

# Life Insight

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## Highs and Lows of the Week That Was

If anyone needed encouragement before entering battle against overwhelming odds (think Agincourt, *Henry V*, Act IV, sc. iii), surely he could have found it in Washington, DC on the week of the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court's decisions in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*. Pro-life Americans turned out in unprecedented numbers to pray for an end to the killing of innocent boys and girls and to witness to our unwavering determination that we shall not quit this fight until we prevail.

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception is the largest Catholic church in the U.S. and eighth largest church in the world, but it's not big enough to hold pilgrims wanting to attend the Vigil Mass for Life on January 21. The Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, and staff of the Shrine, Trinity University and the Catholic University of America, collaborated in offering two "overflow" Masses on the Trinity and CUA campuses. Notably, some 43 bishops (including five cardinals) were joined in the sanctuary of the Basilica by over 400 priest-celebrants, scores of deacons, and about 350 seminarians. The stirring homily by Cardinal Justin Rigali, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, was frequently punctuated with applause. Here is a brief excerpt:

*"This morning's dawn began the first full day in office of the first African-American president our nation has ever had. We observe this as an historic milestone in the life of a country where people were once oppressed and even enslaved because of the color of their skin. The rejection of slavery and racism has signified an enormous change for the benefit of our civilization. Today, as people called to witness to the Gospel of Life, we must constantly proclaim the need for a new change, one that will complete this march toward human equality. Desperately needed is a culture of life in which all people, from conception to natural death, are valued and respected regardless of their age, race, disability, stage of development, or condition of dependency. This change we need! This change we believe in!"*

*"We welcome a new Administration and a new Congress. They will need our encouragement and our prayers, but they will also need our voices, united as a constant reminder of the rights of the poor, the sick, the elderly, those with disabilities, the imprisoned, and, yes,*

*especially the most innocent, vulnerable and weakest among us: the child in the womb. We intend to work with those in public office whenever we can, and to raise our voices in respectful but impassioned protest when we must."*

The full homily can be read at [www.usccb.org/prolife/prayervigil/homilies.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/prayervigil/homilies.shtml).

Following the National Rosary for Life, Night Prayer (Byzantine Rite), and Holy Hours for Life from midnight to 7 AM conducted by seminarians from across the country, a 7:30 AM Mass again filled the Great Upper Church of the Shrine with pilgrims who had traveled throughout the night. Bishop Paul Loverde of the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, inspired and energized the pilgrims with remarks such as these:

*"[Our] faith requires us to oppose evil and to do good, to oppose abortion on demand and to provide help to mothers facing challenging pregnancies. ... Moreover, we are being urged to concentrate only on reducing the number of abortions. Our response is unequivocal and absolutely clear: our goal is not the reduction of abortions but the elimination of all abortions! ...*

*"We have come here, seeking forgiveness for those times when we failed to support or to witness to the sanctity of life, whether through fear or apathy or the lack of awareness, or, God forgive us, downright disobedience and disregard for the sanctity of life. But here, the Lord is saying to us through the prophet Isaiah: 'I will not accuse you forever, nor always be angry; ... I saw their ways, but I will heal and lead them; I will give full comfort to them and to those who mourn for them, I the Creator, who gave them life' (Is 57:15-19).*

*"We have come here, seeking deepened awareness and understanding. Saint Paul tells us in today's second reading 'Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, ... think about these things.' Yes, abortion is an act of injustice; it is not honorable and it opposes the truth about life! ...*

*"We are here, seeking a massive conversion of hearts! Although laws prohibiting abortion and supporting life are needed and necessary, in the end, the conversion of hearts is crucial! We storm heaven, asking for this grace above all other graces: the conversion of hearts.*

*“We are here, seeking renewed strength and zeal to proclaim and to live the Gospel of Life, because this proclamation and witness will engender even greater hope and, in turn, hope will fuel ever stronger witness!”*

*“Our prayer is answered here. Hope comes to us, beyond words: the Lord Jesus Himself, Hope Incarnate! He embraces us in Holy Communion: He sends us forth, so that by word and deed, we may live the Gospel of Life and witness to Him, Christ Our Hope! He sends us forth today into the streets of this nation’s capital, and later, into the streets where we live, not to be violent or cynical, not to crush those who are already burdened by their participation, often without full consent, in abortion. We are sent forth to proclaim hope, the hope that forgives and heals, the hope that strengthens and enables all of us in our efforts to eliminate abortion and to promote life! This is the hope that, through God’s grace and only with His grace, will empower us to overturn the current culture of death and to restore and to intensify the new culture of life.*

*“Yes, the atmosphere is charged with words and with the realities conveyed by these words: change, accountability, responsibility and, above all, hope! We will remain steadfast in our commitment to change the culture of death into the culture of life. We will remain accountable to God and to the Church for proclaiming the Gospel of Life and we will remain responsible for upholding life from conception to natural death and in every stage in between.*

*“This is our time, the time to become even more a people of life and for life, because we are, in Christ and with Christ, a people of hope — today, tomorrow and all days until the victory of life is won — for the glory of God and the salvation of the world! Amen.”*

At the Youth Rally and Mass at the packed Verizon Center on January 22, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, read an inspiring message from Pope Benedict XVI:

*“His Holiness asks you to kindly convey his cordial greetings to the more than 20,000 young people from throughout the United States who will gather on 22 January for the annual Youth Rally and Mass for Life held in conjunction with the national March for Life.*

*“His Holiness is deeply grateful to all who take part in this outstanding annual witness to the Gospel of Life, and to the many others who support them by fasting and prayer. During his visit to the United States last April, he asked young people, in the light of their love for Christ, to promote a culture of life by defending the unchanging moral truths which safeguard the dignity and rights of every man, woman and child in our world – including the most defenseless of our brothers and sisters, the unborn child in the mother’s womb. ... No Christian can shirk the moral duty of affirming the sacredness of God’s gift of life at every stage of its development and working to*

*ensure that this fundamental human right receives due legal protection.*

*“For this reason, the Holy Father encourages young people to make their voices heard in addressing this burning moral and social issue with honesty and integrity, working as wise and committed citizens for the building of a truly just and humane society, in which every member of the human family is allowed to share in the banquet of life. Commending all those gathered for the March for Life to the prayers of Mary, Mother of the Church, he cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of wisdom, strength and peace in the Lord.”*

The message is signed by Archbishop Fernando Filoni, Substitute for the Secretary of State of the Holy See, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

As teens and young adults streamed from the Verizon Center and the various downtown churches where Masses were celebrated for the thousands who exceeded the capacity of the Verizon Center, it may have looked as if all of Washington was taking part in the March for Life. In fact, the National Park Service put the number at 300,000, and their estimates have typically underestimated the crowd by wide margins.

On January 22, in a special *Roe v. Wade* supplement, the *Washington Times* published a column by Deirdre McQuade, the bishops’ spokesperson on abortion, widely publicizing the results of an on-line survey the Secretariat commissioned in December from Harris Interactive. The survey gauges the current level of support for legal abortion, and public attitudes to the kinds of laws that are at risk under the new Congress and Administration. Here are key survey findings:

- 11% of Americans would ban all abortions
- 38% would limit abortion to the narrow circumstances of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother (cases accounting for fewer than 2% of abortions)
- 27% would allow abortion for any reason but only in the first three months of pregnancy
- 6% favor abortion through only the second trimester
- 9%, fewer than one in ten, support abortion for any reason for all 9 months, the current law under *Roe v. Wade*. The remaining 9% declined to answer.

Thus, half of Americans would severely curtail abortion and three-quarters support significant legal restrictions. When asked about specific pro-life laws that are at risk in the new Congress, the level of support for pro-life legislation is even higher than the figures on general attitudes:

- 95% favor laws ensuring that abortions be performed only by licensed physicians
- 88% favor informed consent laws
- 76% favor laws that protect doctors and nurses from being forced to perform or refer for abortions against their will
- 73% favor parental involvement laws

- 68% favor laws against partial-birth abortion, and
- 63% favor laws preventing the use of taxpayer funds for abortions.

Be sure to use these important survey findings in letters to the editors and communications with your elected representatives.

With all this good news in mind, let's look at the reality in Washington.

Soon after the election, abortion industry and pro-abortion lobby groups submitted a 55-page wish list called "Advancing Reproductive Rights [sic] and Health in a New Administration" (ARRH) to the Obama Transition Team. It can be found on the OTT website. And now, in only the first few days following the President's inauguration, their dreams are already beginning to come true. Here's just some of what they demanded:

- "Rescind the Global Gag Rule"
- "Restore Funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)"
- "More and More Money from Taxpayers for Contraceptives"
- "De-Fund Abstinence Programs"
- "Reverse the HHS Federal Refusal Rule"

**Rescind the Global Gag Rule** (ARRH, p. 8) was accomplished on January 23 when President Obama rescinded the Mexico City Policy which, as Cardinal Rigali explained in a statement criticizing the action, "prevents U.S. funding of organizations that perform and promote abortion as a family planning method in developing nations." The Cardinal added: "An Administration that wants to reduce abortions should not divert U.S. funds to groups that promote abortions."

Let it be noted that the now defunct "gag rule" never did silence international family planning groups. They simply had to agree that they would not perform abortions or promote abortion as a method of family planning if they receive U.S. funds. International Planned Parenthood Federation was one of the very few major organizations that refused to go along with this policy and thus was denied funds, and Scandinavian taxpayers made up the difference. Now, thanks to the President's Executive Order, at this time of economic hardship in the U.S. and abroad, American taxpayers will be funding organizations engaged in the killing of little boys and girls in developing nations.

Note, though, that under the Helms Amendment, U.S. funds cannot be used directly to perform abortions in foreign countries. The new Congress can, of course, change that policy.

A Vatican official was swift to condemn the rescission of the Mexico City Policy. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life, stated in an interview in *Corriere della Sera* that "among the many

good things that he could have done, Barack Obama instead has chosen the worst." He added, "What is important is to know how to listen ... without locking oneself into ideological visions with the arrogance of a person who, having the power, thinks they can decide on life and death," according to an English-language report by the Catholic News Agency.

**Restore Funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** (ARRH, p.8) In a statement made when he signed the Executive Order rescinding the Mexico City Policy, President Obama said he intended to work with Congress to reinstate funding to UNFPA – supporter and enabler of China's brutal, coercive one-child-per-family policy. UNFPA is seeking \$60 million from U.S. taxpayers in the current fiscal year.

**More and More Money from Taxpayers for Contraceptives** (ARRH, pp.6-7, 11-14) On the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, President Obama reiterated his support for abortion on demand and expansion of contraceptive programs:

"While this is a sensitive and often divisive issue, no matter what our views, we are united in our determination to prevent unintended pregnancies, reduce the need [sic] for abortion and support women and families in the choices they make."

"To accomplish these goals," the President said, "we must work to find common ground to expand access to affordable contraception, accurate health information and preventative services."

Fact Sheets showing the complete failure of contraceptives to reduce abortions are posted at [uscba.org/prolife/issues/contraception/index.shtml#2](http://uscba.org/prolife/issues/contraception/index.shtml#2). In the coming weeks, the Pro-Life Secretariat will update these, and post others demonstrating the many serious health problems associated with contraceptive use, both for individuals and society.

- The "Prevention First Act" (S. 21, H.R. 463) has already been reintroduced in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress and action could occur any time. It includes \$700 million for Title X "family planning" services, contraceptive insurance mandates, mandatory provision of emergency contraception to rape victims, expansion of eligibility for contraception under Medicaid, and elimination of funding for abstinence-only education.

- Some in Congress seem poised to use any and all measures to advance the cause of Planned Parenthood. Even the "urgent" economic stimulus bill proposed by House leaders contained provisions allocating additional hundreds of millions for contraceptives. House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH) was quoted as saying: "I'm concerned about some of the spending that's in there. How you can spend hundreds of millions of dollars on contraceptives – how does that stimulate the economy?"

In the health insurance for the unemployed program, the bill would expand Medicaid coverage for non-

pregnant women ONLY for “family planning services and supplies,” but not for basic health care. If a woman needs treatment for diabetes or develops cancer, she’s plain out of luck. But she can get contraception! The bill would also amend the current program for government-subsidized “benchmark” health insurance (which currently allows some flexibility in benefits as long as it’s worth about as much as the standard Blue Cross-type plan), so no one could have such coverage UNLESS it includes family planning. Thus people currently with healthcare coverage could lose it unless contraceptives are added to the coverage. There’s an additional requirement that any related services be provided “in a family planning setting,” which seems designed to turn Planned Parenthood clinics and similar entities into the mandatory entry points into the health care system for an expanding class of low-income or temporarily unemployed women of childbearing age.

On ABC’s *This Week*, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi tried to explain how a massive increase in contraceptive funding would stimulate the economy: “The family planning services reduce cost. They reduce cost. The states are in terrible fiscal budget crises now, and part of what we do for children’s health, education and some of those elements are to help states meet their financial needs. One of ... the initiatives you mentioned, the contraception – will reduce costs to the states and to the federal government” (Jan. 25, 2009). A *Wall Street Journal* on-line commentary points out that “Today’s unplanned pregnancy is tomorrow’s consumer of baby products and next month’s worker and taxpayer, so that subsidizing contraception ... is the opposite of an economic stimulus.”

Reaction to these Planned Parenthood-friendly provisions was so critical from so many quarters, that House leadership was shamed into removing them from the stimulus bill. It’s safe to assume, however, that the Speaker will try and try again.

**De-Funding Abstinence Programs** (ARRH, p. 21) is provided for in the pending Prevention First Act.

**Reverse the HHS Federal Refusal Rule**” (ARRH, p. 7). This is more accurately described as a regulation implementing long-standing federal laws protecting the rights of conscience of healthcare professionals and institutions. The President has criticized these regulations. The ACLU has filed suit on behalf of pro-abortion groups (e.g., see *National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Assn. v. Leavitt*) in federal court in Connecticut to have the regulation invalidated.

Many other and graver threats are looming in the weeks ahead, including taxpayer funding of abortion through the repeal of the Hyde Amendment and that neutron bomb of abortion bills, the “Freedom of Choice Act.” (For extensive information on FOCA and the bishops’ postcard campaign to Congress, visit [usccb.org/prolife/issues/FOCA](http://usccb.org/prolife/issues/FOCA) and [nchla.org/issues.asp?ID=50](http://nchla.org/issues.asp?ID=50).)

These are times that will test our mettle, but with God, the truth, reason, and decency on our side, we will ultimately prevail.

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