The Natural Law leads us to freedom
By Travis & Kelly Benson

(An edited version of this article appeared in the January 2010 issue of The Bishop’s Bulletin.)

January 22nd will once again mark an event that changed the course of this nation. This date is the solemn anniversary of the 1973 United States Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, and the companion case, Doe v. Bolton.

Together, these two decisions laid the groundwork for the “right” of a mother to kill her unborn child at any time during pregnancy for any reason. Although the language of the decisions suggest that an abortion must be necessary to protect the health of the mother, subsequent decisions have completely gutted the term of meaning. Simply not wanting a child has been held as a justifiable threat to the mother’s mental health.

Many pro-abortion Americans will celebrate this day as a day they believe women were liberated by the recognition of their right to privacy and control over their own bodies – their right to “freedom of choice”. At the same time, many pro-life Americans will reflect on this day as a day the Court provided the stamp of approval for the future killing of millions of our tiniest citizens, creating a cultural vision of children as burdens to be destroyed and discarded, and exploiting women in the name of individual freedom.

Often, the issue of abortion is compared to the issue of slavery, the institution of which was protected in law in our country for eighty-seven years before being banned in 1865 by the 13th Amendment. When looking back at the legal and political debates of that time, almost eerily, you see arguments about the “freedom of choice” coupled with a direct attempt to ignore the object of that choice – the

(Continued on page 2)

Embryonic Stem Cell Research Bill Introduced in State Senate
By Travis & Kelly Benson

After much talk this fall about a possible initiated measure for the 2010 ballot that would repeal the protections against embryonic stem cell research and cloning, the group behind the push decided to go the legislative route this session. Yesterday, Senate Bill 74 was introduced. True to form, the bill contains deceptive language, even in it’s title, which states that it is “an Act to repeal the prohibition against stem cell treatments and research and to establish ethical guidelines to regulate stem cell research.”

Remember, there are no restrictions against adult stem cell treatments or research in our state. The law only restricts research that requires the death of our tiniest citizens at their earliest stage of life to obtain embryonic stem cells. To follow this bill and others, visit the CAN website at: www.can4life.org.
slaves – treating them as property and not recognizing them as fellow human beings. Such is the treatment of the unborn today.

When faced with the moral implications of slavery, Stephen A. Douglas explained that “It is for [citizens] to decide therefore the moral and religious right of the slavery question for themselves within their own limits.” The humanity of the slave was deemed a “religious” question that had no place in a constitutional debate. Sound familiar? Douglas even played the “judge not lest ye be judged” card in response to abolitionists stating that slavery violated the law of God. Such is the pro-abortion mantra today.

But Abraham Lincoln responded: “Repeal the Missouri Compromise--repeal all compromises--repeal the declaration of independence--repeal all past history, you still can not repeal human nature. It will still be the abundance of man's heart, that slavery extension is wrong; and out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth will continue to speak.”

And such is our response against the evil of abortion. In fact, the words of Abraham Lincoln reflect his understanding of natural moral law. Compare them with the words of Pope Benedict XVI, in his Address to the Participants in the International Congress on Natural Moral Law in February 2007, when he explained that the natural law “is written on the heart of man” and “has as its first and general principle, ‘to do good and to avoid evil’. This is a truth which by its very evidence immediately imposes itself on everyone.”

Natural moral law, called lex naturalis, allows us to employ reason to determine what is good and what is evil, and to act on that determination. Or, as Charles Rice explains, “Man can know, through the use of his reason, what is in accord with his nature and therefore good.” Because this law is inscribed on our hearts by our Creator, it is accessible and understandable by all, even those who do not ultimately believe in God. In other words, it is there, whether a person believes God placed it there or not.

Just as natural physical laws cause us to kick our feet and move our arms when we jump into a swimming pool, lest we sink to the bottom and drown, natural moral laws tell us that intentionally killing a child developing in the womb of its mother is not in accord with our nature. And just as the voice of natural law ultimately led our nation to outlaw slavery, it will – out of the abundance of our hearts – one day lead our nation to outlaw abortion.

The foundation of our country has been severely wounded by the decision in Roe v. Wade. Our Holy Father explained that this cannot be avoided when a law made by man overrides “the norm written by the Creator”. We see this in the suffering of post-abortive women, in the increasing instances of child abuse and neglect, in the rejection of motherhood as honorable and just, in the treatment of our fertility as a disease, and in so many other ways.

So what is the answer? As our Holy Father proclaimed: “Natural law is, definitively, the only valid bulwark against the arbitrary power or the deception of ideological manipulation. The knowledge of this law inscribed on the heart of man increases with the progress of the moral conscience. The first duty for all, and particularly for those with public responsibility, must therefore be to promote the maturation of the moral conscience. This is the fundamental progress without which all other progress proves non-authentic. The law inscribed in our nature is the true guarantee offered to everyone in order to be able to live in freedom and to be respected in their own dignity.”

Abortion is the epitome of “deception of ideological manipulation”. Let us form our consciences in the beauty of the teachings of our Catholic faith, and then “promote the maturation of the moral conscience” with our loved ones, fellow parishioners, and in the public square. This is the way to true freedom – the way to respect for the life and dignity of us all.
LifeTimes Litterae Page 3

As long-time advocates of health care reform, the U.S. Catholic bishops continue to make the moral case that genuine health care reform must protect the life, dignity, consciences and health of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. The bishops have stated clearly that health care reform should not advance a pro-abortion agenda in our country. But that is, in fact, what’s happening.

On November 7, the U.S. House of Representatives passed major health care reform that reaffirms the essential, longstanding and widely supported policy against using federal funds for elective abortions or plans that cover abortions and includes positive measures on affordability and immigrants. On December 24, the U.S. Senate rejected this policy and passed health care reform that requires federal funds to help subsidize and promote health plans that cover elective abortions. All purchasers of such plans will be required to pay for other people’s abortions through a separate payment solely for abortion, and there is no way to opt out. Outside the abortion context, neither bill has adequate conscience protection for health care providers, plans or employers.

These two bills must now be combined into one bill that both the House and Senate will vote on in final form. Provisions against abortion funding and in favor of conscience protection must be part of a just health care reform bill, or the final bill must be opposed. The bishops continue to be attacked for trying to “derail health care over abortion,” but who is it that is really forcing the abortion issue on health care reform?

Thirty-seven years ago, the Supreme Court wrongly decreed that abortion was the law of the land. Now Congress wants to force us to pay for it. This could be the most radical expansion of abortion in our country since Roe v. Wade and conscience protections are being trampled in the process.

Catholics, and all people of good will, need to make their voices heard insisting that health care reform protect the lives, dignity, consciences and health of all, and not advance a radical abortion agenda on our country. Parishes across the country are distributing bulletin inserts from the U.S. bishops’ Conference asking you to please contact your congressional representatives immediately and urge them to address these moral issues. The insert includes a web address www.usccb.org/action that allows you to send an email message to Congress with a click of a button or you can call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121, or call your Members’ local offices. Contact info can be found on Members’ web sites at www.house.gov & www.senate.gov.

The message to Congress is simple: “I urge you to work to uphold essential provisions against abortion funding, to include full conscience protection and to assure that health care is accessible and affordable for all. Until and unless these criteria are met, I urge you to oppose the final bill.”

Abortion is not health care. True health care reform should be about saving lives, not destroying them.

To learn more about the bishops’ advocacy for authentic health care reform, visit www.usccb.org/healthcare.

Tom Grenchik is Executive Director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Go to www.usccb.org/prolife to learn more about the bishops’ pro-life activities.
### Vigil Mass for Life:

**45 Bishops, 350 Priests, 65 Deacons, 550 Seminarians**

by John-Henry Westen | [www.lifesitenews.com](http://www.lifesitenews.com)

WASHINGTON, DC, January 22, 2010 (LifeSiteNews.com) - Arriving over an hour early for the 6:30pm Vigil Mass for the March for Life yesterday, not only was every seat in the massive Basilica of the National Shrine occupied, but so was every good standing area. Brian McFee, his wife Molly and their children Lucas and Dominic were in the front row of seats open to the public – but to gain this distinction they had to arrive at 1pm to stake out their spot.

The Mass, which precedes the annual March for Life, is a joyous celebration of faith and commitment to life, and a stunning spectacle. Five Cardinals accompanying 40 other bishops and archbishops concelebrated the Mass with 350 priests. Also in the sanctuary were 65 deacons and a whopping 550 seminarians and 60 servers.

Hundreds of men and women religious also took part, with the steps leading up to the sanctuary taken up by a large contingent of the Sisters of Life. Well over 8,000 faithful jammed every nook and cranny of the spacious Basilica both in the main church and the crypt below.

The Mass was open to millions more as well, as the event was broadcast via EWTN into countless homes.

During the 35-minute long opening procession the faithful looked on with awe as over 1000 men of the Church professed by their presence their commitment to the cause of life. The Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, the Archbishop of Galveston-Houston and Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

As they processed out of the church a little baby was held aloft to the cheers of hundreds, and was blessed by Cardinal DiNardo.

### Upcoming Events

**JANUARY**

**WHAT:** South Dakota Legislative Session  
**WHERE:** Pierre, SD  
**WHEN:** January 12th - March 29th  
*Follow along at [www.can4life.org](http://www.can4life.org).*

**FEBRUARY**

**WHAT:** Life Chain Link Prayer with Bishop Paul J. Swain  
**WHERE:** Planned Parenthood on 41st Street, Sioux Falls  
**WHEN:** February 15th, 12:00 noon  
*To learn more about, and to sign up to participate in this prayer ministry, please visit the Life Chain Link Page of the Respect Life Website.*

### A Pro-Life Prayer For Our President And Public Officials

Lord God, Author of Life and Source of Eternal Life,  
Move the hearts of all our public officials and especially our President, to fulfill their responsibilities worthily and well to all those entrusted to their care.

Help them in their special leadership roles, to extend the mantle of protection to the most vulnerable, especially the defenseless unborn, whose lives are threatened with extermination by an indifferent society.

Guide all public officials by your wisdom and grace to cease supporting any law that fails to protect the fundamental good that is human life itself, which is a gift from God and parents.

You are the Protector and Defender of the lives of the innocent unborn. Change the hearts of those who compromise the call to protect and defend life. Bring our nation to the values that have made us a great nation, a society that upholds the values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

Mary, the Mother of the living, help us to bear witness to the Gospel of Life with our lives and our laws, through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

*Imprimatur: January 22, 2009; Most Reverend Robert J. Baker, Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama*

### Meditation

Many people are very, very concerned with the children of India, with the children of Africa where quite a few die of hunger, and so on. Many people are also concerned about all the violence in this great country of the United States. These concerns are very good. But often these same people are not concerned with the millions who are being killed by the deliberate decision of their own mothers. And this is what is the greatest destroyer of peace today - abortion which brings people to such blindness.

And for this I appeal in India and I appeal everywhere - "Let us bring the child back." The child is God's gift to the family. Each child is created in the special image and likeness of God for greater things - to love and to be loved.

~ Blessed Teresa of Calcutta to the National Prayer Breakfast in 1994

### Respect Life Reflection

“Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion.”

~ Blessed Teresa of Calcutta