



## The Fifth Sunday of Lent

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, (and) from now on do not sin any more."

John 8:1-11

## Will the winner please stand up?

By Gail Quinn

California passed a law in 1999 called the Women's Contraception Equity Act (WCEA). Under the law, employers that provide insurance for prescription drugs were told they must cover prescription contraceptives.

Catholic Charities sought an exemption based on its religious beliefs. On March 1, the Supreme Court of California ruled against Catholic Charities.

How could this happen? Isn't religious freedom a bedrock of our American way of life? How can the State force a religious organization to pay for contraceptives when doing so directly violates its religious beliefs?

And for what? And who benefits?

I've long had my own theory of "for what." Those who promote contraceptive mandates likely do not have such coverage as their goal. If Catholic employers can be forced now to pay for contraceptives, how long before some try to force them to cover - or perform - abortions?

Under the California law, religious employers can be exempted from having to cover "contraceptive meth-

ods that are contrary" to their religious tenets. So what's going on?

Well, in its WCEA law, the state of California decided it would define "religious employer" extremely narrowly - as an employer which (1) has as its primary goal the teaching of religious values, (2) employs primarily people who share its religious beliefs, (3) serves primarily those who share its religious beliefs, and (4) is a non-profit organization as specified under a particular section of the IRS Code. The California Supreme Court said that Catholic Charities doesn't meet any of the State-described criteria.

In dissenting from the Court's decision, Justice Janice Brown noted that this is such "a crabbed and constricted view of religion that it would define the ministry of Jesus Christ as a secular activity."

The purpose of WCEA is reportedly "not to facilitate access to contraceptives but to eliminate a form of gender discrimination in the provision of health benefits." Such an argument is, one presumes, based on the notion that prescription contraceptives are a boon to women's health. But fertility is normal and healthy; taking high

doses of artificial hormones to disrupt fertility is increasingly shown to be unhealthy. Cannot a religious or even secular employer fairly draw the line between drugs required for health and lifestyle drugs?

Brown also notes that Catholic Charities can avoid the mandate by dropping prescription drug coverage for all its employees. But "if religiously affiliated employers are serious about their objections," said Brown, "women who work for those employers could actually be worse off."

So who wins? Not Catholic Charities, whose religious beliefs preclude paying for contraception, and which also wants to provide drug benefits to employees and their families. If prescription coverage is dropped, not a single Catholic Charities employee wins. Each one of them would, in fact, be worse off.

I'd very much like to know who benefits from this State effort to force religious institutions to violate their religious beliefs. So, will the real winner please stand up?

Gail Quinn is Executive Director of the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C.

## The Flip Side

By Janet A. Morana  
Associate Director  
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More and more women, as part of the Silent No More Awareness Campaign, hold signs at public events saying "I regret my abortion." The pro-abortion side, in response to this effort, is trying to give visibility to women who say, "I had an abortion and I don't regret it at all."

Fine, but that only proves our point, not theirs. If the pro-abortion side wants to counter what we are doing, let them gather groups of women nationwide holding signs saying, "I regret my child."

Here's the point. We are saying abortion is hurtful, and they are saying childbirth is hurtful. This is precisely one of the arguments in *Roe vs. Wade* for permitting abortion. The Court said, "Maternity, or additional offspring, may force upon the woman a distressful life and future. Psychological harm may be taxed by child care. There is also the distress, for all concerned, associated with the unwanted child, and there is the problem of bringing a child into a family already unable, psychologically and otherwise, to care for it" (*Roe*, at 153).

The alternative experience to killing an unborn child is giving birth to that child -- not killing the child and then saying it was OK.

### Commentary

The point of the Silent No More Awareness Campaign is that what the other side defends and promotes (that is, abortion) has a negative side that is being hidden and denied. To round up a group of women to continue denying it only proves our point, not theirs. The denial, in other words, continues, and most of the women who now hold "I Regret my Abortion" signs once said that their abortion caused them no problem at all.

If the other side really wants to try to mount a counter-campaign, they need to do what we have done, namely, take what we promote and show the negative side of it. We promote childbirth. The true reverse of our campaign would be to have women publicly come out and say, "I regret my child."

The Silent No More Awareness Campaign

([www.SilentNoMoreAwareness.org](http://www.SilentNoMoreAwareness.org)) is gaining momentum very quickly. At the National Vigil Mass for Life on January 21, Cardinal William Keeler, Chairman of the Pro-Life Committee of the US Bishops, praised the campaign in his homily. The next day, at the nationally televised March for Life rally, several members of Congress pointed to this effort as a new and powerful dimension of the pro-life movement. And one member of the Senate, Democrat Zell Miller of Georgia, was converted to the pro-life position in large measure as a result of seeing the Silent No More women gathered in front of the Supreme Court, sharing their testimonies.

NOEL and Priests for Life, the two groups that founded the campaign, continue to organize events nationwide all through the year, whereby women who have come through healing after abortion can testify publicly and help in other ways to spread the word about how harmful abortion is. Pray for these women, and when you see one, say "thanks."

Janet Morana is the Co-Founder of Silent No More Awareness Campaign.



Bishop Edward K. Braxton dons earphones at St. Theodore Holy Family Catholic School in Moss Bluff in order to hear instructions on the use of the computer while Cade White, a pre-kindergarten student, gives him some additional advice. Other pre-K students working on the computers are Erika Jarrel, and Logan Picard. Bishop Braxton, who is making his Lenten visits to each of the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lake Charles, was at Holy Family Monday, March 22.

## Cardinal Keeler urges passage of Unborn Victims of Violence Act

WASHINGTON -- Cardinal William Keeler, Chairman of the Committee for Pro-Life Activities, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, urged the Senate to pass S. 1019, the Unborn Victims of Violence Act. The bill would recognize unborn children as second victims when their mothers are victims of federal crimes of violence. The Senate is expected to vote on the legislation as early as next week.

"When a pregnant woman is assaulted or killed, and her unborn child is harmed or killed as a result, the crime has two victims-the woman and her child," Cardinal Keeler said. "Without this new law, when a pregnant woman is herself the victim of a federal crime, any resulting injury to her

unborn child-harm to which the woman obviously has not consented-goes unpunished."

The majority of states recognize and redress prenatal injury or death resulting from violence inflicted upon a pregnant woman. S. 1019 explicitly excludes abortion.

"It is disappointing that some insist the bill should be defeated to somehow preserve a 'right' to abortion," the Cardinal continued. "This bill simply ensures that both mother and child are protected from violent assault and murder."

The Senate is scheduled to debate two amendments to S. 1019, a "single-victim" substitute by Senator Feinstein and a lengthy amend-

ment on domestic violence programs by Senator Murray.

"Substitute language that recognizes only the harm done to the woman but not to her child-the 'single-victim' approach-is unfair to mothers and families who grieve the loss of their unborn children," Cardinal Keeler stated. "As Sharon Rocha, mother of Laci Peterson and grandmother of Connor, reminds us: 'There were two bodies that washed up in San Francisco Bay, and the law should recognize that reality.'"

"I urge you to pass S. 1019 and to oppose any amendment that would nullify its intent or impede its enactment," the Cardinal said.

(This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles.)



Three seminarians from the Diocese of Lake Charles will graduate from St. Joseph Seminary College on Friday, May 7. They are, from left, Ruben Buller, son of Bennie and Eula Buller of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fenton; Scott Conner, son of Mike and Martha Conner of Our Lady of Seven Dolours Parish in Welsh and Nathan Long, son of Kenneth and Marjorie Long of St. Raphael Parish in Iowa. A charter bus will leave the north parking lot at Our Lady of Heaven Parish at 1:15 p.m. on May 7. Bus fare is \$33 per person. For more information or to reserve a seat for the trip, call Elaine Heape at 477-2746.