

She wouldn't want to live that way?

By Dennis DiMauro, Lutherans for Life

Terri Schiavo died after 13 days of starvation and dehydration, and now our prayers need to be with Terri's family in this difficult time. But I think it is useful to try to cut through a lot of the buzz surrounding this case to look for the motivations that resulted in Terri's death.

The media fed us a steady diet of why Terri needed to be starved to death, and the central message was "Terri wouldn't want to live that way." But the media have also told us that Terri was in a persistent vegetative state. According to them, she didn't know what was going on, and she just followed objects around the room with her eyes, grunted, and smiled as involuntary reactions to stimuli. Furthermore, we were told that Terri didn't feel any pain or discomfort as she was starved to death in her hospital room, instead she happily and painlessly slipped away. In other words, Terri had no consciousness at all: while in her disabled state, she knew nothing, saw nothing, and felt no pain. She was, according to the press, a rock that just looked like a person.

So here is my question. How can a woman who essentially had no consciousness, perceive that "she didn't want to live that way?" How could a woman only capable of reacting to the most basic stimuli, be embarrassed about her condition, or deem that she would prefer to die? We were told that Terri's starvation was done for Terri's benefit, but if her condition was as her doctors described it, starving Terri because "she didn't want to live that way," just doesn't make any sense. Instead, I suspect that "someone didn't want her to live that way."

But why? Well I think there are a number of reasons, and the first is obvious: taking care of a severely handicapped person is a difficult, and highly emotional, full-time job. For a person not grounded in the belief that God holds all life precious, there comes a time when such a person will decide that all this effort is no longer worth it.

And let's also not forget that in our capitalistic society, these things often come down to money. The cost to care someone like Terri is exorbitant. And in America, as in most other parts of the world, money will almost always win the eventual battle between life and death for someone in an unclear health-care situation. And it's not always the families that are to blame. Just as often it is the hospitals, insurance companies, or governments, that are paying for such palliative care, who put pressure on families to end the lives of their loved ones.

So where do we go for help in these difficult matters? Well, the Bible tells us that we are not really equipped to make moral decisions

by ourselves. Proverbs 3:5 says, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*" When we try to make a right decision with our own understanding, sin always gets in the way. So we need to depend on the Holy Scriptures and our friends in Christ to help us in these difficult times. Psalm 31:15, says "*My times are in your hands.*" The Bible clearly tells us that God will determine when our lives end: this is not a role for humans.

We also need to be the servant in intra-family conflicts. The book of Ruth tells the story of a young Moabite bride, Ruth, who marries an Israelite man whose family has moved to Moab. Her husband soon dies and her mother-in-law, Naomi, decides to return to Israel. As Naomi is traveling back to Israel with Ruth, she urges Ruth to return her own country to find a new husband. But Ruth knows that if she did that, she would be leaving her mother-in-law totally alone. So Ruth makes a sacrifice and travels with her mother-in-law to Israel, even though that means that she may never find another husband. This story seems to parallel the Schiavo case: What if a sacrifice of one's own will for the sake of other family members was made? Wouldn't that have been the holier choice?

And then there is the issue of finances. The Bible is once again vital for our understanding of our proper relationship with money. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:24, "*No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*" It seems that the older I get, the more I see the love of money as the catalyst for all types of evil. In most of these health-care situations, money will often come into conflict with godly choices.

So in closing, let's rely on our Savior, the Holy Scriptures, and our Christian friends, to help us make the right decisions when it comes to human life. They are the rocks that we stand on in times of trouble, and they avoid the shifting sands of our imperfect world and our own sinful motivations.

Matthew 7:24-25 "*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock*



Dennis DiMauro

From Coast to Coast...NOEL and Silent No More March for Life!

By Sheila Bracken, NOEL Administrative Director, Silent No More Awareness

From San Francisco, California to Washington, D.C. members of NOEL and the Silent No More Awareness Campaign walked and marched miles to bear witness to the dignity of all life and to honor the lives of those lost from abortion. There were moments of delight when familiar faces connected in the crowds of people and times of somber reflection as we contemplated 32 years of lost lives.

I was invited to participate in the San Francisco Walk and as I spoke about the consequences of abortion with seven women standing behind me holding "I Regret My Abortion" signs, counter protesters tried to disrupt my speech. But the thousands of "Women Deserve Better Than Abortion" signs in the pro-life crowd and the courage of those standing with me emboldened me to proclaim the truth ever more fervently!

That was Saturday. On Monday, I was in Washington, D.C. organizing women from the Silent No More Awareness Campaign to be up on the dais of the March for Life so our "I Regret My Abortion" signs could be seen on C-Span and hopefully help those hurting from abortion know help is available. It was an incredible experience to participate in marches on both coasts just a day apart. At times I became overwhelmed with emotion as I prayed for God to use our witness to end abortion and to help hurting women and men.

A few days after the March was over...a woman who marched with us shared her perspective on the day's events, and as I read it, I realized I wanted to share it with you so you could experience it too. Here are excerpts from her [sharing].

"It is 13 degrees in D.C. at noon and those of us with Silent No More have been invited to stand on the dais behind March for Life organizer, Nellie Gray, and the many political figures who come to say a few words to the assembled crowd. After the remarks, Nellie leads us through a long fenced corridor to the front of the March. It is remarkable to turn around and view the sea of humanity behind us, with thousands of banners and signs identifying the groups.

"Nellie Gray stands at the front with many volunteers who carry the huge March for Life banner. They face a row of news reporters and photographers who kneel to take pictures. The Silent No More contingent is behind the front row. About 30 "Operation Outcry" women carry signs that say, "My Abortion Hurt Me," while the Silent No More men and women hold signs that say "I Regret My Abortion" or "I Regret Lost Fatherhood". Many of us hold our signs over our heads so the photographers can capture them.

"As a novice marcher, I assume that everyone participating in the March assembled in the Ellipse earlier. So, I am quite surprised to see block after block of sidewalks densely packed with pro-lifers singing and yelling their support. Evidently, they assemble on these sidewalks to view the March and then fall in behind when the massive group has passed by.

"It's easy to get caught up in the excitement. One of the rewarding parts of the day is having the opportunity to meet people I know through various online sources. Sometimes we look at each other and wonder how our life journeys brought us to this place where we're carrying signs that renounce our abortions. I also wonder what the onlookers think as they see us carrying these signs while laughing and having a good time.

"It takes perhaps forty minutes to arrive at the U.S. Supreme Court where SNMA co-founder, Janet Morana, suggests that we step onto the curb at the corner and turn to face the rest of the Marchers as they proceed up the street. We do this and watch as virtually everyone stops to look at us and our signs. An older woman comes running over and

says in an agitated way to those in the front row, "You need to get to confession!"

"Ann Marie Cosgrove stands in the front row and explains our mission to all who stop in front of us. Invariably, there are men in each of these groups who stare at us with expressions of reverence and fear. Some women and men come up to us to whisper, "Me, too," and speak hopefully of a day when they can join us. One man in particular joins our group and asks to hold one end of the banner. As he weeps silently, we take turns talking to him. He stays with our group for the rest of the day...

"At 4:30, [we meet back at] the Supreme Court where there is a small stage with a microphone in front of the steps. We form a semi circle behind the stage, facing the street. About 250 men and women, dressed for the weather, are gathered to observe the event. There are no pro-choice advocates present or, if there are, they're not holding signs. Later I hear that four pro-abortion advocates were there, but they just stood and listened to our stories.

"I note that the line I'm standing in contains more women holding "I Regret My Abortion" signs than stood earlier on the March for Life stage. I don't know where all the newcomers have come from. There are now about sixty of us. Jennifer O'Neill speaks first. As I listen to her, I'm suddenly aware that what I am about to do, talk about my past in starkly personal terms, is going to be a challenge.

"Alveda King shares her story next. She is stirring. Georgette follows and she chokes up as she speaks. I feel my throat close to hold back my tears. I have trouble listening to the next few women speak, because my throat continues to tighten and I try to figure out ways to avoid crying when I talk. Meanwhile, I look around the crowd and notice people here and there waving to catch my attention. Friends! People I know from my ministry that I haven't seen for months or years. They flash beautiful smiles of encouragement that make me feel loved and even more spastic about opening my mouth to speak.

"Some women have written down their stories, so they can stay within the two-minute time frame and to keep their own emotions under control. I didn't do that, so I choose two or three things I want to be sure to say and try to hold onto those thoughts in the midst of growing panic. Georgette goes up to stand by the current speaker and turns around to point at me. I walk toward her as she helps the other woman down, and I step up to the mic. A sense of sisterhood and solidarity with others who share my story settles into me.

"Others have spoken about forced abortions so I focus on the relative freedom of my choice, my strong pro-abortion convictions at that time, how kind the clinic staff was, and how empowered I felt that day, including the celebration dinner afterward with my boyfriend. I relate the inexplicable depression that settled on me in the ensuing months, the dance I entered into with my boyfriend as I unconsciously sought ways to replace my baby, and the grim horror that descended on me when I became pregnant and didn't terminate. My mind wrestled with questions to which there were no good answers. I mention the invisible wall my subconscious mind erects between me and my living children as I fear to expose them to what I see as a primitive destructive force contained within me. Halfway through, my throat betrays me and I am forced to push out these words out through tears. I may look like a mess and talk like an emotional wreck, but I am Silent No More.

For more information see: www.SilentNoMoreAwareness.org

Terri Schiavo: An Eyewitness Account

Fr. Frank Pavone National Director, Priests for Life President, NPRC

I was at Terri Schiavo's bedside during the final hours of her life. There was a little night table in the room. I could put my hand on the table and on Terri's head all within arm's reach. Do you know what was on that table? A vase of flowers filled with water. And I looked at the flowers. They were beautiful...fully nourished, living, beautiful. And I said to myself, this is absurd. This is absurd. These flowers are being treated better than this woman. She has not had a drop of water for almost two weeks. Why are those flowers there? What type of hypocrisy is this? The flowers were watered. Terri wasn't. And I can testify to you that her death was not at all peaceful or beautiful. It was the most agonized and horrifying death I have ever seen. Euthanasia advocates will tell you differently, but that's because they sell death as a product.

Terri's case is not about the withdrawal of life-saving medical treatment, but rather about the killing of a healthy person whose life some regarded as worthless. Terri was not dying, was not on life support, and did not have any terminal illness. Because some thought

she would not want to live with her disability, they insisted on introducing dehydration.

The danger in our culture is not that we will be over-treated, but rather that we will be under-treated. We already have the right to refuse medical treatment. What we run the risk of losing is the right to receive the most basic humane care — like food and water — in the event we have a disability. If you want to make plans for your future health care, do not do so by trying to predict the future, which is what "living wills" try to do. The reason you cannot indicate today what medical treatments you do or don't want tomorrow is that you don't know what medical condition you will have tomorrow, nor what treatments will be available to give you the help you need.

The better solution is to appoint a health care proxy, who is authorized to speak for you if you are in a condition in which you cannot speak for yourself. The National Right to Life Committee has designed a "Will to Live," which can be found at www.nrlc.org and which I recommend highly.



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Uniting For Life

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Pro-Life Truth Will Prevail

By Rev. J. Kirk van der Swaagh, Conservative Congregational Christian Conference

President George Washington asserted that, "Truth will ultimately prevail where there is pains taken to bring it to light." How can President Washington be so sure that if people will make the effort to get truth out into the open, into the light, that in the end it will triumph? Because truth corresponds with reality. By definition anything other than the truth does not correspond with reality. A lie, a deception, a ruse, a sham, a fraud, are all attempts at making people believe that something is real when, in fact, it is not. Because of this, truth will trump the lie every time for the fraud will remain only as long as the ruse remains undiscovered. On the other hand the truth will always remain. It may go unnoticed - or ignored - but it exists and does so truly and steadfastly.

Why is this so? Why is truth so durable, so indestructible? Because truth corresponds to the being of God. We are told by the apostle Paul, that in God's creation of everything God has revealed something about himself. In the things that he has made his "invisible attributes are clearly seen . . . even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). This means that things exist as they do because God has called them into being in order to reveal something about himself. They are real, therefore, because God is real.

Truth is not, therefore, some abstract notion to be debated. There is no such thing as "what is true for you might not be true for me." There is truth, enduring, prevailing truth that corresponds to the very being of the only true God and everything else is a sham, a fraud, a lie.

What has all this to do with the pro-life cause? Everything! If we are not involved in an endeavor that corresponds to what is true then we might as well go home now for we are doomed to fail. God will not bless our efforts for he cannot bless them for to bless a lie would be to deny himself and the Scripture declares, ". . . he cannot deny himself" (2Timothy 2:13). We cannot ask him to prosper a lie for God is truth and only that which is in line with his own being will be upheld by his eternal power.

But we are not involved in a vain, fruitless exercise. What we proclaim - what we profess - what we believe, is true. It is the other side in this struggle who are doomed for failure. This is so because their entire cause is built upon lies and deception. From the fabricated numbers as to how many women died due to "back alley" abortions, to the assertions that what is growing inside of a mother's womb is nothing more than impersonal tissue, to the persistent and insulting assertion that the way to help a woman in a crisis pregnancy is to destroy her baby, the "pro-choice" movement is a fraud.

I suspect that many of them know this. Why else would they object to Crisis Pregnancy Centers showing an expectant mother an ultrasound of her baby, or protest against a twenty-four hour waiting period or parental notification before a teenager is allowed to proceed with an abortion? Why else would they have to change the language of their arguments from "guaranteeing access to abortion" to the cruelly deceptive phrase "reproductive rights?" The reason that they object to such things and use language as they do, is because they know that people may just come to admit what everyone knows - it is a baby growing in there. And when that happens, the lie is uncovered, the truth made manifest and, as President Washington asserts - the truth prevails.

Pro-lifers, do not lose heart. The pro-death agenda is doomed to fail. Roe v Wade will be overturned because Roe v Wade is a lie and a lie does not have the power to stand before the truth. We must not become discouraged because it seems that truth goes unheeded and the fraud of the pro-death crowd persists. Take up the challenge of President Washington - make the truth known. March, picket, hold up signs, lobby congress, talk to your neighbor, teach your children, for in each of these activities and more - truth is being made known. And in the words of President Washington, "Truth will ultimately prevail where there is pains taken to bring it to light."



Rev. van der Swaagh

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National Pro-Life Religious Council

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

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"What I feel is revulsion at the moral horror that is abortion!"

Excerpts from homily by Bishop Timothy Whitaker, the United Methodist Church

In the United Methodist Church often many of us are silent and passive about abortion. . . . I suspect that we are silent and passive about abortion because often we allow ideology to trump theology in forming our ethical positions on controversial issues. It is no secret that abortion is captive to ideological and partisan political agendas in American life. . . . Yet we who are Christians cannot let our ideological or partisan political loyalties constrain our witness to the living God. We need to view abortion as a concern that transcends ideological or partisan loyalties.

I think that our silence and passivity about abortion comes from the difficulty of being a Christian in America. I used to think that being a Christian in America is easy. I thought it would be hard to be a Christian in a country dominated by other religions or in a Communist country where atheism was avowed by the state, but I thought it was easy to be a Christian here. Now I realize that practicing the Christian life in America has its own difficulties. The seductions of American life may seem more subtle, but they are real and dangerous. In America both the culture and the state view persons as autonomous individuals who have private rights to live as they choose. But we who are Christians have a different anthropology: we view persons as members of a community who are made in the image of the Triune God and who have both rights and responsibilities. Therefore, we cannot endorse a woman's right to abort an unborn child as a morally neutral decision because we understand that the child also has a right to live and the community has a responsibility to care for this child if the mother is unable to rear it. . . .

Can there be any doubt that there is silence and passivity about abortion in our Church? How often is a sermon about abortion or an educational forum on abortion offered in our congregations? How many congregations are involved in supporting crisis pregnancy centers in their communities or offering tangible support to women with unwanted pregnancies? What kind of pastoral counsel is being offered behind the closed doors of the pastor's office? When the bishops gave splendid leadership in the Bishops'

Initiative on Children in Poverty, there was a great mobilization of ministries for children, but not even scant mention was made of the deaths of unborn children because of abortion

What I feel is revulsion at the moral horror that is abortion. This revulsion is magnified when I reflect upon the fact, as Carl Braaten has said, "ninety-nine percent of all murders in the United States are abortions." I would like to be a bishop of a Church that knows how to make philosophers and politicians feel the same revulsion of the moral horror of abortion.

Perhaps this feeling of revulsion against the horror of abortion is a feeling shared by most human beings. Certainly Christians have feelings others may not have because we have been told the Gospel. For Christians, revulsion at the moral horror of abortion is a sensibility shaped by the story of God's purposes told in the Bible.

It is often said that there is no clear prescription against abortion in the Bible. That is because such a horror is unthinkable and unspeakable to the people of Israel and to the people who are the church. The grand story of God's gift of peace and God's opposition to the sin of violence compels us to be a people who try to protect the unborn from killing and to work for a culture of life. . . .

As Christians moved into the wider world where abortion was not unthinkable or unspeakable, they had to apply the divine commandment against murder to the horrible practice of abortion. . . .

Pope John Paul II has made a powerful Christian witness to God's peaceable purposes in his 1995 encyclical on *The Gospel of Life*. He warned the world about creating "a culture of death," that is rebellion against "the Gospel of life." He showed us that a culture of death is one that endorses abortion, [and] euthanasia. . . .



Bishop Whitaker