



January 28, 2009
St. Thomas Aquinas

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we face further obstacles with the initiative by the new administration supporting tax dollars for abortions, it is vitally critical that we stop to consider our position in what is truly a serious contest between good and evil. With joyful hope, we can reflect on the great advancements made through the tireless efforts of various pro-life activities in our country. At the same time, we must honestly recognize areas we have not been able to accomplish the desired goal of establishing a culture of life. What is preventing us?

The late Cardinal John O'Connor, in reflecting on the ongoing battle for life in this country, called to mind the incident in St. Matthew's Gospel where the Apostles were unable to cast a devil out of the mentally deranged young man. When the disciples asked Jesus the reason for their apparent failure, He explained that this kind of demon can only be cast out through prayer and fasting. (Matthew 17:14-21). The Cardinal pointed out that in the pro-life movement we encounter a demon that can only be driven away by much prayer and fasting.

In the issue of abortion we need to adjust our tactics, and I am entreating everyone in the Diocese of Birmingham to join me in this spiritual strategy. Let us *pray* even more tenaciously and *fast* for the specific intention of ending abortion in our diocese and country.

There are many ways of carrying this out, so I will provide you with but a few suggestions.

First, I would like everyone to pray the prayer I composed for our president and other public officials. A sample of this prayer card is enclosed, as well as an order form if you would like to order copies for your parishioners or students. I would like this prayer to be prayed at the conclusion of the General Intercessions at every Mass, beginning on Ash Wednesday and continuing to the conclusion of Lent.

Secondly, I encourage the lay faithful to fast, particularly on Fridays during the Lenten season, in whatever manner and degree their health and state in life permit, for the expressed intention of ending legalized abortion in our country. I am asking our priests and consecrated religious to take on a more rigorous fast during this Lent for this same intention. We all can sacrifice something for our helpless brothers and sisters in Christ who are denied absolutely everything, including their lives.

(over)

In one high school in a different diocese, a young chaplain encouraged the students to take an active role in the spiritual efforts of the pro-life movement. On Fridays he made an intercom announcement, inviting any students who wanted to fast that day for an end to abortion to congregate together during the lunch period to pray the rosary for the same intention. Other times they gathered in prayer around the flag pole to pray for our country. I am sure our schools have similar activities, and I encourage their growth and frequency. Our young people can find many creative ways to employ these spiritual weapons – prayer and fasting.

As we celebrate the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, let us pray for his intercession for our country, that we all may grow in true wisdom, recognizing God as Creator and ourselves as His creatures. In his explanation of the fifth Commandment (“Thou shalt not kill”), this great yet humble philosopher and theologian said, “The good physician removes the external symptoms of a malady; and, furthermore, he even removes the very root of the illness, so that there will be no relapse.” We must beg God to remove this scourge in our society. In His Holy Name I thank you for all of your efforts for the cause of life, and I ask God to continue to bless all of you in your pro-life efforts.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop Robert J. Baker, S.T.D.
Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

Enclosure: Order Form for the pro-life prayer cards
(5) Sample Prayer Cards
Return Envelope