

Consistent Life News



An international network for peace, justice and life Issue #5 Fall 2005

By Way of Introduction...

Consistent Life is quite pleased to introduce Paul Magno as our interim Executive Director. Paul has also been working on fundraising and member development for CL for much of this year. We've asked him to tell you a little about himself.

My name is Paul Magno and I've been involved with the consistent life ethic since my college days at Georgetown University. One of my most important mentors, Richard McSorley, SJ, made it clear to me that affirming peace and affirming life are all of a piece from a moral point of view. I've tried to honor that truth ever since.

One of the ways I chose was to attend the founding conference of Prolifers for Survival, organizational predecessor to Consistent Life, convened by Juli Loesch in Erie, PA in 1981. Subsequently, I worked locally in the Washington, DC area to make the connections. One result was coordinating between our Catholic Worker vigil at a weapons engineering lab and the Pro-life Nonviolent Action Project's vigil at a nearby abortion clinic to organize joint civil disobedience, one of the few times I know of such a thing ever happening anywhere!

Another was through many years' involvement in the

Catholic Worker movement, both locally in Washington, DC and through work with many CW colleagues & fellow travelers across the country and indeed internationally. The Worker puts a premium on living with integrity and nonviolence through the Works of Mercy. Invariably it demands of its adherents a comprehensive upholding of life - against a world habitually seeking to impose suffering and death, generally on those who are vulnerable to begin with.

Yet one more way I've honored the truth of the consistent life ethic has been through concentrating my attention on contesting the institution of war. There are many, many outrages against human dignity and life in this world. Often we get drawn to one or two in particular, and by way of Fr. McSorley, I've come to dwell on the problem of war.

Consider what it says about our society that we dedicate so much of ourselves, our spirits, our energy and imagination, our money and material resources to the maintenance and exercise of war. The 20th century was the bloodiest in history, in terms of



Interim CL Executive Director,
Paul Magno

the consequences of warfare, and we're not off to a very good start in this new century. War is certainly not the only life issue around, or the only one on which I'll be working here at Consistent Life, but it's virtually the oldest form of violence in the world, and abolishing it feels like a very good way to propel the world to nonviolence on many fronts.

There you have it, a few insights into who I am and what makes me tick as a Consistent Life advocate. It's not all of who I am (I'm also an unapologetic Red Sox fan), but it's a start.

So, get back to me. Fill me in a little on your Consistent Life story. Once we learn more about each other, it will help us work toward a movement in which we simply don't attempt to solve our problems by taking others' lives. A good and gentle world waits in the wings for our hands.

Send e-mails to pmagno@igc.org

Our New Address:

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Democrats for Life

(A CL member organization)

by Carol Crossed

Something strange is happening in the Democratic Party, something that's making some Republicans and pro-choice absolutists nervous. Democratic Party leaders are acknowledging there are indeed pro-life Democrats.

Howard Dean, Democratic National Committee Chair, Sen. Hillary Clinton (NY), and Sen. John Kerry (MA) have all said the party needs to reach out to proliferators. Their call for openness is already bearing fruit. Some examples:

- Democratic state legislators in Oklahoma passed the most comprehensive pro-life legislation since *Roe v. Wade*.
- Texas State Democratic Chair, Charles Soechting, was the keynote speaker June 11 at a state Democrats for Life convention.
- New York's Nassau County Manager, Tom Suozzi, unveiled a "Common Sense for the Common Good" program that will demonstrate Democrat's respect for life by funding adoptions.

In April, Howard Dean welcomed delegates from Democrats for Life of America, an organization that has grown to include chapters in 41 states, to DNC headquarters in Washington. The occasion was the unveiling of DFLA's 95-10 Initiative, a comprehensive proposal of 15 different pro-woman/pro-child policies that, if implemented, could potentially reduce the number of

abortions in America by 95 percent over the next 10 years.

Two Supreme Court cases, *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* had the net effect of approving abortion on demand, a practice of which the majority of Americans disapprove, while accepting exceptions in cases of rape, incest, severe disability of the child, or the life of the mother. These cases represent less than 5% of US abortions. It is in the other 95% of abortions that Democrats for Life wants to make a difference through 95/10.

The program would make adoption tax credits permanent, ban pregnancy as a 'preexisting condition', and make grants for ultrasounds so women can see their babies' development. It includes legislation requiring women's health centers and abortion clinics to disclose adverse effects of abortion, both emotional and physical and parental notification of their underage daughter's abortion. Other measures will require non-abortive contraception in insurance coverage, and full funding for the federal Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC). There's something here to offend everybody. But we believe if Republicans and Democrats can compromise, the net result will be more women valued and empowered, and fewer abortions.

At the press conference to announce the initiative, Nebraska Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE) said, "[95/10] outlined today is a good first step to successfully reduce the rate of abortion by offering alternatives that promote family, promote adoption, and provide

education and support for new mothers."

Given the growth of the DFLA - and the willingness of the Democratic Party leadership to pay attention to it - the national party may moderate its abortion views. Some of those close elections could swing the Democrats' way.

Go to: www.democratsforlife.org

IISA Edits New Book

by Rachel McNair

The **Institute for Integrated Social Analysis** (IISA) is the research arm of Consistent Life. IISA Director Rachel MacNair and CL supporter Stephen Zunes are editing a book: *Violence, Nonviolence, and Consistency*. It will cover the history of the consistent life ethic, the similar dynamics of violence across all the issues, connections of specific issues, and the connections of solutions to all issues of socially-approved violence. Several fine authors have already agreed to write specific chapters.

MacNair and Zunes are looking for help from grassroots CL members on several fronts.

They need statements for one chapter from single-issue groups indicating how their issue is foundational for stopping violence in all its manifestations. Missouri Right to Life, for example, explains that they don't address other issues because they believe establishing a right to life for the weak is foundational to stopping violence on everything else. People who oppose the death penalty have made the same type of argument



regarding government sponsorship of violence. Groups opposing war, poverty, and racism can certainly make the case as well, along with other issues not included in the official Consistent Life statement. A collection of these would make a good chapter. Leads on finding such statements would be much appreciated.

For another chapter, they need short pieces criticizing the consistent life ethic, from all different kinds of opponents.

Please send all writing or leads to: admin@rachelmacnair.com

Rachel MacNair's Fall Tour of Academic Conferences:

- September 8-11, Historic Peace Churches conference, "Seeking Peace: The Courage to be Nonviolent," in Indianapolis, IN -- a 90-minute workshop on "Killing as Trauma and Nonviolence as Lively: Two Aspects of Peace Psychology." The work on developing PTSD from killing includes not only combat veterans but abortion staff and those who carry out executions.
- October 6-7, Peace and Justice Studies Association, at Goshen College, Goshen, IN -- a 50-minute workshop on "The Impact of the Abortion Debate on Achieving Peace Movement Goals." In addition, Rachel will join a panel with representatives of a variety of views on abortion and emphasize that PJSA needs to have more dialogue about different viewpoints on abortion.
- October 15-16, Second Annual Gandhian Nonviolence

Conference, Memphis, TN -- a 75-minute workshop on "Integrating the Culture of Peace and the Culture of Life."

Come on Board!

by Bill Samuel, President

One way to further the effort of Consistent Life is to serve on our Board of Directors. Currently, we have a vacancy in the office of Treasurer and our Secretary must resign due to ill health. With no one on the Board able to fill either of these positions presently, we are looking for new Board members to fill these roles, which could also be combined into one position.

The Treasurer is responsible for seeing that proper financial records are kept, and that appropriate financial reporting is made to the Board and governmental agencies. In more general terms, the Treasurer should be keeping track of our financial condition and our fundraising efforts. The Treasurer should oversee the staff's day-to-day financial management and development work.

The Secretary makes, distributes and maintains copies of the minutes of Board and Executive Committee meetings, and keeps records of Board membership and terms of service. In addition, the Secretary conducts Board e-mail votes, reporting the results to the Board.

Board members serve 3-year terms, and may be reelected without limit. Officers have no set terms under our By-laws, and generally serve as long as they are willing. An officer should be

willing to serve in the position for at least a year. The officers constitute an Executive Committee, which takes action as needed between Board meetings.

The Board is widely dispersed geographically, and usually meets in person only once every 2-3 years. The Board meets by teleconference approximately quarterly. The Executive Committee meets by teleconference as needed. E-mail is extensively used for Board reports and to discuss matters of concern among the Board and Executive Committee. All Board members must be accessible by e-mail.

Compensation for board members consists of the opportunity to help build a more peaceful and life-affirming world, and to work with some great people in that effort. If interested in joining the Board as an officer, please e-mail your qualifications to President Bill Samuel at wsamuel@comcast.net, or call him at 301-946-7735 (home) or 301-943-6406 (cell).

Roberts Dialogue Brings Attention to Alternative Pro-Lifers

by Bill Samuel

In the wave of media coverage of the nomination of John Roberts to the Supreme Court, one thing drawing attention was the involvement of his wife Jane with Feminists for Life of America (FFLA), a Consistent Life member organization. Most major media outlets provided significant coverage of her work in this movement, including substantial



information about FFLA programs. The pieces often went beyond the particular organization to note the broader existence of a much more varied pro-life movement than the right wing stereotype. We hope this media flurry will get people who agree with us on many other issues to be open to the connection of these issues with the pro-life position on abortion.

Consistent Life Action Report

by Rachel MacNair

On August 20, Consistent Life members leafleted at the American Psychological Association convention in Washington D.C. with a handout narrowly tailored to that organization. We documented how their position on abortion aftermath was based on the work of researchers with a stated political bias, and asked them to consider how being inconsistent with scientific method would hurt their public policy advocacy. We suggested that the psychology of violence -- dehumanizing language and so on -- would apply to the abortion issue, and gave several consistent-life type web sites for those who wanted more insight for reflection.

Why should the progressive community care about Terri Schiavo?

Editorial by CL member, Lana Jacobs

In March of this year, I witnessed state ordered euthanasia. It is not the first time

or the last that we will see this. Most of the euthanasia we see is perpetrated by insurance companies and state funded Medicaid.

The disability community has a lot to teach us about life and its value. Many people are not aware that the death with dignity movement came out of the managed health care movement perpetrated by the corporate insurance companies in the early 1990s.

To many people in the disability liberation movement, death with dignity and assisted suicide are euphemisms for "duty to die" to make it easier on insurance companies and caregivers.

That is the crux of the matter. It is not about us. It is about valuing life and caring for those who cannot care for themselves.

The issue was never about recovery. The issue is valuing people with disabilities. Terri was not dying and she was not brain dead. She was a disabled woman. Even in the disability community, there is often a hierarchy, and women who cannot speak are at the bottom. The reason it took her 13 days to die was that she was healthy.

We also must explore the feminist issue of ownership of Terri. Where else can a man have a common law wife and children and order the execution of his other wife? As a feminist, I am outraged at the concept of Terri's body being owned by her husband. Where were the feminists to speak for a sister who could not speak for herself?

Since we as a society value people for what they produce,

rather than their existence, we cannot value people who do not enhance corporate and government structures. The very value of people is reduced to monetary issues. God gave us those to care for as a means for us to learn compassion and skills that we cannot learn from our culture unless we value all life. I contest the concept of burden as it is used in our culture. Rather, the most vulnerable, be they homeless people, disabled people, unborn children, those on death row and those who are victims of war are entrusted to us to value and protect and speak on their behalf when needed. Life choices are not about our comfort. We just are not allowed to take life. It seems simple, but it is layered in culture and euphemism.

Let us strip away the euphemism that clouds our judgment. Father Daniel Berrigan was asked by a student at St. Louis University to comment on the military response to 9-11 as justified. Fr Berrigan simply said we are not allowed to kill. We are not allowed to kill. It really is that simple.

This is why I was arrested for trying to take water to Terri. I did not plan it. There was no press release and no staging of action. I was trying to save a life. It was that simple. Terri was being killed and I could not stand by and allow it to happen. I stood there with my daughter, a disabled woman, and knew that I must act as a mother, as a human rights activist and as a Christian. The only peace I felt through Holy Week was when I was in jail, because I had done



Membership Dues

We rely on your donations to help fund the work we do, so please be generous when you send in your dues. Amounts for organizational and individual memberships are listed below.

SIGN US UP! We want to become members of *Consistent Life* (or renew our membership). Enclosed is our contribution for membership.

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Name: _____
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Address: _____

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Organizational Membership Dues:
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Individual Membership Dues:
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 \$15 Low income Membership

\$____ Pledge in addition to Consistent Life dues monthly quarterly annually

Donations and Membership fees to Consistent Life are tax deductible.

Fall 2005

Consistent Life

www.CONSISTENT-LIFE.org

what I could to stop state-ordered killing.

On June 6th, I stood before a judge charged with trespassing at the hospice. The judge gave me a day of probation and no fine. I am home with my family at the Catholic Worker caring for homeless mentally ill people once more. I will never forget the effect Terri has had on me and all the others her life has touched. She is a martyr for all of us to examine life and how we respond to the call to choose life, not death.

The Gift of Life

by Mary Rider

In April, I stepped down from my position as Consistent Life executive director because my husband, Patrick O'Neill, and I were expecting our eighth child in May. It was hard to leave, but I knew I was reaching a point where

I couldn't put enough time into CL business without hiring a full time nanny and maid (and frankly, CL didn't pay enough for that.)

On May 2, Mary Evelyn Rider O'Neill was born. A beautiful redhead, Mary Evelyn was born with Down syndrome (Trisomy 21) and a heart defect. Her first week was spent in the UNC Hospitals neonatal intensive care unit. Thanks be to God, Mary Evelyn and I came home on Mother's Day.

Mary Evelyn will need surgery soon to repair her heart. Several factors -- her weight, age and cardiac condition -- will determine when the surgery will happen. So we wait for her to slowly gain an ounce here and there (not so easy with her poor heart) and get a little bigger before her heart problems make it too difficult for her to breath.

Although Mary Evelyn is more than four months old, the first few weeks of her life were a blur. There was much to learn about

Down syndrome, heart defects and other potential health problems associated with Downs. She was constantly undergoing tests. Thankfully, many other problems were ruled out for now. At first, we were at a doctor's office or hospital appointment every few days. Now we just go a few times a month.

Early on, a friend of a friend



Mary Evelyn Rider O'Neill at her Baptism

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ave me a call. She had heard about Mary Evelyn and wanted to tell me about her youngest baby who had been born with Trisomy 17, a more serious and lethal genetic condition. We talked for more than 30 minutes and had a good conversation. The most amazing thing she told me was something she had heard from a friend living in Germany. Her friend said you don't see children with Down syndrome in Germany because German mothers often choose to abort babies with Down syndrome. Although abortion isn't forced there, like it may be in China, the coercion is heavy to end the life of an unborn child who may be less than perfect.

I have to admit I was shocked that the Germans didn't learn more from the Nazi era! Apparently eugenics is alive and well in Germany.

But of course eugenics is alive and well here too. Each time I have been pregnant I've been offered a multitude of tests to determine if there is anything wrong with the baby. Each time my answer has been that I'll only submit to the tests if there is something curative that can be done if something is wrong. Funny thing is, there isn't. So, I've never had those prenatal screening tests.

People ask if we knew Mary Evelyn would have Down syndrome. While we didn't know for sure, we knew the chances were much higher given my age. But as I watch this beautiful little baby grow and recognize her friends and family with her beatific, loving smile, my heart is filled with love and hope.

My daughter Annie, 5, has told me she's sad that Mary Evelyn has Down syndrome. I'm sad for Mary Evelyn only in so far as we have a

better picture of what her sufferings in life may be. We have less of an idea for our other children, only knowing that each of us has our share of suffering to endure along with the joy we're given.

We like to pretend we have some control over our lives and our children's lives. When faced with illness or disability, we're stripped of that illusion of control and must face the fact that we must deal with each day to the best of our abilities. Nothing more can be asked of us than that.

I feel sure that Mary Evelyn will bring great things to this world. While she may not discover a cure for cancer or AIDS, neither will most of us. But what she will do, what she already does, is bring love to everyone she meets. At the end of the day, that's more than enough to make a mother proud.

*Newsletter edited by Mary Rider.
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