



Dennis DiMauro

Is Russia More Pro-Life Than the United States?

By Dennis DiMauro, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

Russia has passed a new law prohibiting the vast majority of abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy. This new law (while simply a first step in the Russian pro-life movement) is great news because it will save so many children's lives in a nation of 200 million people. In addition, this news has a few lessons to teach us pro-lifers here in the U. S.

First of all, this new law is especially welcome considering Russia's dismal abortion statistics. In the communist years, abortion was used as a primary means of birth control, and abortions were common. In fact in 1988, one year before the Berlin Wall fell, there were 4.6 million abortions performed in that nation. Compare that total to the annual U.S. number of 1.2 million abortions per year (a horrible statistic in its own right) and you can see how great a culture of death Russia was in those days.

However, even though abortion was such an accepted practice in the late 1980's, we see that Russia's democracy was still able to prohibit nearly all abortions in the second and third trimesters last month - while here in the United States we must fight tooth and nail to even prohibit an abortion technique that takes place when a child is nearly born.

Why the disparity? Isn't the US the freest country in the world? Who won the cold war anyway?

A few points are clear:

1) While we may have greater freedoms than just about any country in the world, including Russia, we may no longer be the most democratic country in the world. Somewhere along the way

we seem to have given away a lot of our democracy to the courts, and our judges often legislate from the bench rather than act in their designated role of a constitutional check on our Legislative and Executive branches. And *Roe v. Wade*, with its unbelievable opinion that equated the constitutional right to privacy with the right to have an abortion, is indeed the best example of such legislation from the bench. The result is that, unlike in Russia, all our pro-life legislation is limited by the courts.

2) People's opinions can be changed. When abortion was the preferred type of birth control in Russia in the 1980's, people must have thought abortion was perfectly acceptable. But since the Iron Curtain has come down, a lot of truth has become available in Russian society. And that openness to pro-life data has revealed the fact that abortion kills a living child. Indeed this new information has helped lower the annual number of abortions from a total of 4.6 million per year in 1988, to a current total of 1.7 million per year - and dropping. I think it is clear that if the truth can get out, many people can and will change their behavior. It is good to note also that the Russian Orthodox Church was one of the most important organization lobbying for a tightening of the abortion laws.

Now I'm not trying to say that life is great in Russia. I am certainly not about to move there anytime soon. But maybe, in regards to our goal of saving the unborn, we need to give the place another look. When I was a kid, this country was used to describe everything we would never want to be. Yet Russia seems to be on the road to becoming a more pro-life society than the United States. And that is due in a large part to their ability to pass pro-life legislation without being thwarted by the courts, their new openness to pro-life information, and the Church's willingness to "Lift High the Cross" to protect those defenseless members of their society, such as the unborn.

Judges Prevent Enactment of Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, Overruling President, Congress and 2/3 of Americans

The same day that President Bush signed into law the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, pro-abortion legal teams succeeded in getting U.S. District Judge Richard Kopf in Nebraska to sign an order preventing enforcement against four abortionists. The next day, federal judges in New York (Judge Richard Casey) and California (Judge Phyllis Hamilton) issued temporary orders restraining enforcement of the law against a national abortion provider, virtually impeding enactment nation wide. In October, Senators approved the act by a vote of 64-34, and Representatives by 281-142.

Since the law is now enjoined, "Partly born, premature infants will continue to die at the point of seven-inch scissors because of these judicial orders," observed Douglas Johnson, Legislative Director for the National Right to Life Committee.

President Bush has promised that his administration will "vigorously defend this law against any who would try to overturn it in the courts." When he signed the PBA Ban Act November 5, the President proclaimed, "For years, a terrible form of violence has been directed against children who are inches from birth, while the law looked the other way. Today, at last, the American people and our government have confronted the violence and come to the defense of the innocent child."

On November 10, 2003, the Department of Justice urged a federal district judge in New York to adopt expedited

procedures in reviewing a legal challenge to the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act. If the judge grants the government's request, it would result in a trial in four months--far faster than the year or more that would be common under non-expedited procedures.

It is expected that the law will ultimately be reviewed by the Supreme Court. NRLC's Johnson commented that "five justices in 2000 said *Roe v. Wade* guarantees the right to perform partial-birth abortions at will. [in the *Stenberg v. Carhart* decision]. We can only hope that by the time this law reaches the Supreme Court, there will be at least a one-vote shift away from that extreme and inhumane position."

In a partial-birth abortion, usually performed in the fifth and sixth months, a living premature baby is mostly delivered, feet first, until only the head remains in the womb, after which the abortionist punctures the skull and removes the brain with a suction machine. The abortion industry has acknowledged that the method is performed thousands of times annually, and in the "vast majority" of cases on healthy babies of healthy mothers.

According to a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll, 68% of the American people believe that the procedure should be illegal. Even "pro-choicers" agreed by a margin of 50% to 42% that PBAs should be illegal. The greatest support was among young adults (18-29) of whom 77% believed the procedure should be banned.

For more information on partial-birth abortions, see the NRLC website at www.nrlc.org.

NOEL Asks Episcopal Church to Withdraw from RCRC

By Georgette Forney, National Director, NOEL

After reading the book *Holy Abortion?* NOEL concluded there are fundamental theological and ethical differences between the Episcopal Church's position on abortion related issues and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) statements and publications.

At the recent triennial General Convention of the Episcopal Church of the United States (ECUSA) of America NOEL submitted a resolution calling for the General Convention to direct the ECUSA and its affiliate organizations, the Episcopal Urban Caucus and the Episcopal Women's Caucus, to withdraw membership and financial support for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). There were six specific statements by RCRC that, when compared to the Episcopal Church's official statements, show clearly inconsistent worldviews.

1. RCRC believes in the existence of absolute, God-given sexual and reproductive freedom, including abortion rights: "Your sexuality is a blessing, not a curse, and your need to express it is to be honored, not despised. You, and no one else, are 'called to figure out what this unwanted pregnancy is about. And you are to do it without guilt or shame.'" (*RCRC's Considering Abortion? Clarifying What You Believe*, p.3)

But according to Resolution D032, of the 72nd General Convention, the Episcopal Church believes "all parishes are urged to teach and support sexual abstinence" and in 1998, the worldwide Anglican Communion passed Lambeth Resolution 1.10 "affirming abstinence for all who are not called to marriage." Further, Resolution A054 of the 71st General Convention, clearly states: "We emphatically oppose abortion as a means of birth control, family planning, sex selection, or any reason of mere convenience."

2. RCRC supports the idea that the moral agency of a woman, whether adult or teen, is subjective, isolated from others, from Christian community, and from tradition: "Place both hands over your heart and imagine or remember a time when you were feeling full of love, relaxed, and happy. Notice how your body responds. Where in your body do you experience sensations of warmth, relaxation, softening, and expansiveness? This is where your Truth resides. Listen to this place as you seek to discover what is right." (*RCRC, Abortion: Finding Your Own Truth*)

But Resolution A054 of the 71st General Convention indicates: "In those cases where an abortion is being considered, members of this Church are urged to seek the dictates of their conscience in prayer, to seek the advice and counsel of members of the Christian community and where appropriate, the sacramental life of this Church."

3. RCRC accepts the trivialization of the moral status of unborn human life: "The biblical portrait of person, therefore, is that of a complex, many-sided creature with godlike abilities and the moral responsibility to make choices. The fetus hardly meets those characteristics. The abortion question focuses on the personhood of the women, who in turn considers the potential personhood of the fetus in terms of the multiple dimensions of her own history and future." (Paul Simmons in *RCRC's Prayerfully Pro-Choice: Resources for Worship*, p. 117)

But Resolution A054 of the 71st General Convention states: "All human life is sacred from its inception until death. The Church takes seriously its obligation to help form the consciences of its members concerning this sacredness. Human life,

therefore, should be initiated only advisedly and in full accord with this understanding of the power to conceive and give birth which is bestowed by God." And the Book of Common Prayer affirms, "the birth of a child is a joyous and solemn occasion in the life of a family. It is also an occasion for rejoicing in the Christian community" (p. 440).

4. RCRC accepts the legitimacy of abortion as birth control: "The bottom line is that if someone does not want to have a child they should not be forced into it." (Whoopie Goldberg quoted approvingly in *RCRC's Prayerfully Pro-Choice: Resources for Worship*, p. 35)

But the Episcopal Church states in Resolution A054 of the 71st General Convention: "We emphatically oppose abortion as a means of birth control, family planning, sex selection, or any reason of mere convenience." And it asserts the opposite position further along in the resolution when it states: "Whenever members of this Church are consulted with regard to a problem pregnancy, they are to explore, with grave seriousness, with the person or persons seeking advice and counsel, as alternatives to abortion, other positive courses of action, including, but not limited to, the following possibilities: the parents raising the child; another family member raising the child; making the child available for adoption."

5. RCRC claims the holiness of abortion: "woman has made a good and holy decision to have an abortion." (Diann L. Neu's "Affirming a Choice" liturgy in *RCRC's Prayerfully Pro-Choice Resources for Worship*, p. 82)

But according to Resolution A054 of the 71st General Convention clearly states "We regard all abortion as having a tragic dimension, calling for the concern and compassion of all the Christian community."

6. RCRC claims the sanction of a pro-choice God who blesses all decisions, which they assert is attested to in Scripture: "You are to claim your godlike, God-given role in creation by saying yes or no, secure in the knowledge that whatever you decide, after having honestly sought what is right, God will bless." (*RCRC's Considering Abortion? Clarifying What You Believe*, p.7).

But the Episcopal Church doesn't bless all decisions regarding abortion, as stated in Resolution A054 of the 71st General Convention: "We emphatically oppose abortion as a means of birth control, family planning, sex selection, or any reason of mere convenience." It takes the opposite position by acknowledging that decisions and actions can be out of the will of God, and recognizing the need for repentance and confession at the beginning of each liturgy.

The RCRC position absolutizes, sanctifies and even deifies choice, but it dehumanizes human life before birth, while the Episcopal Church maintains the sacredness of human life even before birth and relativizes the value of choice by setting parameters for how choice is used. Affiliation with an organization with such clear differences is inconsistent and needs remedy.

Considering that RCRC's first president was a female Episcopal priest and RCRC is still closely associated with the Episcopal Church (they had an exhibit booth at the Convention). NOEL negotiated to have the resolution referred to the Standing Commission for National Concerns for further study and consideration. While we would have loved to have had the General Convention vote to withdraw from RCRC, having the issue referred for further study provides the opportunity to educate people about the impact of abortion on women, children and society.



Georgette Forney



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The Abortion "Was Eating Away at My Insides": A Testimony

by Marie Johnson

From *Lifewatch*, Taskforce of the United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality

In 1973 I was a middle-class, single, 23-year-old college student. After a "one night stand," I learned that I was pregnant. There was no one to whom I could turn. Alone, I went to the university medical center and had a D&C abortion. Afterwards, I walked home—again, alone...

A year later, despite precautions, I was pregnant again. My boyfriend wanted nothing to do with the whole situation, so he gave me half the abortion fee. I drove myself to a clinic an hour away, had the abortion, and drove home alone. That was the end of the relationship with that man. And that was the end of my problem, I thought.

In 1976, I married and settled in another state. We joined a United Methodist church, and I became active in its UMW chapter. At a UMW meeting in the early 1980s, during a discussion of abortion, I admitted, even bragged about, my two abortions. I did not mention any details, or that my thoughts and feelings were eating away at my insides. Months later, I shared my experiences of abortion - and the pain, guilt, and fears they caused - with a friend. I was convinced that God hated me and would punish me with no more children. My friend listened and cared. In the midst of many tears, we prayed for God's forgiveness. And forgiveness came. I remember that moment as if it happened yesterday.

From personal experience, I know that abortion virtually guarantees the "devastating damage" our Social Principles say we want to avoid. If I were the only woman to experience these consequences of abortion, then my testimony could be ignored. Unfortunately, there are millions of women, like me, who have had abortions and who have suffered similar, or worse, consequences. Even Planned Parenthood's Alan Guttmacher Institute admits that 90% of the women who have had abortions would not have done so if they had believed they had another option. All women who face unplanned pregnancies need people who will care about them and their long-term welfare. As followers of Jesus Christ, as The United Methodist Church, we can and we should love them both.

News Note

Construction Contractors Boycott Building of Planned Parenthood Abortion Clinic

According to a report in *World Magazine* (12/6/03), a Texas concrete contractor organized a boycott that brought to a halt the construction of a new Planned Parenthood (PPF) abortion clinic in Austin, TX.

The contractor, Chris Danze, organized a group called Texas Contractors and Suppliers for Life (TCSL) and wrote letters to scores of Austin-area construction firms, asking them not to participate in "the construction of the abortion chamber Planned Parenthood is attempting to build..." The motivator? The companies that chose to participate in the construction of "this child-killing complex" would become part of a list circulated to church communities and businesses throughout Texas.

At least 40 construction companies agreed to exit from or boycott the "Choice Project" of PPF, according to the report. This included every concrete supplier within a 60-mile radius of Austin. Since concrete hardens if transported over a distance, the clinic plan, without a local supplier of concrete, became unfeasible.

Danze feels strongly that "Business people have a responsibility not to participate in a project that hurts the society and women and children." He said that churches can use business pressure to affect pro-life change. Churches in the Austin area blacklisted companies cooperating in the "Choice Project"—and churches provide a lot of construction work.

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National Pro-Life Religious Council

The National Pro-Life Religious Council (NPRC) is a Christian coalition which acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and works to encourage every Christian denomination to affirm and witness to the biblical standard of the value, dignity and sanctity of human life, and to foster ministry to those vulnerable to the violence of abortion or euthanasia.

Member Organizations

Alpha Omega Life

Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC)

International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church (CEC for Life)

Lutherans for Life (LFL)

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)

National Clergy Council (NCC)

National Organization of Episcopalians for Life (NOEL)

Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL)

Priests for Life (PFL)

Religious Outreach, National Right to Life Committee

Task Force of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS)

United Friends for Life (UFL)

A Test for Us All

Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director, Priests for Life

The case of Terri Schindler-Schiavo is a test for all of us. It's not a test of whether we will kill cognitively disabled people by refusing them food and water. That's a test we've already failed, because it happens routinely throughout the country.

Rather, Terri's case is a test of whether we will wake up and realize that letting patients decide they want to be killed means that some patients will be killed against their will.

People often leave advance directives saying what treatment they do or do not want. But Terri had no such directive, and her parents and siblings say she never indicated she wanted to be dehydrated and starved to death. The problem, of course, is that if dying is a "right," then why take it away from those who forgot to tell us they want it? Should this "right" be exercised only by those well enough to express it?

For that matter, why should the right to escape a burdensome existence be limited to those with cognitive disabilities or other illnesses? What about the teenager whose life has suddenly become burdensome because he lost his girlfriend, failed his courses, and got thrown off the football team? In those cases, of course, if the student indicates a desire for death, we call the suicide hotlines. I guess we still need to catch up with ourselves.

One advocate for Terri's death, reacting to the re-insertion of her feeding tube, declared that is "simply inhumane and barbaric to interrupt her death process." But Terri Schindler-Schiavo

is not a dying patient. She simply doesn't function at the same level as the rest of us. There was no "death process" underway until her food and water were taken away. That's what is inhumane and barbaric. And this is a test for all of us, to see if we remember the difference.

While there are such things as worthless treatments, there is no such thing as a worthless life. Food and water, furthermore, constitute the most basic care. We don't come back from a meal saying we just got our latest "medical treatment."

Terri's parents and siblings are heroes. Were it not for their desire to care for Terri despite her limitations, she would have been killed without us ever hearing her name. The future of society is determined by the strength — or weakness — of the family, by its readiness to care or its willingness to kill.

Some have said that the government should stay out of this case, and that Governor Jeb Bush had no business ordering that Terri should be given food and water. But Jeb Bush is a hero, too. He understands that no public servant is permitted to turn his back on members of the public who are being mistreated. He, and many others, have passed the test this case puts before us.

It falls to us to do the same.



Fr. Frank Pavone

Great Resource for Churches!

Thinking Theologically About Abortion

Publication of the National Pro-Life Religious Council,
Edited by Paul T. Stallsworth

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