

POLITICS AND THE CULTURE OF LIFE—WHY I AM STILL A DEMOCRAT

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INTRODUCTION

In college, I was called to be a Democrat. My dad, a loyal Republican, was a little bewildered, and maybe disappointed, especially when I drove home one day with a “Dukakis for President” sign hanging in the hatchback of my 1988 Ford Escort. I recall him shaking his head in disbelief.

Ironically, the values instilled by my mom and conservative father drew me to the Democratic Party. They taught me that it is important to help those who need assistance. My parents encouraged me to “trick or treat” for the United Nation’s International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and made me aware that there were children in the world who went to bed hungry. We did not explicitly talk about abortion, but they instilled in me a respect for the beauty and fragility of life.

As Christians, we all have a duty to be generous to others and to give of ourselves before we take. We have a duty to follow this general vocation and strive to be followers of Christ. As we are reminded in *Hebrews*, “[D]o not forget kindness and charity, for by such sacrifices God’s favor is obtained.”¹

Jesus is clear about how he expects us to serve the poor, the oppressed, and the needy. In *Matthew 25* we are told that when the Son of Man comes into his majesty, he will separate people into two groups.² He will recognize those on his right as the ones who fed him when he was hungry, gave him water when he was thirsty, and tended to him when he was sick. The just people will ask, in confusion, when they did such deeds for him? Jesus will reply, “Amen I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me.”³ The second group, which did none of these things, “will go into everlasting punishment, but the just into everlasting life.”⁴

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1. *Hebrews* 13:16.
2. *Matthew* 25:31–46.
3. *Id.* at 25:40.
4. *Id.* at 25:46.

While this general vocation is clear, every Christian is further called to a personal vocation. William May wrote that “God speaks personally to each and every Christian—priest, religious, lay person, doctor, lawyer, construction worker, business man, teacher—calling him or her to a unique personal vocation, inviting him or her to play a unique and indispensable role in carrying out his redemptive work.”⁵ I searched for my personal vocation, and found politics. And it was the Democratic Party’s historic principles of helping the poor, the weak, and the down-trodden that drew me in.

Although politics is sometimes thought to be a distasteful vocation, and there is a general mistrust of politicians, I believe it is a noble and necessary profession. The laws that govern our society can help feed the poor, save lives, protect our environment, and maintain a peaceful society. Bringing oneself fully into political life to work for charity and social justice is a vocation in which each person can and should participate. Working to change the laws to promote life and maximize the chance for life is a goal we all should share.

However, the Democratic Party was not perfect for me. As any good Democrat, I believed that I had to support a women’s “right to choose” because that is what good Democrats did. Something told me it was wrong; I knew that I would never have an abortion, no matter the circumstances. I felt so strongly aligned with the Democratic Party that I could not admit, even to myself, that I was pro-life. If I admitted it, I thought I would have to turn in my Democratic Party credentials.

It was not until I graduated and worked on Capitol Hill for five years that I realized that I wasn’t alone. In 1995, I was hired as a Legislative Assistant for Congressman Jim Barcia, a pro-life Democrat from Michigan. When the staff convened to divide the issues, no one wanted to represent the Congressman on the life issue. I enthusiastically volunteered to do so. It was through this position and talking to my boss that I learned there were other democrats like me and that it was not only right, but consistent, to be both democrat and pro-life.

I recall sitting on the House Floor one day in 1997 during a debate on abortion. I spoke with another pro-life Congressman, Jim Oberstar of Minnesota. He shared stories of drafting the Hyde Amendment and founding the Congressional Pro-life Caucus in 1976. He also reminisced that there used to be many more pro-life Democrats.

5. William E. May, *The Vocation of a Catholic Teacher/Scholar*, FELLOWSHIP OF CATHOLIC SCHOLARS QUARTERLY, Spring 2001, at 11.

In 1977, the Democrats controlled the House of Representatives with a 292 seat majority.⁶ Forty-three percent of those Democrats had strong pro-life records.⁷ In the 108th Congress, the Democrats were in the minority and just eight percent of Democrats held the pro-life position.⁸ Republicans, who have historically controlled the pro-life message, held solid majorities across the nation.

I continued to realize that there were a lot more pro-life Democrats out there who, like me, either would not admit that they were pro-life or would not vocalize their position. In 1998, I organized a reception for pro-life Democrats at the March for Life. There, I met a lot of people who would later become members of the Board of Directors of Democrats for Life. Since then, several Congressmen have told me that their Democratic supporters used to whisper to them, "I am pro-life too. Keep up the good work."

In 1999, I became the Chief of Staff for Congressman Barcia and continued to advocate for the pro-life position. Two years later, I was offered the daunting opportunity to open a Washington D.C. office for Democrats for Life and build a national organization to unite pro-life Democrats across America.

In 2002, at our first Democrats for Life "Hall of Fame" dinner, Congressman Jim Langevin said to me, "I thought I was the only one." It was invigorating to meet people in my party who also shared a commitment to protecting life at all stages. My faith in my party was growing. At the same time, other Democrats were leaving the party to vote Republican because of the abortion issue. I could have left, too.

I. ACHIEVING A CULTURE OF LIFE CANNOT BE DONE BY SIMPLY VOTING REPUBLICAN

To truly be pro-life, we must support a broad spectrum of issues including worker's compensation, minimum wage, and education assistance for displaced workers. The pro-life issue has become only about outlawing abortion through the courts. There is a more prominent role that Congress can play in providing women with the options they need to bring their pregnancy

6. BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS 1774-1996, at 488 (Joel D. Tresse ed., 1997).

7. See Nat Hentoff, *Reclaiming Pro-Lifers*, WASH. TIMES, Mar. 29, 2004, at A21.

8. See DEMOCRATS FOR LIFE OF AMERICA, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTING RECORD 2003-2004 (2004), available at http://www.democratsforlife.org/documents_etc/108thcongress-scorecard.pdf [hereinafter HOUSE VOTING RECORD].

to term. While both major parties are divided on the life issues, it is not obvious that one should remain loyal to the Republican Party when looking at the full spectrum of life and attempting to be consistent with the social justice teachings of the Catholic Church.

The perception that only the Republican Party will promote a culture of life directly impacted the outcome of the 2004 election. Exit polls showed that the Republican Party won the faith and values voters, largely due to their pro-life stance on abortion. An MSNBC.com exit poll showed that twenty-two percent of voters choose moral values as their top issue in the 2004 Presidential race.⁹ Eighty percent of these voters supported President Bush.¹⁰ The Democracy Corps Memo on Reclaiming the Catholic Vote showed that, over the past three presidential elections, support for Democratic presidential candidates has decreased by twenty points among white Catholics.¹¹

In the 2004 election, many Democrats and many Catholics felt that they had no choice but to support Republican candidates because of their position on abortion. The candidates' other life positions were often ignored. The electorate was challenged to stand behind those who make the tough, yet courageous, decisions to protect a culture of life. They were told that too many pre-born lives were at stake and we must elect those who will advocate and support legislation to protect life. Some voters were even led to believe that it was a mortal sin to vote for Democrats because the party advocated for abortion. They were led to believe that it was not consistent to vote for democrats and remain a good Catholic.

A document written by Father Stephen Torraco in 2002 was widely circulated in the Catholic and pro-life communities before the 2004 election. In his *Brief Catechism for Catholic Voters*, Father Torraco wrote, "If a political candidate supported abortion, or any other moral evil, such as assisted suicide and euthanasia, for that matter, it would not be morally permissible for you to vote for that person."¹² Father Torraco suggested that "in voting for

9. Exit Polls—President, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5297138> (last visited Mar. 21, 2006).

10. *Id.*

11. Memorandum from Stan Greenberg & Matt Hogan, Democracy Corps, to Friends of Democracy Corps, Reclaiming the White Catholic Vote 1 (Mar. 29, 2005), available at http://www.democracycorps.com/reports/analyses/Democracy_Corps_March_2005_Catholic_Analysis.pdf.

12. STEPHEN F. TORRACO, A BRIEF CATECHISM FOR CATHOLIC VOTERS (2003), available at http://www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=6068.

such a person, you would become an accomplice in the moral evil at issue.”¹³ Such statements led many Democrats to believe that if they voted for a Democratic candidate they would have to confess their sin.

The notion that every Democrat supports abortion, and refuses to restrict or regulate abortion, is not supported by the facts. In fact, sixty-five Democrats in the House¹⁴ and sixteen Democrats in the Senate¹⁵ voted to outlaw the partial-birth abortion procedure. Further, fifty-four Democrats voted to prohibit the transportation of children across state lines to evade their states abortion regulations.¹⁶ A Zogby poll indicated that forty-three percent of Democrats believe that abortion “destroys a human life and is manslaughter.”¹⁷ There is more diversity within the Democratic Party regarding abortion policies than is popularly recognized.

Perceptions on the abortion issue have created a bigger challenge for the Democratic Party in demonstrating that it is a party which promotes the larger definition of a culture of life. If the goal is a pro-life culture in which all stages of life are respected and protected, we need to support candidates, including Democrats, who support a true culture of life that extends beyond abortion. Many people rely on the general anti-abortion philosophy of the Republican Party and pull the lever for a candidate, ignoring this broader definition of life.

The assumption that the Democratic Party and all of its members uniformly disregard the value of life leads to odd outcomes. It is nearly to the point where a pro-life activist would prefer a pro-choice Republican to a pro-life Democrat, particularly in the Senate where judicial nominees are approved. Such extreme partisanship over a single, narrowly defined issue causes these partisans to replace loyalty to the culture of life with loyalty to a secular, government driven political party. Senator Rick Santorum infuriated many in the pro-life community when he actively campaigned for Senator Arlen Specter when he was challenged by Republican pro-life Congressman Pat Toomey. Many

13. *Id.*

14. See 148 CONG. REC. H5373 (daily ed. July 25, 2002) (House Vote on H.R. 4965, the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act).

15. See 149 CONG. REC. S12948 (daily ed. Oct. 21, 2003) (Senate Vote on S. 3, the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act).

16. See 151 CONG. REC. H2615 (daily ed. Apr. 27, 2005) (House Vote on H.R. 748, the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, Apr. 27, 2005).

17. See Steven Ertelt, *New National Abortion Poll Shows Majority of Americans are Pro-Life*, LIFE NEWS.COM, Jan. 16, 2005, <http://www.lifenews.com/nat280.html>.

in the pro-life community felt betrayed that Santorum would not support the pro-life candidate.¹⁸

In the 2004 election, pro-life Democratic Congressman Chris John suffered a defeat in his bid for the U.S. Senate because of the success that Republicans had in perpetuating the myth that there was only one true pro-life candidate in the race, Republican David Vitter. Congressman John had a one hundred percent pro-life voting record.¹⁹ Others believed that David Vitter had a stronger pro-life record because he would support the conservative judges who would be appointed by President Bush. However, this is a weak argument because the Supreme Court, which has been dominated by Republican-appointed Justices for the past three decades, has handed down devastating defeats for pro-life supporters. Just this year, under the leadership of John Roberts, a pregnant woman was allowed to get a state-funded abortion at sixteen weeks' gestation even though state law prohibited using state funds for abortion.²⁰ The Right-to-Life Movement suffered a major defeat when the Supreme Court upheld the Oregon physician-assisted suicide law.²¹ And we cannot ignore the fact that, in 1973, a Republican-appointed Justice drafted the *Roe v. Wade*²² decision, which legalized abortion.

This year pro-life advocates in Pennsylvania will have an opportunity to judge which candidate best supports the broader definition of life in the U.S. Senate race between two candidates who oppose abortion. Pro-life Democrat Bob Casey is challenging Senator Rick Santorum to reclaim the seat the Democrats lost in 1995. Pro-choice Democrats failed to line up behind Senatorial candidate Harris Wofford because of his pro-life leanings.²³ He lost his election bid when pro-lifers strongly united behind Republican Rick Santorum.²⁴ This year, Democrats on both sides of the issue have rallied behind pro-life Democrat Bob Casey, Jr.²⁵

Father Frank Pavone of Priests for Life has said many times that we all have a calling, no matter our vocation, to promote a

18. Editorial, *Endorsement Exposes Faulty Logic*, NAT'L CATH. REP., May 14, 2004, at 28.

19. HOUSE VOTING RECORD, *supra* note 8.

20. *Crawford v. Roe*, 126 S. Ct. 477 (2005); see also *U.S. Supreme Court Allows Abortion for Prisoner*, LIFESITENEWS.COM, Oct. 17, 2005, <http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2005/oct/05101702.html>.

21. *Gonzales v. Oregon*, 126 S. Ct. 904 (2006).

22. 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

23. Peter J. Boyer, *The Right to Choose: Why the Democrats Are Moving Toward Compromise*, NEW YORKER, Nov. 14, 2005, at 60.

24. See *id.*

25. *Id.*

culture of life.²⁶ If you choose to participate in the legal or political systems, even if only to vote, there is an obligation to vote consistently with your values and morals. As Catholics, it is necessary for us to be involved in the electoral process so we can support those candidates who advocate for the social justice teachings of the church. We all have a social and moral responsibility to be informed voters and look beyond party politics.

There are many levels on which individuals can be called to action, ranging from voting or working on a campaign to donating money and running for office. There is a demand for public engagement and public participation in the electoral process if we are to achieve a culture of life. Those who believe in the social justice teachings of the church should challenge their elected officials to follow those teachings—and not just on the abortion issue.

In 2004, the culture of life was defined in a way that primarily addressed abortion—a major wedge issue, given that pro-life groups worked closely with the Republican Party and pro-choice groups dominated the Democratic Party. Other life issues such as euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, and poverty have not generated the same passion and activism as abortion. These critical issues have taken the back seat in the promotion of a culture of life. No other political debate has generated as much controversy for so many years.

This fact could stem from simple math. Since abortion became legal in 1973, over forty-seven million babies have been aborted.²⁷ Conceivably, the prominence of the issue of abortion in U.S. politics could stem from the political gains that have been made and lost on that issue.

II. THE 95-10 INITIATIVE: REDUCING ABORTION BY SUPPORTING WOMEN—SOMETHING WE ALL CAN SUPPORT

I have come to believe that the only way to build a true culture of life is through compromise and common ground, not division and discord. Democrats now have a real opportunity to change the debate on the abortion issue and drastically reduce the abortion rate in America. The Democratic Party platform states that abortion should be rare, but the party has done virtu-

26. Frank A. Pavone, Nat'l Dir., Priests for Life, Homily at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington, D.C. (Jan. 23, 2006).

27. National Right to Life, Abortion in the United States: Statistics and Trends, <http://www.nrlc.org/abortion/facts/abortionstats.html> (last visited Mar. 21, 2006).

ally nothing to achieve that goal.²⁸ The main debate has focused on keeping it legal versus making it illegal. Not much has been done to help the women who are facing unplanned pregnancies and believe that abortion is their only option.

Shortly after the 2004 election, Democrats For Life of America (DFLA) developed the 95-10 Initiative, legislation which aims to decrease the abortion rate by ninety-five percent in ten years.²⁹ Congressman Tim Ryan (D-OH) is drafting the comprehensive bill and will introduce the legislation this year. This bill will address the reality that too many women see abortion as their only choice even though they might want to carry the child to term. Financial concerns, fear of raising a child alone, and fear that a child will interfere with their school or job plans are among top reasons women seek abortion.³⁰

The goal of the 95-10 bill is to create a culture that gets past the abortion impasse by empowering women and protecting children. The proposed legislation provides funding for a toll-free number to direct women to pregnancy resource centers, job training, legal assistance, and other areas that might help women make a more informed decision. It also provides college-age women with the opportunity to complete their education if they become pregnant. It will ensure that women can keep their financial aid and also provides counseling and childcare while they complete their degrees. The 95-10 bill challenges the notion that the only way to eliminate abortion is to make it illegal. This common ground proposal has generated support from people on both sides of the abortion debate.

More and more, people are coming to realize that abortion hurts women both physically and psychologically. Higher rates of eating disorders, suicide rates, depression, and post-traumatic

28. See 2004 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE, STRONG AT HOME, RESPECTED IN THE WORLD: THE 2004 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR AMERICA 38 (2004), available at <http://www.democrats.org/pdfs/2004platform.pdf>. The Party has focused on keeping abortion legal but has not looked at why women seek abortion or how we can help women choose other options. This is a personal opinion.

29. Press Release, Democrats For Life of America, Plan to Reduce the Number of Abortions Unveiled: Congressman Tim Ryan to Introduce Legislation Modeled After DFLA's 95-10 Initiative (Apr. 21, 2005), available at http://www.democratsforlife.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=49&Itemid=2.

30. See Lawrence B. Finer et al., *Reasons U.S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives*, 37 PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH 110 (2005), available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3711005.pdf>.

stress are found in women who have abortions.³¹ In the past few years, women and men have been emerging through the Silent No More campaign³² to speak about how abortion hurt them and how they regret having an abortion or pressuring someone to have an abortion.

III. WORKING TOWARD A BROADER DEFINITION OF LIFE

Ending abortion is just one step towards creating a culture of life. The 95-10 Initiative grows out of DFLA's larger concern to foster a cultural of life. Several issues come to the floor here, including: stem cell research that does not use human embryos; opposition to physician assisted suicide, euthanasia, and capitol punishment; and addressing poverty, unjust wars, and international pro-life issues.

A. Stem Cell Research

Stem cell research has proven to be a challenge for the country due to misinformation and the complexity of this scientific issue. The support for embryonic stem cell research transcends party lines with supporters on both sides of the aisle, including Republican Senators Bill Frist,³³ Trent Lott,³⁴ and Arlen Specter, and Democratic Senators Tom Harkin³⁵ and Ted Kennedy.³⁶ Many in the pro-choice community are touting embryonic stem cell research as the only way to save and improve the lives of millions of Americans even though it has not generated the same successes as other types of stem cell research.

The leading scientist on embryonic stem cell research, Hwang Woo-suk, was recently discredited when it was revealed that he falsified the results of his research.³⁷ In a 2004 report, Woo-suk claimed to have cloned the first human stem cell and

31. See David C. Reardon, The Elliot Institute, *A List of Major Psychological Sequelae of Abortion* (1997), <http://www.afterabortion.info/psychol.html>.

32. The National Silent No More Awareness Campaign, <http://www.silentnomoreawareness.org> (last visited Mar. 21, 2006).

33. Ceci Connolly, *Frist Breaks With Bush On Stem Cell Research*, WASH. POST, July 30, 2005, at A1.

34. Ceci Connolly, *2 GOP Senators Defend Bush on Stem Cell Research*, WASH. POST, Aug. 13, 2004, at A2.

35. Tom Harkin, Statement of Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) on Senate Bill to Fund Embryonic Stem Cell Research, June 29, 2005, <http://www.tomharkin.com/press/newsitem.asp?id=8>.

36. Rick Klein & Gareth Cook, *Kennedy Rips Romney Over Stem Cell Policy*, BOSTON GLOBE, Feb. 16, 2005, at A1.

37. Choe Sang-Hun, *Panel Further Discredits Stem Cell Work of South Korean Scientist*, N.Y. TIMES, Dec. 29, 2005, at A9.

was considered a national hero in South Korea.³⁸ Dr. George Q. Daley testified before Congress that “no one to date has been treated with cellular therapies based on human embryonic stem cells.”³⁹

Stem cells from umbilical cord blood and adult stem cells have proven to be more promising than stem cells from human embryos. According to the National Institute of Health, embryonic stem cell research is “still hypothetical and highly experimental.”⁴⁰ By contrast, adult stem cells have treated various diseases including multiple sclerosis, sickle cell anemia, and repair damage to stroke and heart attack victims.⁴¹ The National Marrow Donor Program provides a list of diseases and disorders, including leukemia, lymphoma and sickle cell anemia that can be treated by cord blood transplant.⁴²

In 2005, Republican Congressman Chris Smith and Democratic Congressman Artur Davis introduced legislation to create a stem cell cord blood bank.⁴³ The bipartisan effort passed the House on May 24, 2005, with only one Republican voting against it.⁴⁴ On that same day, the House passed a bill to allow embryonic stem cell research. Bipartisan cooperation allowed the cord blood bill to pass the Senate and it became Public Law 109-129 on December 20, 2005.⁴⁵ The Senate has not yet voted on the embryonic stem cell bill.

Continued bi-partisan cooperation is necessary to fully fund the cord blood program and promotion of ethical stem cell

38. Moon Ihlwan, *Putting Korea on the Stem Cell Map*, BUSINESSWEEK, July 11, 2005, at 62.

39. *Hearing on Stem Cell Research Before the Subcomm. on Labor, Health and Human Services of the S. Comm. On Appropriations*, 109th Cong. (2005) (statement of George Q. Daley, Associate Professor, Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology, Harvard Medical School).

40. NAT'L INST. OF HEALTH, *STEM CELLS: SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS 17* (2001), available at <http://stemcells.nih.gov/statistics/resources/info/scireport/PDFs/fullrptstem.pdf>.

41. *Maryland Cigarette Restitution Fund Spending and Stem Cell Research Act of 2005: Hearing on H.B. 1183 Before H. Health & Gov't Operations Comm. & H. Appropriations Comm.*, 2005 Leg., 420th Sess. (Md. 2005) (testimony of Dr. David Prentice, Georgetown Univ. Med. Center), available at <http://www.stemcellscience.info/documents/Testimony%20of%20Dr%20Prentice.pdf>.

42. National Marrow Donor Program, *Learning More About Your Disease*, http://www.marrow.org/PATIENT/learning_about_disease.html (last visited Mar. 23, 2006).

43. Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act, H.R. 2520, 109th Cong. (2005) (enacted).

44. 205 CONG. REC. H3852 (daily ed. May, 24, 2005).

45. Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-129, 119 Stat. 2550 (2005).

research that does not harm or destroy human life. The program goal to collect and maintain 150,000 units of blood would treat almost ninety percent of patients who suffer from over seventy different diseases.⁴⁶

B. *Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide*

As pro-life advocates, we must do everything that we can to protect those in the disabled community as well. The disabled community is facing challenges as support for euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide continues to gain strength. The disabled are often given the impression that their lives are not worth as much as an able-bodied individual.

A recent case in Massachusetts involves Haleigh Poutre, an eleven-year-old girl beaten into a coma and considered brain dead. Her step-father wants to keep her alive—but only so he will not face murder charges.⁴⁷ The courts authorized the Department of Social Services to remove the feeding tube, which they declined to do because she is showing signs of improvement.⁴⁸

The reality of the situation is that money often affects medical decisions in these life issues. For instance, the State of Missouri removed Medicaid coverage for feeding tubes, forcing people to starve to death if they cannot afford the tube.⁴⁹ Such a policy devalues human life by saying that people are “disposable” when their care becomes too costly or burdensome. The ramifications of this type of ideology will have deadly implications for the disabled community. Mercy killing is not compassionate. It is a way to get out of showing compassion in life, especially in difficult situations.

The recent Supreme Court case, ruling that Oregon’s “Death with Dignity” Law was legal, angered those in the disabled community.⁵⁰ Spokeswoman Diane Coleman of the group Not Dead Yet⁵¹ said, “If the values of liberty really dictate that society legalizes assisted suicide, then legalize it for everyone who asks

46. S. REP. NO. 109-129, at 1–2 (2005).

47. Patricia Wen, *Haleigh Case Rolled On Despite Dissent*, BOSTON GLOBE, Feb. 12, 2006, at A1.

48. *Id.*

49. Virginia Young & Clay Barbour, *Medicaid Recipients Cope With Cutbacks*, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH, Aug. 28, 2005, at A1.

50. *See* *Gonzales v. Oregon*, 126 S. Ct. 904 (2006) (upholding Oregon state law providing for physician assisted suicide).

51. Not Dead Yet is a national grassroots disability rights organization that opposes the legalization of assisted suicide and euthanasia.

for it, not just the devalued old, ill and disabled. Otherwise, what looks like freedom is really only discrimination.”⁵²

C. *Death Penalty*

Democrats can influence policy on the cultural of life issues. Republicans certainly do not have a monopoly on life issues. For instance, the “pro-life” party is also the “pro-death penalty” party. Furthermore, the Republicans have their share of defectors on the abortion issue, including California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger,⁵³ former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani,⁵⁴ and former New Jersey Governor and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman.⁵⁵ Additionally, several Senators, including Lincoln Chafee from Rhode Island and Olympia Snowe from Maine voted against the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act.⁵⁶

A common justification for supporting the death penalty, even for those who allegedly support a culture of life, is that it does not concern innocent life in the same way as the abortion issue. The Republican position is supported by the Brief Catechism for Catholic Voters, in which Father Torracco explains, “It is not correct to think of abortion and capital punishment as the very same kind of moral issue” because abortion is “an intrinsic evil, and cannot be justified for any purpose or in any circumstances.”⁵⁷ He argues we have a moral duty to “defend and preserve the common good” and the death penalty is “an act of self-defense on the part of civil society.”⁵⁸ However, recently the Catholic Bishops have come out strongly against the death penalty and started a campaign to end its practice. Their pastoral statement suggests, “[I]t is time for our nation to abandon the illusion that we can protect life by taking life” and that the death

52. Press Release, Not Dead Yet, Disability Activists Criticize Administration and Supreme Court on *Gonzales* Ruling (Jan. 17, 2006), available at <http://www.notdeadyet.org/docs/gonzalesupctrulingpr.html>.

53. Joe Garofoli, *Anti-Abortion Activists Don't Jump on Actor's Bandwagon*, S.F. CHRON., Aug. 14, 2003, at A12.

54. Gary Gately, *Giuliani Criticized Over Abortion Stand*, N.Y. TIMES, May 20, 2005, at B6.

55. David Kocieniewski, *Loyal to Her Party, But Not in Lock Step*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 26, 2005, at B2.

56. See 3 CONG. REC. S3657 (daily ed. Mar. 13, 2003).

57. STEPHEN TORRACO, A BRIEF CATECHISM FOR CATHOLIC VOTERS ¶ 6 (2003).

58. *Id.*

penalty cannot be justified when there are other ways to protect society.⁵⁹

The death penalty is horrific because it is so irrevocable and final. Modern science is helping us find innocent people on death row and in the criminal justice system. Since 1992, The Innocence Project has helped exonerate 175 people using DNA evidence.⁶⁰ The most recent person released with the Project's assistance had served twenty-four years in prison for a crime he did not commit.⁶¹ The Democrats for Life 2004 and 2005 Policy Initiatives supported The Innocence Project⁶² and a ban on juvenile executions.⁶³

D. Poverty

When considering a culture of life, we must also address poverty, including a livable wage and affordable health care. Congressman Dale Kildee of Michigan, a pro-life Democrat, introduced one resolution aimed at addressing such issues: "A Child Is Waiting," is a resolution to support full funding of the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).⁶⁴ The WIC program provides pregnant and nursing mothers and their young children with food assistance and nutritional advice.⁶⁵ After the Republicans captured the U.S. House of Representatives in 1994, the new committee pushed for legislation that would greatly curtail the WIC nutri-

59. UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, A CULTURE OF LIFE AND THE PENALTY OF DEATH 4 (2005), available at <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/penaltyofdeath.pdf>.

60. Founded in 1992, the Innocence Project is a non-profit legal clinic and criminal justice resource center that works to exonerate the wrongfully convicted. They limit their cases to those where post-conviction DNA testing can conclusively prove a person's innocence. It is located at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University. See The Innocence Project Home Page, <http://www.innocenceproject.org> (last visited Feb. 19, 2006).

61. Case Profile: Robert Clark, http://www.innocenceproject.org/case/display_profile.php?id=167 (last visited Mar. 23, 2006).

62. See The Innocence Project Home Page, *supra* note 60.

63. Charles Lane, *5-4 Supreme Court Abolishes Juvenile Executions*, WASH. POST, Mar. 2, 2005, at A1.

64. A Child Is Waiting, H.R. Res. 233, 103rd Cong. (1994) (as reported by H. Comm. on Educ. & Labor, Mar. 24, 1994, and referred to the H. Subcomm. on Elementary, Secondary & Vocational Educ., Apr. 18, 1994).

65. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, 7 C.F.R. pt. 246 (2005), available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/lawsandregulations/WICRegulations-7CFR246.pdf>; see generally United States Department of Agriculture, Women, Infants & Children, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic> (last visited Mar. 23, 2006).

tion program.⁶⁶ Many of the new freshmen Republican members of the committee had campaigned for Congress on a pro-life platform. Congressman Kildee, first elected to Congress in 1976, pointed out the obvious contradiction between their campaigns and their committee activity. During the committee debate, Kildee emphasized that WIC is one of the most pro-life federal programs, as little could be more important than ensuring that pregnant women, new mothers, and their children received proper nutrition and support.⁶⁷ Kildee then turned to the new Republican Members and stated that if they were to oppose this program, they may consider themselves “anti-abortionists,” but they could not call themselves “pro-life.”⁶⁸

E. *Just War*

A culture of life must also include consideration for the potential loss of life in the case of war. Operation Iraqi Freedom caused many divisions in the life community. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,⁶⁹ the World Council of Churches⁷⁰ and a vast majority of religious leaders in the United States took the position that the War in Iraq was unjust and the potential loss of life should be considered before attacking Iraq.⁷¹ Yet others, including the conservative Institute on Relig-

66. See Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, H.R. 4, 104th Cong. (1995).

67. Interview with Chris Mansour, Chief of Staff, Congressman Dale Kildee, in Washington, D.C. (Feb. 1, 2006).

68. *Id.*

69. Wilton D. Gregory, President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Statement on Iraq (Feb. 26, 2003), <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/iraqstatement0203.htm>.

70. World Council on Churches, Executive Committee, Statement Against Military Action in Iraq, (Feb. 18–21, 2003), <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/exco03-iraq.html>. The World Council on Churches is a culmination of 340 churches, denominations, and church fellowships in over 100 countries and territories throughout the world, representing some 550 million Christians. See generally World Council of Churches Home Page, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/home.html> (last visited Mar. 3, 2006).

71. See, e.g., Peter Steinfels, *Churches and Ethicists Loudly Oppose the Proposed War on Iraq, But Deaf Ears Are Many*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 28, 2002, at A1 (discussing opposition to the Iraq war expressed by numerous congregations, including: the United Methodist, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian, Orthodox, and African Methodist Episcopal churches, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the United Church of Christ); Richard Vara, *Baptists to Vote on Iraq War*, HOUS. CHRON., Aug. 5, 2004, at B5. But see, e.g., Tony Carnes, *Disappointed But Holding*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Feb. 2006, at 78 (“In 2003, 77 percent of white evangelicals approved of Bush’s decision to launch the war in Iraq.”).

ion and Democracy, defended the President,⁷² and the War, even though 2289 American soldiers have been killed and 16,825 wounded.⁷³ Furthermore, it is estimated that over 30,000 Iraqis have been killed as a result of the war.⁷⁴

F. *International Considerations*

Finally, such an ethic should be expanded with respect to how we relate with the rest of the world. We need a broader definition of sanctity of life that includes eliminating the gender genocide in India and China and addressing the fact that, by the end of the decade, there will be twenty-five million AIDS orphans in Africa.⁷⁵ Much can be done to improve the quality of life for those in developing and third world countries where basic health care needs are not met. The number one cause of death worldwide is pneumonia.⁷⁶ There were 1.27 million deaths worldwide from malaria in 2002, many of them children under five.⁷⁷ Over one billion people worldwide do not have access to clean drinking water.⁷⁸ Poor sanitation and unclean water causes many diseases, including diarrhea, the second leading cause of death among children worldwide.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

I completed this essay on January 23, 2006, after a day spent marching with tens of thousands of people who support life in the Washington, D.C. March for Life. A light rain dusted the

72. Press Release, The Inst. on Religion and Democracy, IRD Regrets 'False Penitence' of U.S. Church Leaders' Letter to WCC, <http://www.ird-renew.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=fvKVLfMVISG&b=390529&ct=1991985> (last visited Mar. 25, 2006).

73. Department of Defense, Operation Iraqi Freedom U.S. Casualty Status, <http://www.dod.gov/news/casualty.pdf> (last visited Mar. 23, 2006).

74. John Ward Anderson & Omar Fekeiki, *Freedom, Yes, Iraqis Say, But at Grave, Grave Cost*, WASH. POST, Mar. 21, 2006, at A13.

75. UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND [UNICEF] ET AL., CHILDREN ON THE BRINK 2004: A JOINT REPORT OF NEW ORPHAN ESTIMATES AND A FRAME OF ACTION (2004), available at http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/cob_layout6-013.pdf.

76. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION [WHO], WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REPORT ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES 2000 ch. 4 (2000), available at <http://www.who.int/infectious-disease-report/2000/>.

77. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ALLERGY AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES, MALARIA I (2002), available at <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/publications/malaria/pdf/malaria.pdf>.

78. Stopping a Child Killer: Safe Water Saves Lives, United States Agency for International Development, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/home/News/childwater.html (last visited Mar. 23, 2006).

79. *Id.*

pro-life supporters as they waited for the march to begin. The signs in the crowd ranged from religious signs to “Women Deserve Better Than Abortion” and to more surreal messages like, “Pro-life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians” and “Napoleon Dynamite is Pro-life.” A steady supply of interested spectators approached our group to express surprise that pro-life Democrats actually existed and to offer their support.

At the completion of the march, after hours in the rain and completing the rally, a group of us from DFLA decided to warm up at a coffee shop on Capitol Hill. On the way, we picked up James Carville & Paul Begala’s new book, *Take It Back: Our Party, Our Country, Our Future*.⁸⁰ Outside the bookstore, I opened the book to the section on abortion as several members of the DFLA Board looked over my shoulder. We read and we cheered. Someone was finally getting it! In the opening pages of their book, Carville and Begala promote the DFLA 95-10 Initiative and recognize the need for the Democratic Party to start taking action to decrease the abortion rate in America.⁸¹ They present statistics about the opinion of a majority of Americans and confess that the Democratic Party is “on the fringe of the issue when it should be in the mainstream.”⁸²

Later that evening, former Democratic Mayor of Boston Ray Flynn spoke eloquently about how his pro-life position was shaped by the social justice teachings of the Church and the need to look beyond party lines to promote a culture of life.⁸³ He also spoke of how lonely and embattled his tenure as a pro-life Democrat had been. Now it is becoming less lonely.

Pro-life Democrats are stronger than ever. More and more people are coming out of the closet on the life issue and more Democrats are embracing and advocating the full definition of a culture of life. This is a significant step in the right direction for the party I love, and a monumental leap forward since I first posted the “Dukakis for President” sign in the hatchback of my 1988 Ford Escort.

Several years from now, when my one-and-a-half year old daughter, Kate, and four-year-old son, Jack, are able to understand the work I am doing, I will be very proud to explain the small role I am playing to promote the culture of life. I will encourage them to do their part. I encourage you too.

80. JAMES CARVILLE & PAUL BEGALA, TAKE IT BACK: OUR PARTY, OUR COUNTRY, OUR FUTURE (2006).

81. *Id.* at 34–47.

82. *Id.* at 36.

83. Raymond L. Flynn, Chairman, Catholic Citizenship, Keynote Address at the March for Life Annual Rose Dinner (Jan. 23, 2006).

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In the 2004 election, John Kerry repeatedly proclaimed, “We can do better. Help is on the way.” If America is bold enough to step away from the argument of who is right and who is wrong on the abortion issue and address the root of the problem, we will indeed do better. And, help *is* on the way in the form of a re-energized Democratic Party that is willing to step away from its abortion on demand policy and take action to reduce the abortion rate by empowering women and protecting children.

Each of us is called to offer such help.

