously without the consent of the patient. Infanticide can also be a result of refusing treatment for an infant with a disability when that treatment would be readily available for a child without a disability.

Infanticide by lethal injection is prohibited under the general homicide laws of all of the fifty states. In 1983, a baby boy born in Indiana with Down syndrome was allowed to die. His esophagus was not joined to his stomach, preventing him from processing

food. This surgery is routinely performed on infants without disabilities. The little boy died because his parents refused to consent to the surgery. Following this highly publicized case, the U.S. Congress enacted the Child Abuse Amendments of 1984, 42 U.S.C.A. § 5102 to ensure that infants with disabilities receive appropriate treatment.

Since 1998, Professor Peter Singer has held a distinguished position at the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University. Among other controversial views, Singer advocates for allowing parents a 14-day window after the birth of a child to decide if the child should be killed or allowed to live.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in the UN also argues that selective euthanasia will cut down on the number of late-term abortions. The North Korean government has been charged with killing infants with disabilities as a means to purify the masses and eliminate those who are "different." Is this the world God created?

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*Behold, children are a gift from the Lord; The fruit of the womb is a reward. Psalm 127:3*

### The Silent No More Awareness Campaign

The Silent No More Awareness Campaign is an effort to make the public aware of the devastation abortion brings to women, men, and their families. Our hope is that the emotional and physical pain of abortion will no longer be shrouded in secrecy and silence, but rather exposed and healed. Believing that women deserve better than abortion we pray this effort will make abortion unthinkable as every culture develops ways to help women and men embrace their pre-born children.

<http://www.silentnomoreawareness.org/>

### My Story

*Editor's Note: I previously worked with Project Rachel and several women have allowed me to use their stories as long as their identity is protected. These stories will be told; however, this is my own personal family story.*

I was 14 years old in January, 1973 when Roe v. Wade was passed. I gave it little thought at the time; after all, it didn't affect me. However, 2 short years later that law would impact my family and my own life in a dramatic way. It was March 1975. I was a sophomore in high school, and my 18 year-old step-sister was a senior. One night, as I was studying, she dropped a bomb onto my previously sheltered existence.

"I need to talk to you. I need a favor," she said. When I looked up, she just laid it out there, "I'm pregnant."

I was speechless for several minutes, then bombarded her with a string of questions, "Who's the father? Does he know? Do our parents know? How are you going to finish school? How are you going to take care of a baby? You don't even have a job!"



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"The father doesn't know; I'm not telling him because he won't care anyway. It was just one night. No, our parents don't know and they won't know. I'm going to have an abortion. I just need you to lend me \$100 and skip school tomorrow so we can drive to Madison."

I stared at her in horror. "What do you mean, an abortion? You're going to kill your baby?"

"It's only a blob. It's not a real baby. I need your help. Please! Your mom won't let me have the car, but she'll let you. Tell her that you have to do something for school."

So it happened. I asked my mom for the car, hoping she'd question me the way she normally did; but she didn't. We drove to Madison, trying to pretend it was an adventure, like going shopping. But the whole time I had a sick feeling in my stomach, knowing this was wrong, but pretending it wasn't.

We entered the Midwest Clinic for Women's Health, which looked like any other clinic (and it didn't say it was an abortion clinic!) I guess I'd expected it to look different somehow. The waiting room was filled with young women. As I looked around, I realized that nearly every woman in that waiting room was there for the same reason - abortion.

Soon it was my step-sister's turn. The nurse who called her in made her go in the bathroom and give a urine specimen. Then she sent us in to see a counselor. The counselor asked some questions; things like, are you sure this is what you want, are you a legal adult, when was your last period? When my step-sister confirmed that this was what she wanted, the counselor explained the procedure, making it sound routine; no big deal. It would be a little uncomfortable, with some cramping and there would be some bleeding after, like a period. Then I was ushered out to the waiting room while my step-sister was taken into the 'procedure' room. I wanted to say or do something, but I couldn't.

After what seemed an eternity, the nurse came and got me to take me back by my step-sister. She explained that they'd had to sedate her because she'd become hysterical as the procedure started, so she'd be a little groggy and would have to stay in recovery for a few hours, but that I could sit with her.

I asked the nurse if it had been a boy or a girl. She stared at me like I was some kind of alien, "We can't tell. It's just pieces of tissue." She handed me some birth control pills. "Take these. We don't want to be seeing you back here again." She smiled and patted me on the shoulder. (I didn't even have a boyfriend!)

Several hours later we were on our way back home. I was driving this time while my step-sister stared out the window. After awhile, I asked if she was OK, if she was hungry, or if she needed to stop or anything. She turned to me and I'll never forget the look in her eyes. "Don't ever let this happen to you. It was awful. I thought my guts were being pulled out. The doctor was mean and horrible. It was degrading and I was terrified, but they didn't care." There was nothing to say.

About a month later, my step-sister ran away from home. We didn't see her for six months. When she came back, she was pregnant. She'd met a guy on the

streets of Chicago where she'd been trying to make money (I didn't want to ask how, but I somehow knew.) We discovered later that he was a drug-dealer. She ended up marrying the guy and living in Chicago. She gave birth to a son in 1977. For awhile she seemed happy, and doted on her baby, but she became addicted to drugs and alcohol. I found out later, that she had started sleeping around with lots of men. We soon stopped calling each other.

I was in college in 1978 when my mother called me to say that my step-sister had been arrested and was temporarily placed in a mental health facility. I went with my mother to visit her. My previously bright, pretty, vivacious step-sister was now a zombie. She had lost touch with all reality. The doctor told us that she'd suffered a psychotic break and tried to kill her husband. He suspected it had been brought on by drugs; I knew otherwise, but I couldn't bring myself to tell anyone about it.

During her 5-year confinement in the mental health facility, she was treated with electro-shock therapy. She was released to a half-way house in 1983, but never saw her husband or son again. In October 1984, 2 weeks after giving birth to my own son, my mother called to tell me that my step-sister had committed suicide. She left no note.

Although I had not had the abortion, I hadn't done anything to prevent it either. I sometimes find myself wondering how things would have turned out if I had not agreed to go with her; if I had tried to talk her out of it. I felt extremely guilty. I had to ask for my own forgiveness from God. I will never forget that it was that one 'procedure' that took not only the life of an innocent baby, but the life of my sister. And it robbed a young boy of his family. If not for the abortion, I might still have a sister and a nephew.

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### *Prayer intentions*

For the holy Catholic Church throughout the world, that she may carry on her mission of life with faith and joy.

That God may protect all babies, and keep them safe from the scourge of abortion.

That God may bless all doctors and nurses, and help them use their skills to heal and foster life.

For all elected officials, that they courageously advance the cause of life.

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