

Catholic Bishops Endorsements of 40 Days for Life

Spring 2010

The initial "40 Days for Life" campaign in North San Diego County that concluded in November of 2009 was a laudable event which brought together hundreds of people of various faith backgrounds in peaceful and fervent prayer to bring about the end of abortion in our country. I personally witnessed the responsible actions taken by many to stand publicly in defense of human life by proclaiming the "Gospel of Life," and I applaud their involvement.

The continuous efforts of the campaign will undoubtedly change minds and hearts and, God willing, bring about greater legal protection for life, from conception to natural death. With due deference to the judgment of our pastors, "40 Days for Life" is welcome to continue promoting its program within the Diocese of San Diego.

Sadly, there are many pressures in society that drive women and men to consider abortion. Each year, more than 250,000 abortions are performed in California, 25,000 which occur in San Diego County. As we approach 38 years of legalized abortion in the United States, prayer and fasting to support and promote the dignity and sanctity of human life, and to promote a culture of life, is vitally important.

I send my greetings and continue to encourage those participating in this effort, thereby imitating Christ who made prayer and fasting the basis for his mission "that all might have life and life in its fullness."

+Robert H. Brom
Bishop of San Diego

As a society we cannot allow ourselves to accept the fact of abortion as acceptable, because we would be taking the view that human life is expendable. 40 Days for Life is a peaceful, prayerful campaign, and has my full support.

+Julian Porteous
Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney

As you begin your vigil tomorrow seeking an end to abortion, I send you my blessing and join my prayer to yours that all people will come to embrace a profound respect for life in which abortion, euthanasia and other such scourges disguised as rights and social conveniences are wholly rejected.

May God bless you richly in your efforts and give you the strength and courage to pray with hope and conviction.

+Alex J. Brunett
Archbishop of Seattle

(Spring 2010 continued)

I want the pastors and parishioners of the diocese to know that this effort in promoting the sanctity of human life is very worthwhile and does indeed have my approval. The focus of this movement has been on 40 days of prayer and fasting, a peaceful vigil, and community outreach. In addition, there is an ecumenical dimension to this very worthwhile cause.

The promotion of the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death has long been a part of our Catholic tradition. Each of us has a role to play in promoting a consistent culture of life. This campaign fits in very well with the Lenten season. "40 Days for Life" is a peaceful and prayerful way to bear witness to the sacredness of all human life and to work toward ending abortion in our country. We pray that we will be successful in that holy cause.

+William S. Skylstad
Bishop of Spokane

Fall 2009

In every age and place, we are called as Christians to be leaven. Leaven for a world that cries out with despair and injustice. If we are to take the Gospel seriously in our lives, then we cannot simply watch from the sidelines, but we must be fully engaged in bringing Christ's message of hope to the communities in which we live. At the core of the church's teachings on social justice is the intrinsic value of all life from conception to natural death. This is the foundation of the church's action in the world.

Sadly, the tragedy of abortion is a recurring story right here in our own community. We must face this tragedy. As Christ has taught us, we are not to speak with angry shouts and cruel slogans, but with love and prayer. This is why I am fully endorsing the Pensacola 40 Days for Life Campaign. This campaign is a national ecumenical effort to raise awareness, save lives and bring healing to those wounded by abortion...

All of us can participate in the prayer, fasting and community outreach entailed in this effort and I am strongly encouraging our parishes to become involved. Let's stand together as a church to witness to the dignity and worth of all life. Please get involved in this effort and make our community a safer and more welcoming place for the unborn.

+John H. Ricard, SSJ
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee

What prevents us from committing ourselves to being a part of the urgently needed "great prayer for life" the late Holy Father championed, especially during the upcoming 40 Days for Life campaign, Sept. 23 to Nov. 1? Throughout this 40-day nationwide campaign, thousands of people will unite in prayer and fasting to promote a culture of life. Will you join us? ... Just as the loaves and fishes were multiplied, our efforts to change hearts and save the unborn are multiplied exponentially by prayer...

The truth of abortion is that it takes the life of the most defenseless and vulnerable human beings and gravely harms their parents. We are called to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. To do so is an act of love, an act of solidarity, and an act of service. In the words of St. Francis of Assisi, "preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

Pregnant women in crisis need our prayerful support, as we seek to witness publicly to the sanctity of human life and the redemptive love of Jesus Christ, to soften the hearts of abortion clinic staff, to bring Christ's love to a place of great suffering and evil. We pray in reparation for the injustice of abortion and for men and women who carry the pain of a past abortion.

+Edwin F. O'Brien
Archbishop of Baltimore

(Fall 2009 continued)

40 Days for Life is the work of the Holy Spirit, a divine inspiration in the ongoing effort to end the plague of abortion. Be assured that the Lord himself is our strongest weapon and our most faithful ally. By offering him our hearts, our voices, our hands -- in fact, our very lives -- through forty days of prayer, fasting, peaceful vigil and community outreach, precious human life will be saved, hearts will be converted and the right to life for all human persons will be one step closer to being realized.

Be assured of my solidarity with all of you, today, and for the 40 Days for Life. May the Lord bless you and your effort to promote a civilization of life and love, and may your efforts yield a rich harvest for all people, including those innocent children whose voices cry out for protection and justice.

+Richard J. Malone
Bishop of Portland (Maine)

I certainly strongly support 40 Days for Life, beginning September 23, 2009. It is wonderful to see different Christian communities coming together to support the dignity of life and the right to life. My prayers are with all of you.

+John T. Steinbock
Bishop of Fresno

On this Feast of Pio of Pietrelcina, we begin the 40 Days for Life North Dakota campaign, a concerted effort of prayer, fasting and peaceful vigil with the goals of educating the public about the evil of abortion, saving lives and seeking the conversion of souls. For the third consecutive year, the Catholic faithful will join many others in prayerful witness to the dignity of all human life as we pray, 24 hours per day for 40 days, on the sidewalk outside North Dakota's only abortion facility, the Red River Women's Clinic at 512 1st Ave. N. in Fargo. Together we will implore our Lord to pour His mercy out upon our state to bring an end to the callous act of abortion through which more than 25 unborn babies are killed in their mothers' wombs each week in Fargo by abortion-inducing drugs and surgical procedures...

I will pray on the sidewalk in front of the abortion facility on Friday, September 25, at 11 a.m. and again on Respect Life Sunday when I lead a Eucharistic procession to the abortion facility, carrying our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament to the site of death for so many of His children. I ask that each of you [priests] schedule at least one hour of prayer outside the abortion facility during these 40 days. I realize this will require great sacrifice for some of you in terms of miles traveled and time away from other pastoral duties. Yet I am confident that much fruit will come from your time spent in conversation with God at the site of this modern day, legally protected holocaust. Please also encourage your parishioners to take up the cross of Christ for the most vulnerable among us.

+Samuel J. Aquila
Bishop of Fargo

As Jesus spent 40 days in the desert, we spend 40 days praying for an end to abortion, praying that somehow, someway, God can do what we can't do and that is to soften the hearts of those hardened, who can't understand the importance and dignity of every human life from natural conception to natural death,

So as we gather today with Catholics and non-Catholics and people of goodwill throughout the country, we support one another in prayer and fasting, prayer and fasting. Thank you for your efforts and for what you do. Thank you for being here tonight and for all that you do for the next 40 days.

+Walter R. Nickless
Bishop of Sioux City

Spring 2009

The program, 40 Days for Life, will again be held during Lent of 2009. It is a praiseworthy, ecumenical effort to prayerfully bear witness to the sanctity of life and to work toward ending the practice of abortion in our nation. I encourage Catholics to participate in this effort.

+Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento

As we enter into the holy season of Lent in preparation for the great Feast of Easter, we recall Jesus' forty days in the desert. The number forty carries great significance in salvation history, including the forty years the Israelites wandered in the desert, the forty days and nights of the Great Flood, the forty days and nights Moses spent on Mount Sinai. In each case, we see long periods of testing and trial, of hardship, even impatience with God. In each case, we find that doing God's will is not always easy. However, we also see that God does not abandon His people when they remain faithful, prayerful and patient.

In this sense, the "40 Days for Life" campaign is appropriately named, for we surely have experienced great challenges in our effort to give witness to the dignity and value of human life. These challenges naturally test our patience and commitment. We may hunger for quicker progress and tire of the journey. Yet, recalling God's fidelity, and strengthened by His grace, we do not grow discouraged or weary, but carry on with quiet humility and prayerful perseverance. In this spirit, may the "40 Days for Life" campaign open the hearts and minds of people everywhere so that there is a growing and deepening appreciation for the dignity of human life and the need to protect it from conception to natural death.

+Joseph A. Galante
Bishop of Camden

I would like to wholeheartedly express my support for the 40 Days of Prayer and Penance for Life. Prayer and fasting especially in the Season of Lent is one of the most powerful tools to promote the Culture of Life.

+Dominic Luong
Auxiliary Bishop of Orange

40 Days for Life is a wonderful vehicle for both a spiritual and civil response to the growing Culture of Death. Know that my prayers are with you and the others who are making the 40 Days for Life campaign in Austin a reality.

+Rene H. Gracida
Bishop Emeritus of Corpus Christi

(Spring 2009 Continued)

Participating in a particular practice this Lent—40 Days for Life—has brought many of us here this evening, that of devoting time to witnessing for life before the Morgentaler Clinic, to fasting and praying insistently to God for an end to the scourge of abortion in our country.

This year marks the fortieth year since the introduction into legislation in our country of the 1969 Omnibus Bill, which effectively led to opening the door to abortion on demand in Canada. What a tragic loss it has been to our country of the hundreds of thousands, the millions of souls who have never been given the chance to see the light of day! Now some might be tempted to see in these spiritual activities an attempt to justify ourselves and somehow, by our individual efforts, to bring about the goal we seek. And that is why the text of St. Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians is our guide in terms of how to understand what we are about. We recall that God has already effected our reconciliation; God has already in his sovereign will made peace with all of sinful humanity. Our task is merely to say "yes" to this and to let ourselves be caught up in God's saving dynamic...

Let us pray that this truth may be accepted by more and more hearts in Ottawa, in Canada, and in our world in these coming days of Lent. And as we seek this good in gentleness and forbearance, in good conduct and good cheer, in quiet prayer and unobtrusive fasting, let us not become discouraged. Rather let us be confident, because God has already won the victory for us; our task is to bring the Good News of the dignity of every human life, particularly life in the womb as simply and clearly as we can.

+Terrence Prendergast
Archbishop of Ottawa

Fall 2008

I would like to call on all Catholics in the Diocese of Birmingham "to be unconditionally pro-life." With this in mind, I wholeheartedly endorse the good work of the Forty Days for Life that will take place in our diocese from September 24, 2008 through All Souls Day, November 2, 2008.

The prayer, fasting and witness of the Forty Days for Life is an excellent example of what being "unconditionally pro-life" is all about. We must take a stand for life, making our voices heard not only in our communities, but through the prayer and fasting advocated by the Forty Days for Life to Heaven itself—asking the intervention of God to touch those hearts hardened by a culture that does not see life as a precious gift, but a burden too great to bear. As Our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples when they could not cast out a demon, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

+Robert J. Baker
Bishop of Birmingham

I write to invite you to participate in the national pro-life campaign, 40 Days for Life, September 24th through November 2nd. It is my hope that the Catholics across the Diocese will join together in their parishes to participate in this activity of prayer and fasting, peaceful vigils and community outreach providing a positive pro-life message.

As followers of Jesus Christ we must continually work to uphold the sacredness and dignity of life, especially for the most vulnerable among us, the unborn. In his homily at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI reminded us, "The Church is called to proclaim the gift of life, to serve life, and to promote a culture of life."

This fall let us promote the culture of life in our families, our parishes and in our communities. Participation in the 40 Days of Life will be a time of grace for you, your parish and the Diocese. To learn more about the national campaign, please go to

www.40daysforlife.com/raleigh. On September 24, 2008 at 7:00 a.m., I plan to participate by peacefully praying the rosary in front of "A Woman's Choice of Raleigh."

+Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Raleigh

(Fall 2008 continued)

We begin another season in our efforts to instill in our communities and nation a true respect for the sanctity of life. As part of the variety of ways we can participate, I call to your attention the 40 Days of Life campaign, which in our diocese has four key components: prayer, fasting, constant vigil and community outreach.

The idea of forty days alludes to our yearly celebration of the season of Lent, a time of prayer and penance when we turn our hearts to God. It is a time of conversion, a change of heart. Through the 40 Days of Life we pray that there will be conversion in the hearts of people in our country, so that they will cherish and respect God's gift of life and there will be an end to abortion.

+Randolph R. Calvo
Bishop of Reno

Giving witness to the dignity of human life is always important. From the moment of conception to natural death, all human life is sacred and must be protected.

Every individual has a role in promoting a consistent ethic and culture of life.

The 40 Days for Life witness, which was held last fall and also during Lent, will be held once again September 24 - November 2. This is a praiseworthy ecumenical and prayerful way to bear witness to the sanctity of life and to work toward ending abortion in our nation. I pray that many abundant fruits will flow from it.

+William K. Weigand
Bishop of Sacramento

As Catholics we must insist that assaults on the dignity of human life represent a profound moral evil... During Respect Life Month, the national group 40 Days for Life will be encouraging prayer and fasting. I particularly encourage parish groups to pray in solidarity with those who are witnessing to the Gospel of Life.

+David A. Zubik
Bishop of Pittsburgh

What is taking place at Planned Parenthood is a crime. If we say nothing, our silence gives our blessing to the continuation of this holocaust.

(From a letter encouraging priests of his diocese to become involved with 40 Days for Life.)

+R. Walker Nickless
Bishop of Sioux City

I commend your personal action to promote life during these next forty days. Our adherence to prayerful participation and fasting will be the source of strength and guidance in defeating the foes of life.

+Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Providence

Spring 2008

The 40 Days for Life campaign is a laudable and practical means through which people of faith across America can engage the urgent and necessary work to end abortion. The campaign will undoubtedly change hearts, minds and God willing, bring about greater legal protection for life, from conception to natural death. With due deference to the judgement of our pastors, you are most welcome to promote your program within the Archdiocese of Detroit.

+Adam Cardinal Maida
Archbishop of Detroit

With gratitude to God, I am delighted to announce that an ecumenical, grassroots effort of prayer, fasting and community outreach called 40 Days for Life will launch here in the Phoenix area during the 40 days of the Lenten season, 2008.

This national movement began in the fall of 2007, and through the prayer efforts, hundreds of unborn children were saved. Equally as important, many women facing the temptation to abortion found the true help they needed in the compassion of those praying and ready to assist them with their needs.

It is my prayer that 40 Days for Life will grow to be a powerful moment in our nation's history and that, cooperating with God's grace, it will move us closer to the day when our unborn brothers and sisters are protected in law and abortion itself becomes unthinkable.

+Thomas J. Olmsted
Bishop of Phoenix

As we begin the sacred Season of Lent, I write to invite you and your parishioners to include among your Lenten activities, one that will advocate for the protection of human life. The 40 Days for Life campaign provides just such a focus. Initiated by a national organization which has invited people of all faiths to participate, the campaign will be done in 31 states and 58 cities across our country, among them Raleigh...

I ask that you consider your participation in this worthy activity during the Season of Lent... In addition, in this season focused on conversion of hearts, continue the many activities that give witness to our commitment to work always for the protection and defense of the unborn. I am grateful for your efforts to support the sacredness of all human life.

+Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Raleigh

Promoting the dignity of human life is the foundation of Catholic teaching. From conception to natural death, we believe that each human life is sacred and that, as followers of Christ, we must bear witness to this truth. We do so through education, advocacy, prayer and caring for those in need. Each of us has a role to play in promoting a consistent culture of life.

A worthy endeavor along these lines is the ecumenical campaign, 40 Days for Life - a peaceful and prayerful way to bear witness to the sacredness of all human life and to work toward ending abortion in our country. I commend this effort and pray that abundant fruits flow from it.

+William S. Skylstad
Bishop of Spokane

Fall 2007

During these 40 days, many people throughout the diocese and surrounding area will readily join in prayer and fasting for an end to abortion in our state. Prayer and fasting are primarily private acts. They are typically easy to do as we go about our regular schedules. They require sacrifice and are good and powerful.

But, for those who are physically able to do more, I encourage you to go one step further -- to commit to an hour of prayerful vigil at our state's only abortion facility.

I know it is not convenient. You may have to travel hours to get to Fargo. It may be cold or rainy. It is hard to stand on a concrete sidewalk for an hour. Or worse, you may be thinking, "What if someone who supports abortion yells at me or challenges what I'm standing up for?"

Remember, though, that this quiet prayerful witness can save lives. If we are yelled at, we can remember the eighth Beatitude, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12). Be not afraid.

+Samuel J. Aquila
Bishop of Fargo, North Dakota

Here is the link to the full text of Bishop Aquila's call for involvement in 40 Days for Life:

<http://www.fargodiocese.org/News/2007Archives/September2007.htm>

Here is the audio interview David Bereit conducted with Bishop Aquila.

Listen online:

Download MP3 (right-click to save to your computer):

<http://www.40daysforlife.com/blog/audio/aquila.mp3>

I send my greetings and encouragement to those participating in this work of prayer and fasting. Your efforts imitate the life of Christ, who prayed and fasted for forty days in the desert before beginning His public ministry.

Sadly, there are many pressures in our society that drive women and men to consider abortion. Each year, more than 22,000 abortions are performed in Cook and Lake Counties. As we approach 35 years of legalized abortion in the United States, prayer and fasting for the sanctity of human life is vitally important now more than ever.

+Francis Cardinal George
Archbishop of Chicago

The Gospel message calls us to conversion and to defend life. We must all work together to answer God's call. This peaceful, 40 day fasting effort gives local Catholics ample opportunity to join with people of faith around the country in doing something significant to help put an end to abortion. I encourage members of our local Church to participate in this important national event.

+Daniel Cardinal DiNardo
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston

(Fall 2007 continued)

The focus will be one of conversion, forgiveness and prayer for those who provide or assist in abortions, those who encourage mothers toward abortion, and the mothers themselves, so that all may come to understand the truth of the dignity of human life from the first moment of conception. Prayer will also be for the softening of the hardened hearts and the healing of broken hearts caused by abortion.

+William Cardinal Keeler
Archbishop Emeritus of Baltimore

Please be assured of my full encouragement and support of your efforts, and those of your collaborators in your promotion of the nationwide pro-life prayer campaign, "40 Days for Life".

While at present, I am not a diocesan ordinary, in light of my impending transfer, I do hope you will find strong grassroots support in your efforts! To that end, know of my daily prayer.

+Edwin F. O'Brien
Archdiocesan Administrator
Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA

Promoting the dignity of human life is central to Catholic teaching. From conception to natural death, human life is sacred and followers of Christ must bear witness to this truth. We do so through education, advocacy, prayer and caring for those in need. Each of us has a role to play in promoting a consistent culture of life.

A worthy endeavor along these lines is the ecumenical campaign, 40 Days for Life -- a peaceful and prayerful way to bear witness to the sacredness of all human life and to work toward ending abortion in our country. I commend this effort and pray that abundant fruits flow from it.

Sincerely in Christ

+William K. Weigand
Bishop of Sacramento

With the month of October, we begin another season in our efforts to instill in our communities and nation a true respect for the sanctity of life. As part of the variety of ways we can participate, I call to your attention the 40 Days of Life campaign, which in our diocese has two key components: prayer and fasting and community outreach.

The idea of forty days alludes to our yearly celebration of the season of Lent, a time of prayer and penance when we turn our hearts to God. It is a time of conversion, a change of heart. Through the 40 Days of Life we pray that there will be conversion in the hearts of people in our country, so that they will cherish and respect God's gift of life and there will be an end to abortion.

Entrusting our efforts to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Randolph R. Calvo
Bishop of Reno