

Pro-life Protest Manifesto
Background information Pro-life NPNS
(National Protest/National Strike) Presentation
-A Unified National Strategy to Decisively End Pre-born
Child Killing

Epiphany #1: While I was still in the seminary, I attended a seminarian pro-life retreat sponsored by Priests for Life. **Greg Cunningham** and **Monica Miller** both gave presentations. During Monica's presentation, a discussion between Greg and Monica began on the merits of the **Operation Rescue Movement**. The particulars of the discussion are not important for this manifesto. What struck me in the discussion was Monica's thought that the pro-life movement has to return to the Operation Rescue mindset of (and I paraphrase) "what are we willing to do to save a baby's life." For me it echoed Greg's challenge of "No more excuses" which I had heard years before; a challenge that had a profound effect on me in my activism.

Reflecting on the Rescue Movement, its mindset, and Monica and Greg's discussion, several thoughts came to my mind. 1. I greatly admire those who willingly took beatings and suffered incarceration to save babies from murder. 2. I seriously regret to this day that I was clueless about pro-life ministry when the Rescue Movement was happening and that I was not part of it. I still regret daily that I suffer very little for our brothers and sisters in the womb. 3. Today, in hindsight, OR had the right mindset. Today that mindset is being applied to other locations by many in our movement, but surely not to the extent it should applied.

St. Pope JP II, in *The Gospel of Life* (EV), called abortion "a structure of sin," the basis of the "culture of death." It has occurred to me that the secularists have understood that the battle they are waging against life, marriage, family, and religion starts in the public square. They have sought to eliminate all signs of religion

from all public areas. Nativity Scenes and the Ten Commandments are the primary example. Reflecting on this discussion between Greg and Monica, it struck me that we need to wage our battles on Main Street USA and in the public square, but we also need to risk arrest through civil disobedience in the mindset of OR. This is exactly what Martin Luther King understood, that peaceful, non-violent protests on Main Street and in the public square were the basis of bringing about social change.

Epiphany #2: Around this same period of time, I think the following January, myself and 3 other future priests were returning to our seminary from the March for Life in DC. A discussion ensued initiated by now Father Charles LaCrioux about how to end preborn child killing. Charlie simply put forth the notion that the mass murder will all end when people in our country wake up one morning and cannot have their toast and coffee, heat their homes, or put gas into their cars. He went on to state that abortion, a sin born out of convenience, will end when it becomes inconvenient to support it. When the convenience of abortion causes a loss of people's conveniences, the people will turn against it. I immediately saw the simplicity of this idea as well as all of the obstacles that would have to be overcome (unified will) to get to this point...a national shut down / strike.

Two Models

Thus it occurs to me that in the last 60 years, 2 models have been successfully employed to end injustice in the area of civil rights. 1. Martin Luther King's model of peaceful, non-violent protests to bring about social and legal change in the 60's. 2. Lech Walesa's model of "Solidarity" utilizing national strikes to peacefully force the communists from Poland in the 80's. I believe we as a movement need to utilize these two models to end preborn child killing in the United States. We need to engage in national protests leading to a national

strike leading to constitutional personhood from the moment of conception.

We are already protesting!

Yes we are already protesting and protesting in many different ways. I know that if I asked any pro-lifer if they personally protest abortion, they would readily say, “of course.” Yet, we were so reticent to use the word. We march for life, walk for life, rally for life, defend life, we stand up, pray, and witness for the end of abortion, but as a movement, we stopped using the word protest and it seems (and I may be wrong) we avoided the word protest at all costs.

Terminology...words matter!

The movie **Selma** had a great impact on me as an affirmation of this concept of protest. MLK was not afraid to call what he was doing what it was...He was peacefully and non-violently protesting the violation of the civil rights of black Americans. What I find interesting is that all of us have this mindset, yet we were reticent to use the word and call what we are doing what it is. While we are doing all the things we are doing in defense of life and to end abortion, I felt we needed to add, “**and we do so in protest of pre-born child killing.**”

Unity

Someone once asked me why the pro-life movement lacks the unity of the pro-abortion movement. I responded because there is so many necessary components that constitutes the pro-life mosaic...remote prayer, on site prayer and witness, counseling, CPCs, post-abortion healing, political activism, education, and much more. “One Spirit, many gifts” says St Paul. Pro-life people are called by the Holy Spirit in any number of ways to minister to our brothers and sisters in the womb, their moms, and those wounded by abortion. All of these are necessary and important,

but unfortunately for an equal number of reasons, the different pieces of the mosaic don't always fit nicely into place and of course, we all know the evil one uses the necessary diversity in our movement against us. We see the divisiveness all around us despite our best efforts to be unified. Conversely, pro-death people are unified because they have one focus... keeping abortion for profit legal without restriction.

Protest...simple terminology to unite us and overcome divisiveness.

“Everything I do in defense of life, I do in protest of pre-born child killing.” The first step in adopting the “protest” mindset is merely accepting the terminology. “I march for life and in protest of pre-born child killing.” “I lobby for the rights of the unborn in protest of pre-born child killing.” “I pray and counsel at abortion mills to save babies and in protest of pre-born child killing.” No matter what good work we are doing and what terminology we use now, we can unify our efforts and project a more serious mindset in all of our ministries merely by adding the term “protest pre-born child killing.”

Decisive

It is clear that we are utilizing a multitude of somewhat successful strategies to end abortion. We are restricting abortion in many states, we are closing abortion mills, we are finding more and more innovative ways to educate people, using ultrasound to save babies, and there are ample opportunities to pray for the end of abortion. However, none of these strategies appear to be decisive. **The personhood movement is surely an end strategy and I think ultimately needs to be our goal...constitutional personhood from the moment of conception.** But how are we going to get there? State by state? A federal amendment? As with all legislative solutions, we are dealing with politicians who want everything on their terms in the

face of a well funded and aggressive opposition. **National protests that lead to a national strike until personhood at conception is a decisive strategy in which we demand that the government deal with us on our terms.**

Progression of protest movement

1. Adopt the terminology “protest” as an additional aspect of what we do. 2. Achieve the point where nationally everyone is using the word “protest” regardless of what activity we are engaged in.

3. Find more and more intriguing ways and places to protest.

4. Peaceful, non violent civil disobedience as the national protest movement takes on a life of its own.

5. Introduce calls for a “national strike” as the final level of protest.

6. National strike is called to be sustained until constitutional personhood is granted from moment of conception

7. Strike continues in the form of various forms of protest including no work, no unnecessary purchases, communal care of each other, fasting, and prayer vigils in church and public.

8. Constitutional personhood is granted to the unborn from moment of conception.

More terminology: **Ministry: How to offset the stigma of “protest?”**

Someone once asked me, “Father you use abortion victim imagery, visually and verbally, and it is obvious what you do is protesting. How is it that you can call what you do a ministry?” The answer is quite obvious actually. Everything we do in the movement we do for the praise, honor, and glory of God in the

desire to do God's will and thus what we do is ministry. This may seem to conflict with the fact that abortion is a violation of human rights and not a religious issue, but it really doesn't matter...civil rights issue, human rights issue, religious issue...the fact is that we have justice on our side and we spend too much time explaining ourselves and defending our position, trying to show or prove that abortion is immoral and a violation of human rights. That being said, prayer and trust in Jesus is essential to sustain us.

Let the signs and our actions do the talking!

Another person once asked me, "Father, why does the debate over abortion always become emotional?" My answer is because we debate the undebatable. We know we are right and the reality is the pro-death crowd knows we are morally correct. It doesn't matter to them. This is a battle of the wills. It is the replication of the original battle for heaven. There was no debate or discussion. It was a battle of will and God's will won out and will always win out over the will of evil. But we must exert God's will as Michael the Archangel exerted God's will over Satan. These are babies in the womb and we are killing babies and we are not going to stop protesting until we stop killing pre-born children. No more discussion necessary!

If not now, when?

After 40 years of trying to end abortion in this country, we have seen the anti-marriage crowd with a very small core overwhelm the government and the culture to institutionalize immoral behavior. This is as monumental moment as January 22nd, 1973. If we were able to go back to that date in history, would we react differently knowing what we know now? Today, many more people are upset at our government and our culture than ever before. We have seen "occupy" protests, "immigration" protests, and "gay pride" protests. They haven't necessarily used the word

protest either, but surely they were not concerned about what people thought of them. **I suggest we consider using the word protest, define it as peaceful and non-violent, and not worry about what people say about us after we declare “we protest anyone who profits from, supports, and condones pre-born baby killing most of all our government!”**

If not now, when? Protest of an institution vs an issue. More unity!

The moment seems to be right. We are not only protesting the killing of pre-born children, but people are protesting attacks on marriage and family. We are also protesting attacks on religious freedom and freedom of speech. Protests at this moment in time could possibly go beyond our single issue of baby killing and be joined by others who are protesting other aspects of corrupt and immoral government intrusion. A protest movement could transcend one issue and ultimately focus on our corrupt and immoral government intruding on human rights.

Seriously?

Someone once asked me, “If we can’t get people to come and pray in front of abortion mills, how are we going to get them to protest?” This may be correct, but maybe the question here is, “do we ask enough of ourselves and enough of others?” Do people really take us seriously? I truly believe that we need to ask more of ourselves, sacrifice more ourselves, and ask more of others.

Other thoughts...

Current Planned Parenthood situation...perfect opportunity to protest, yes? The most recent revelations about Planned Parenthood is a perfect opportunity to have a national protest directed toward Planned Parenthood. Isn't that in essence what we are doing already in regard to Planned Parenthood?

Types and places of protest! (check out the slideshow @

www.protestbq.com)

There is unlimited places and types of protests. Public square, busy streets, overpasses, schools and universities, neighborhoods of politicians, business leaders and business, abortionists, or anyone else who profits from, supports, or condones abortion. The collective imagination of the pro-life movement has found and will find innovative ways and places to protest.

Use of abortion victim images?

Encouraged yet not always necessary. Experience has been that once people realize it is an abortion protest, those who are going to be offended are offended; sometimes more offended if there are no abortion imagery signs because those signs give them an extra excuse to complain about us. Signs should include a variety of text signs about the focus of the protest, baby development images, victim imagery et al. Actually very few people carry victim imagery. The variety of signs tells the protest story and the focus. We have experienced this and I am sure many of us have...a dozen protestors completely silent and people claiming "they were screaming at us." The signs and their consciences were screaming at them. We actually also had someone say, "there are hundreds of them; they are everywhere!" In reality our average protest is about 12 people holding a variety of signs!

Solidarity: Lech Wales had control of only 1/3 of the workers in Poland (solidarity topped off at 10 million workers) when he shut Poland's economy down and forced the Communists out of Poland. Here in the US, we have a much greater percentage of people of same mind plus social media and better communications.

Martin Luther King had to compete with some violent elements

in the Civil Rights Movement yet he was not distracted nor deterred. We cannot be afraid that we will look bad if some people become too extreme. Riots are not protests. People today can tell the difference between a riot and a protest.

The situation right now with the **Abolitionists** is very disconcerting and I stand firmly with who we are and what we do in our movement. I have presented all of this to the abolitionists. It appears as if NPNS is right in their wheelhouse and possibly a source of uniting what is dividing us.

I am the least worthy! I do not wish in any way for my thoughts and ideas to be a criticism of anything we are doing as a movement. I am always far more critical of myself in this movement; two babies in heaven, never doing as much as I should do or can do. As to protests and sacrificing for our brothers and sisters in the womb, I am the biggest coward. I have suffered little in my time doing pro-life activism, far less than many leaders of our movement. I am also aware of the tension that conflict causes such as we have seen with the abolitionists movement. I have reached out to them often about NPNS which should be right in their wheelhouse and they have expressed little interest. I have also challenged them often about how everyone, pro-life, abolitionist...everyone is an incrementalist insofar as all of us can do more each day to save lives and end abortion. I know I am the most guilty of this. That being said, I feel we need a decisive and unified national strategy to end pre-born baby killing and I believe that NPNS is such a strategy.

Epilogue: These thoughts and concepts are the basis of initial conversation. Absolutely these need further discussion and fleshing out. These ideas are not meant to be a definitive course of action toward our desired end. Additionally much prayer, fasting, and self reflection is needed. As Father Frank Pavone said in his book, repentance is needed by everyone in our culture

in order for us to move forward to end the courage of pre-born baby killing.