
NEBRASKA CATHOLICS FOR LIFE

Volume 8, Issue 1

"Pray

Think

Act"

April 2009

A Note from Greg

The late Fr. Richard John Neuhaus provided the following reflection on our responsibility to protect human life and God's assurance that our efforts are premised upon the victory He won for us. It has long been a source of inspiration for my pro-life work. I pray that it also inspires you as we contemplate our Lord's passion, death and resurrection.

"So long as we have the gift of life we must protect the gift of life. So long as it is threatened, so long must it be defended. This is the time to brace ourselves for the long term. We are today laying the foundations for the prolife movement of the twenty-first century. Pray that the foundations are firm, for we have not yet seen the full fury of the storm that is upon us.

"But we have not the right to despair. We have not the right and we have not the reason to despair if we understand that our entire struggle is premised not upon a victory to be achieved, but a victory that has been achieved. If we understand that, far from despair we have right and reason to rejoice that we are called to such a time as this, a time of testing, a time of truth.

"The encroaching culture of death shall not prevail, for we know, as we read in John's gospel, 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' The darkness will never overcome that light."

*Greg Schleppenbach, State Director
Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro Life Activities*

Obama Expands Funding For Embryo-destructive Research; University of Nebraska Med Center Wants to Follow Suit

The federal government will issue new funding guidelines for embryo-destructive research in the next 2-3 months. The Regents will wait until the guidelines are issued before considering a policy change to prohibit expansion of embryo-destructive research at the University's Medical Center. **See enclosed action alert**

Oprah Doc Touts Adult Stem Cells

Dr. Mehmet Oz, cardiovascular surgeon at Columbia University, is a regular on the Oprah Winfrey show to discuss medical issues. He made a recent appearance to discuss, with Michael J. Fox and Oprah, the possibilities of stem cells to treat disease. Besides teaching a little brain anatomy, he made some astounding and truthful statements, starting with: "The stem cell debate is dead."

He went on to note, "The problem with embryonic stem cells is that embryonic stem cells come from embryos, like all of us were made from embryos, and those cells can become any cell in the body, but it's very hard to control them and so they can become cancer."

Dr. Oz went on to talk about the new science of induced stem cells made from skin. He didn't complete the medical lesson, though, to point out the successful results already seen with adult stem cells. In fact, in February a U.S. team published their results showing that using a Parkinson's patient's own brain adult stem cells, transplanted into only half of his brain, caused him to go almost five years with little to no Parkinson's symptoms.

This April, researchers published a study in which patients with type 1 diabetes who got stem cell transplants were able to go as long as four years without needing insulin treatments. Patient improvement with adult stem cells is documented for over 70 diseases and injuries (see www.stemcellresearch.org).

--From the Family Research Council

Watch the Oprah episode here:

<http://www.oprah.com/media/20090319-tows-dr-oz-brain>

Transplants help Type 1 diabetics skip insulin:

<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/afx/2009/04/14/afx6288141.html>

SPECIAL REQUEST:

Do you have e-mail? If so, please e-mail me at: nebrcc@neb.rr.com so I can send you this newsletter electronically, as well as my more frequent pro-life updates.



Pope Benedict Is Right!

By Susan E. Wills

During an interview with the press en route to Africa, Pope Benedict was asked about the use of condoms to combat AIDS in Africa. He answered that the epidemic “cannot be overcome by the distribution of [condoms]: on the contrary, they increase it.”

Many assumed that Pope Benedict’s comments reflected only the Church’s moral opposition to contraception and to sexual activity outside marriage and had nothing to do with sound science. He was harshly criticized for calling into question the central dogma of the sexual revolution that “safe sex” is free of consequences. Many AIDS experts have found that condoms do not work and, as Benedict observed, may be “exacerbating the problem” in Africa. Harvard researcher Edward C. Green—who spent 25 years promoting the use of condoms in Africa to combat AIDS—is just one who has publicly defended the Pope’s viewpoint.

Part of the explanation for why condoms aren’t the answer to the AIDS epidemic in Africa is the phenomenon of “risk compensation,” a person’s greater willingness to engage in potentially risky behavior when he believes his risk has been reduced through technology. Someone who uses sunscreen is likely to stay in the sun longer, and studies have shown an increase in melanoma among sunscreen users. Seat belts “save lives,” but in 23 months after mandatory seat-belt laws went into effect in the United Kingdom, traffic fatalities *increased* due to more careless driving.

Similarly, experts in sexually-transmitted diseases have found that risk compensation may occur with condom use. As noted in a 2006 study co-authored by a senior advisor in the USAID Office of HIV/AIDS, many HIV researchers have reported that “the perception that using condoms can reduce the risk of HIV infection may have contributed to increases in inconsistent use, which has minimal protective effect, as well as to a possible neglect of the risks of having multiple sexual partners.

Thus, the protective effect of promoting condoms could even be offset by aggregate increases in risky sexual behavior” (emphasis added). The authors stress that behavior change (abstinence, monogamy, fewer partners), which has proven “a feasible and effective approach to preventing new HIV infections,” must be promoted in any HIV/AIDS prevention program.

The many problems with condoms: Although some claim condoms are 80-90% effective in preventing HIV transmission, that assumes perfect condition, and correct and consistent use. Studies have shown them far less effective among younger and less experienced adults.

The reality of “cumulative risk exposure” is also ignored by condom promoters. For example, with “repeated exposures to an infected partner, such as a man visiting a sex worker [sic] in Nairobi or Johannesburg once a month, the man will likely be infected within five months, even with consistent condom use.”

What works? In 2004, 150 AIDS experts signed a Comment in the medical journal *The Lancet* calling for an evidence-based approach to preventing the sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS, with primary emphasis on changing behavior rather than promoting condoms to halt generalized epidemics. One co-author later testified to Congress: “No generalized HIV epidemic has ever been rolled back by a prevention strategy based primarily on condoms. Instead, the few successes ... were achieved not through condoms but by getting people to change their sexual behavior.” Once again, science has proven the wisdom of Church teaching on abstinence before, and faithfulness within marriage.

Visit www.usccb.org/prolife/factsheet/condoms for additional information and citations to research studies.

Susan Wills is the assistant director for education & outreach, USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

State Legislation

Fight FOCA Postcard Campaign

In January, parishes throughout Nebraska joined in a nationwide postcard campaign to oppose the so-called **Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA)** and to support existing laws against funding and promotion of abortion. The project was sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and supported by the three Bishops of Nebraska.

To date, about one-third (130) of the parishes in Nebraska have reported sending nearly 100,000 postcards to our representatives in Congress. It is likely that more than a third of our parishes participated in this campaign so the number of postcards sent from Nebraska is likely much higher. Nationally, more than 10 million postcards were distributed to various dioceses.

So far, Congress seems to be hearing our message. The Omnibus Appropriations Bill passed by the House of Representatives and Senate retained all current riders on abortion, embryo research and conscience rights without change. The only exception is new language authorizing U.S. funding of the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) despite that organization's support for the coercive population program in China. **FOCA** hasn't yet been introduced in this Congress, but there are indications it will happen soon.

Federal Legislation

The National Committee for a Human Life Amendment (a sister organization of the U.S. Bishops' Pro Life office) tracks federal pro-life legislation as well as the votes of our federal representatives. A legislative report, voting records and a lot of other useful information about federal pro-life policies can be seen at www.nchla.org or obtained from Greg Schleppebach's office, 402-477-7517 or gregschlepp@neb.rr.com.

Website: www.nebcathcon.org

The Ultrasound Bill (LB 675)

This bill introduced by Sen. Tony Fulton of Lincoln would amend the state's current informed consent law by requiring the following prior to an abortion: 1. Informing the mother that she cannot be forced by anyone to have an abortion and has the right to request a list of providers who offer ultrasounds (specifying which ones provide them for free); 2. If an ultrasound is performed prior to the abortion, the abortionist must display the screen so that the mother may choose to see it and tell her that it is displayed for her to see.

This bill was recently voted out of the Judiciary Committee and will soon be debated by the entire Legislature. The text of the bill and a list of the bill's 21 co-sponsors can be seen online at http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=6867.

The Women's Health Protection Act (LB 594)

This bill was introduced by Sen. Cap Dierks of Ewing would require abortionists to screen and inform mothers of risk factors that would predispose them to more severe post-abortion complications (emotional, psychological or physical). The bill remains in the Judiciary Committee while revisions are being made to address concerns expressed about it by the Nebraska Medical Association. The bill will probably remain in the Judiciary Committee until next year's legislative session to allow time to make the necessary revisions. Links to the bill and background information are online at: www.nebcathcon.org/2009_legislation.htm.

Anti-FOCA Legislative Resolution 26

Introduced by Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh (Omaha), this resolution does not create law but would put our Legislature officially on record urging President Obama and Congressional leaders to oppose the Freedom of Choice Act. A link to this resolution is also available at the mentioned above website. **LR 26** will likely remain in the Judiciary Committee until FOCA is introduced in Congress.

ACT

Ways to Get More Involved

Fr. Frank Pavone in Hastings on May 1

Fr. Frank Pavone from Priests for Life will be the keynote speaker at a Respect Life Banquet in Hastings on May 1. The event is sponsored by South Central Ne Right to Life, St. Michael's pro-life committee and St. Cecilia's pro-life committee. The event will be held at Hastings Quality Inn Convention Center beginning at 6:00 pm (social) with the banquet at 6:30.

Tickets are \$25.00. To register, send name(s), address, phone number and check (payable to So. Central Neb. Right to Life), to:

SCNRTL, P.O. Box 391, Hastings, NE 68902.
Reservation deadline is Friday, April 24, 2009.
A full-color promotional flier is also available from Connie Consbruck at 402-751-2368 or concon@gtmc.net.

Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro Life Activities
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Urge Your State Senator to Support LB 675

Please contact your state senator as soon as possible and urge him or her to support **LB 675**. You can find your senator and his/her contact information online at: http://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_find.php or on the enclosed list.

Urge Your Regent to Oppose Expansion of Embryo-destructive Research

See enclosed Action Alert



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