

We Give Thanks for Life Itself

“We Want to be Part of a Society ...

that makes affirmation and protection of human rights its primary objective and its boast,” Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley recently wrote. As chairman of the US Bishops Committee on Pro-Life Activities, the Cardinal emphasized that our mission in life “is to show each person the love of Christ. As uniquely created individuals, we each have unique gifts which we are called to use to share Christ’s love.”

We can’t but cherish human life, having been made in the image of God. Cardinal O’Malley stated that God “looks on each us with love that cannot be outdone in intensity or tenderness. We must look at ourselves and at others in light of this truth and **treat all people with the reverence and respect** which is due.” [Sister Constance Veit, “We Are Masterpieces of God’s Creation,” *The Beacon*, 10/9/14.]

Protecting Life: the Elderly & Disabled

Black-and-white answers to our questions about end-of-life issues are not always possible. It can be very difficult to know how to make medical decisions. According to a new leaflet from the US Catholic bishops, it is best to “designate a health care agent who not only understands our Catholic values but also shares them and can apply them to current situations and respond to questions as they arise.”

Because of the inherent dignity of the person and our moral obligation to protect each human life, our Church teaches that we should take reasonable steps to preserve life and should never withhold or administer treatment with the intention of ending the life of the person. One should consider the benefits and burdens of a prospective procedure and conscientiously judge whether or not to accept it.

Cutting someone’s life short before their time deprives them of unknown opportunities for God’s grace to work in their life.

It is incredibly difficult to see someone we love suffering, and it is natural for us to want to alleviate their hardship. We live in a culture that values productivity and prefers to get rid of what is deemed useless. Advocates for legalizing assisted suicide and euthanasia promote the illusion that we can help those in need by killing them or assisting them in killing themselves. But this ignores the person’s true needs and does not respect their dignity. Each person deserves support when facing physical, emotional and spiritual challenges. [“Advance Medical Directives”, leaflet from USCCB.org]

Assisted Suicide Laws?

When the focus is on a hurting individual, “assisted suicide” can sound good. Who’s against compassion and relieving suffering? But a law permitting assisted suicide puts vulnerable people in mortal danger.

Unfortunately, not all families are loving. Elder abuse is a nationally recognized epidemic. Financial gain or emotional relief creates motives for steering someone toward death. Once a lethal prescription leaves the pharmacy, there is no further supervision and no independent witness required to ensure that the lethal dose is self-administered.

States “must resist the pressure to make public policy based on one person. Assisted suicide laws are just too dangerous.”

Many depressed people are harmed. Oregon’s statistics for the past 4 years show that only 2 percent of patients are referred for psychological evaluations. This is one of many reasons why leading national disability rights groups oppose assisted suicide, joined by medical associations, palliative care experts, hospice workers and faith-based groups like the Catholic Church.

Palliative care has advanced tremendously in the past 20 years. There is no reason for anyone to die in uncontrolled pain. [John B. Kelly, “Assisted Suicide Laws are Insidiously Dangerous,” *Star Ledger*, 10/31/14.]

Hamilton Moses, former chief physician, Johns Hopkins Hospital, and Paul McHugh, Professor of Psychiatry at Hopkins, recently wrote that suicide is not victimless – it always leaves scars among family and friends, often to their later regret. Moreover, **imminent death can rarely be predicted accurately**. Religious and secular moral objections to suicide arise from thousands of years of grappling with the reality.

Expert palliative care and modern pain control can ease emotional and physical suffering, but more needs to be done to make them available and consistently applied. [*The Economist*, letters, 8/9/14.]

The euthanasia of Nancy Fitzmaurice, a severely disabled 12-year-old who was not dying, requested by her mother, was granted approval by the British courts. Nancy had significant disabilities but was able to breathe on her own and did not require life support. The child was starved through the withholding of fluids. The Autism Self Advocacy Network in a statement slammed the decision, calling it “troubling” and “concerning”. [*LifeNews.com*, 10/31/14]

A Seventeen-Year-Old Speaks Out

“When I was 3 years old I saw my mom on TV, speaking to a man about how she killed her baby and regretted it. As she told her story and how she became a pro-life speaker, I watched and listened. My grandma didn’t think I was old enough to understand.

“When my mom picked me up that night I asked her why she killed my brother or sister and why she didn’t kill me. My mom said she was in shock that her 3-year-old would ask these questions. She answered them the best she could for me, and as I got older I learned more.

“Now my mom and I are pro-life speakers. She has been one for almost 15 years, and I just started last year. **My mom was 18 when she had the abortion, and I’m now 17.**

“I thank God I’m alive. I’m still sad to know I have an older brother or sister who was denied the chance to LIVE – something we all take for granted. I hope someday we will meet. That’s why I do what I do.” (Published in Teenbreaks.com)

[Sarah Terzo, *LifeNews.com*, 10/30/14. Terzo is a pro-life liberal who runs ClinicQuotes.com, a web site devoted to exposing the abortion industry. She is a member of the pro-life groups PLAGAL and Secular Pro-Life.]

Link Between Abortion & Breast Cancer?

A review of 72 studies entitled “Breast Cancer and Induced Abortion: A Comprehensive Review of Breast Development and Pathophysiology...” by Dr. Angela Lanfranchi and Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., was published in *Issues in Law and Medicine*, Spring’14.

Their conclusion was that there is enough evidence of a link between abortion and breast cancer that a systematic, robust study of the link is warranted. The mechanism involved appears to be the same that causes an increase in breast cancer for those who are childless, have premature birth before 32 weeks, and have second trimester miscarriages. [Dr. Lanfranchi is a breast cancer surgeon practicing in NJ since 1984.]

College Scholarly Achievement Awards

One of the highlights of the University Faculty for Life and Learning Conference is the Scholarly Achievement Award in Creative Writing, Literary Criticism, or Research given to talented undergraduate and graduate students.

For 2014, the awards were given in an Oscar-style presentation, complete with “And the envelope, please!” This year’s winners were: Creative Writing First place: Kimberly Hubbard (Baylor University) for her short story “Infinite?” Second place: Teresa Pincus (North Carolina State University) for her short story, “Confessions of a Sidewalk Counselor.”

In the Research category, First Place went to Andrew Kubick (Holy Apostles College and Seminary, Cromwell, Connecticut) for his essay “Could GMO Classification Facilitate the Global Trafficking of Human Embryos for Scientific Research?” Second place: Anthony Crescio (Marquette) for his essay, “Abortion: A Threat to the Actualization of the Mother as an Individual.”

We encourage Catholic college students to submit their work for a scholars award. UFFL.ORG

Student scholars who win in any category may be offered an opportunity to read their work before the annual conference of University Faculty for Life. They may have their work published on UFL’s website and in conference proceedings. Finally, first place winners in each category receive a cash prize. [*ProVita*, online newsletter, uflf.org, 8/2014.]

Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic

College The 2015 edition of this book recommends Catholic colleges, universities & online programs both in the U.S. and abroad because of their **commitment to a faithful Catholic education**. All the recommended institutions are unique, each with its own special approach to education and campus culture. Some immerse students in every aspect of faithful Catholic life, while others, though faithful, serve a more diverse group of students. Some allow opposite-sex room visitation while others do not. Some have a strong core curriculum; others offer more electives & encourage specialization. [CardinalNewmanSociety.org]