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# Word™

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**“When we promote the beauty and sanctity of human life, it is necessary to promote life in all of its facets.”**

**-Bishop J. Terry Steib, SVD**

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD

# ***THIS FAR BY FAITH***

## *Being Pro-Life today*

by  
Bishop J. Terry Steib, SVD

This week a large number of high school students from our Diocese will be going to Washington, DC to march in the annual Pro-Life March against the Roe vs. Wade decision of the United States Supreme Court. I am proud of our young people who are backing their words with action. And their action offers me the opportunity to reflect on what it means to be Pro-Life.

One of the greatest evils of our time is abortion. It robs countless children of their lives before they even have a chance to breathe the gift of God's air in their lungs. Somehow, in the morass of our highly secularized culture, we need to bring an end to abortions through prayer, through positive political action that will help people understand its evil, and through a continuing program of education that will help, not only our young people, but also our people of all ages, to understand that separating the act of sex from marriage is indefensible in our times. We need to help our young people to realize that pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease do not last just for short periods of time in their lives; instead, they do change their lives forever. At the base of our defense of marriage and our opposition to abortion is a fundamental principle: **human life is sacred.**



Because human life is sacred, the Catholic bishops of the United States in 1999 called for a deeper awareness of what it means to be assimilated into a culture, and the difficulties such assimilation can bring. In the document **Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics**, the bishops challenged us by saying, "American Catholics have long sought to assimilate into U.S. cultural life. But in assimilating, we have too often been digested. We have been changed by our culture too much, and we have changed it not enough. If we are leaven, we must bring to our culture the whole Gospel, which is a Gospel of life and joy. That is our vocation as believers. And there is no better place to start than promoting the beauty and sanctity of human life."<sup>1</sup>

**When we promote the beauty and sanctity of human life, it is necessary to promote life in all of its facets.** We



cannot hide from protecting our people who are old and ill from those who would euthanize them because they are no longer "useful." My Dad, who is almost 93, is more than useful. He loves me. He loves my brothers and sister. He may not be able to cut sugar cane as he once did, and his garden has gotten smaller with each passing season, but he reminds me everyday of the beauty of a faithful and well-led life. So, my Dad is immensely useful and the many like him deserve all the support we can give them as they live out their lives.

Somehow we need to learn ways to protect people who are living in despair and who wish to kill themselves rather than assisting them in committing suicide. It is our task as Christians

to help the despairing to understand the reality of hope and of living with the wonder of the surprises that God sends into our lives.



When a child is brought into our world, we need to foster that child into a human being who is well nourished and well educated both religiously and in secular skills so that he or she can become what God intended when, through

the gift of their parents, God gave them life.

In other words, we must promote a “consistent ethic of life.” Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the former Archbishop of Chicago, once described the pro-life movement as a “seamless garment”, much like the garment that had been given to Joseph in the Hebrew Scriptures. But as he journeyed on, trying to help people everywhere to understand the importance of being Pro-life; his own research and the help of companion theologians helped him to embrace the “consistent ethic of life.”



Regardless of which phrase you might find more palatable, what is most important is that in every way and at all stages of life, we as Catholics defend and are deeply dedicated to life. And **if we say that we believe in life, then we must be**

**opposed to abortion, capital punishment, assisted suicide, economic injustice, racism, euthanasia and unjust wars; and we must embrace the universe in which we live and which is the source of life to so much of what is important to us.**

Not one of the issues that I just mentioned is a simple one. Every single issue is filled with moral dilemmas calling for careful pastoral and practical responses that will create in the people around us a sense of what Jesus told us when he said that we must love our neighbor as ourselves.

## We Must Promote A Consistent Ethic Of Life

In a speech in May of last year to the members of the Pro-Life Movement in Italy, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, said: “For Christians, in this fundamental context of society, an urgent and indispensable field for the apostolate and for Gospel witness is always open: to protect life with courage and love in all its stages.”



As our young people return from their important defense of life in Washington, and as we all reflect on the needs of our nation and our Church, the Pope’s call “to protect life with courage and love in all its stages” is a clarion call to recognize how important human life is to all of us and to each of us, and to do all in our power to promote its sacredness in all we do.

<sup>1</sup> **Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics, para 25**

*Bishop Terry Steib, SVD is Bishop of Memphis, Tennessee. This article originally appeared in the Diocese of Memphis Catholic newspaper, The West Tennessee Catholic, January 22, 2009.*

## in a word or two

Front cover photo is of Mrs. Deborah Thomas and her daughter Veronica who live in Houston, Texas. They were at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Father Clifton Labbe, SVD's ordination to the priesthood held in Livingston, Texas.

**The Knights of Peter Claver will hold their 2009 National Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana from July 30 to August 7, 2009. This will be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Knights of Peter Claver the largest lay African American Catholic group in the United States.**

The Junior National Convention of the Knights of Peter Claver will held July 8 to July 13, 2009 in Houston, Texas. Young men and women from around the country will gather.

**Father Rollins Lambert, the first African American to be ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Chicago, died January 25, 2009 .** He was 86. Father Lambert first rose to national prominence as chairman of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus in the late 1960s. He later worked on the staff of the bishops' conference in Washington as an adviser on African affairs. A Chicago native of African American and Cherokee heritage, Father Lambert was educated in Chicago public elementary and secondary schools. He earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Chicago. While he was in college, he joined the Catholic Church. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1949.

**The Archbishop Lyke Conference will be held June 18 to 21, 2009 in New Orleans, Louisiana.** The theme of the Conference will be "*In Christ All is New*". The Lyke Conference is a spiritually uplifting experience that is a must for those ministering in our parishes. For more information e mail to: [LykeConference@yahoo.com](mailto:LykeConference@yahoo.com) web site [www.LykeConference.com](http://www.LykeConference.com)



**The National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) and Saint Mary's Press announce their partnership in developing a new Bible specifically aimed at African American Catholic youth.** The Bible is expected to be published in late 2010. John M. Vitek, President and CEO of Saint Mary's Press said "When we took a look at young people who hunger for Good News, we saw that no Catholic publishers were specifically serving the needs of African American youth. We wanted to put our resources to use serving the unique, rich experience, cultures and heritage of the African American communities."

The editorial director for the Bible is Rev. James Chukwuma Okoye, C.S. Sp., Professor of Old Testament at Catholic Theological Union. Fr. Okoye will oversee a writing team of authors who will contribute book introductions and a variety of articles that will help explain the Scriptures and contextualize them in such a way that young people can find relevance for their lives.

**The Interregional African American Catholic Evangelization Conference (IAACEC) will be held November 13-15 , 2009 in Indianapolis, Indiana.** Conference theme is "*Continuing The Journey: Listening, Living, And Hearing The Word*" The Conference is designed to equip and empower all who attend especially our youth and young adults and those who work with them. To accomplish this task, the conference is offering the best resources and experiences in faith that our heritage can afford.

For more information contact Ms. Annette Manley-Turner at 502.636.0296, ext. 1245

**The first NBCC Symposium on Development and Fundraising will take place May 28-30, 2009 in Indianapolis, Indiana.**

The symposium is designed to give participants knowledge, confidence, and practical tools for sustaining ministry, school, or congregation. It is also a time to network with and learn from colleagues around the country who are engaged in the same ministries and financial challenges.

For more program information go to the National Black Catholic Congress website:

[www.nbccongress.org](http://www.nbccongress.org)

**Divine Word Missionaries** is an international missionary community of over 6,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

**IN A WORD** is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center. Rev. James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, office manager; Paul Kahan, SVD.

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