

## RELIGIOUS LIBERTY CHALLENGES CONTINUE

### Catholic Health-Care Group Sued by ACLU for Refusing to Do Abortion

“This case has no merit. A federal court already dismissed a similar ACLU claim, and we will seek dismissal of this suit for the same reason,” stated Eve Pidgeon, the manager of public relations at Trinity Health, one of the largest health-care providers in America. The American Civil Liberties Union is suing Trinity over its refusal to provide women with abortion services at its medical facilities.

The **ACLU has long opposed Catholic hospitals** operating according to Catholic teaching. It authored a 2013 report, with the group MergerWatch Project, that claimed the growth of Catholic hospitals was a “miscarriage of medicine.” [*National Catholic Register*, 10/18/15]

A flurry of lawsuits by the ACLU is designed to push Catholic hospitals to provide services that are in direct violation of both their mission and Church teaching. Since its origins, the Catholic Church and health care have been synonymous. Tending to the sick, the poor and forsaken has been the mission of countless saints throughout the history of Christianity. In the **USA, the first hospitals were funded, built and staffed by the Church**, in particular women religious, caring for both body and soul.

These holistic health policies are now described, as one prominent physician scathingly put it in a *Time* magazine essay, as “extremely dangerous.” [*Our Sunday Visitor*, 11/1/15] Catholics may expect similar law suits until the Supreme Court makes a final ruling on the matter.

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*When facing temptation, do not lose your peace but live in my presence and ask my Mother and the saints for help. Do not fear either struggles of the soul or any temptations because I am with you. Temptation gives you a chance to show me your fidelity.*

Diary of St Faustina (#1560)

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### Down Syndrome Test Sparks Debate

In an interview, Karen Gaffney said she believes blood tests that can predict if a fetus will have Down syndrome are “making a judgment on the value of my life.” A competitive athlete, she is the **first person with the condition to swim the English Channel**, and has swum 16 times across San Francisco Bay. [*Wall Street Journal*, 9/22/15]

Karen holds a teacher’s certificate, and advocates for people with Down syndrome. *National Review’s* editor stated (10/19/15): “In an age when moral standards on many fronts are in retreat, here’s a step forward, some cause for hope.”

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### Religious Liberty Under Pressure

In an environment of increasing secularization and moral relativism clothed as tolerance, the Church in the U.S. is finding itself at a critical crossroads. As Dr. Patrick Lee, director of the Institute for Bioethics at Franciscan University of Steubenville, said: “**secularists have the wind behind their sails now.** Victories with same-sex unions and the HHS mandate have emboldened them, so they’re asking for things they once said they would not.”

The result of the moves against Church-affiliated health groups is that they are being pressured via legal action to provide services to which they are morally opposed, such as sterilizations and therapeutic abortions. **Church groups may be forced to choose between service and belief.** To withdraw their many good and valued services from society would be not only tragic but would fall out of step with the Gospel call. Yet to submit to the pressures on issues of deep moral significance would be unthinkable. In a society where abortion, euthanasia, birth control, eugenics and same-sex unions are the norm, the Church may be facing a future of countless lawsuits and coercive rulings or surrender.

The U.S. bishops are planning a public campaign on behalf of religious liberty, but a concerted strategy for dealing with alternative outcomes also needs to be laid out. [*Our Sunday Visitor*, 11/1/15]

### Church Put Out of Adoption Business

Mother Teresa’s order has decided to discontinue participation in India’s federal adoption program, because of new rules granting adoption rights to single-parent homes. Indian Church leaders and other prominent Christian and political leaders have endorsed the unprecedented decision of the **Missionaries of Charity (MC)** congregation to withdraw from the government-controlled adoption process in India, in order to protest objectionable clauses in India’s new adoption policy.

The MCs are among the largest partners in the nation’s adoption process, with their 16 children’s homes registered as recognized centers for adoption in India, where more than **4,000 adoptions** have taken place annually.

For their part, the MCs reiterated: “We will continue to serve wholeheartedly and free of charge unwed mothers, children with malnutrition, & differently-abled children, in all homes/centers run by us, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, by God’s grace. [*Nat. Cath. Register* 10/15/2015]

## Three-Parent Embryos?!

An ethical Rubicon was crossed when the first in vitro fertilization (IVF)-conceived baby came into the world in 1978. With human reproduction no longer limited to the embrace of a man and woman, people felt empowered to do further experiments. Now, three-parent embryos are coming, made by swapping out additional cellular parts known as mitochondria through **recombining eggs from two different women**. Also, it can be done by destroying one embryo, cannibalizing its parts, and use them to build another embryo by nuclear transfer.

**Significant health problems** have now come to light in children born from IVF and other assisted reproduction techniques: a doubling in the risk of birth defects, a six-fold increased risk of retinoblastoma, a childhood eye cancer, and heightened risks for an array of rare yet serious genetic disorders.

A growing number of young adults are vocalizing their strong personal concerns about how they were brought into the world. Any approach that weakens or casts into question the integral connection between parents and their offspring will raise grave ethical concerns.

One fertility specialist bluntly commented: "As a nation, we need to get a conscience about what we are doing here. Yes, it's nice when an infertile couple is able to build a family, but **what about the children?**"

We now face an ominous future where genetic traits are fully manipulated to "create" children. Now is the time to ponder carefully the implications of our rushed reproductive choices, and to oppose the preventable injustices that result." [Fr. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, *The Beacon* (Paterson Diocese), 10/15/15]

*The basic way in which any society is built depends on marriage. Whenever two people give themselves to each other &, between them, give life to children, this touches the holiness, the very mystery of human existence. We realize we do not belong to ourselves alone: husband & wife are regarded within the sphere of the sacred, being answerable to God. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI*

## Cash Bonus for Third Child

Already given out to a number of families, a "baby bonus" of **more than \$2,000** is awarded to couples who are committed Catholics, married in church, and have two children. This comes as Italy worries over its low birth rate.

The initiative was created by a parish priest in a small town in Tuscany as a way of offering assistance to couples who wanted larger families but were worried about the cost of having a baby. The money is awarded to parents on the day that they baptize their infants. [*Italian Tribune*, 9/3/15]

## Down Syndrome *(continued from p. 1)*

Disability rights' advocates, researchers and clinicians note that people are now living longer, healthier and more productive lives with Down syndrome, a genetic condition that causes intellectual disability, developmental delays and certain medical problems. Some researchers are concerned about the **rate of false positives from the new tests, leading to more abortions**. Some states have laws requiring that up-to-date information about the syndrome be given women who learn their developing child will have the condition. Catholics must weigh the taking of a human life when considering such a decision.

Karen's father said the best way to deal with the controversy "is to have people like Karen tell their stories and open people's eyes."

## 40 Days for Life Reaps Rewards

If you could save a human life today, would you do it? During 40 days in September and October, many babies were so close to becoming mere statistics in the eyes of the world. But because of some people's willingness to stand vigil as a witness to God's love for those babies and their mothers, many of those children are alive.

"We definitely had one saved baby last week," said a 40 Days volunteer in Las Vegas. "A couple left the abortion facility parking lot and stopped to talk. We told them about the nearby pregnancy help center."

According to Shawn Carney, Campaign Director of 40 Days for Life, **543 babies were spared from abortion**. "That makes a total of 10,874 lives saved during 40 Days for Life campaigns from 2007 until now," he said. "We've seen **121 abortion workers** have a change of heart and quit their jobs during 40 Days for Life campaigns."

Next time a 40 Days project comes to your area, join it for an hour or two a week. "When you did it for the least of your brothers, you did it for me." [www.40daysforlife.com]

## Marriage / Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

"Man and woman belong to each other. This diversity in unity includes tensions that can lead to attempts to break apart. This we well know. It is the case with every friendship. **The closer you are, the easier it is to get in each other's hair**. Love makes demands that cannot leave me untouched. In love, I simply cannot remain myself. I must always lose myself by having my rough edges taken off. This hurts. It hurts me so as to bring out more of my potential. This is what constitutes the very greatness of love - its healing power."

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