“Opening the Door” to those with Disabilities

In 2016, Catholic Charities Disability Services, in the Diocese of Cleveland, will celebrate 50 years of serving those whose disabilities place them at the margins of society. They have worked to build up a community where those they serve can be recognized for the talents and abilities they bring to this world, as well as challenging them to become more integrated into the community.

One way they celebrate this time of year is by hosting their annual “Journey to Bethlehem” Mass in Tremont at the OLA/St. Joseph Center, which is incidentally the only building in the Diocese that has been specifically used to support those with disabilities since its opening in 1966. This year’s liturgy marked the 31st year they have come together to welcome people with disabilities into the Church. Bishop Gries joins in the celebration, bringing his great love for all people and the message that despite our brokenness, God manifests himself through our presence in the world; our brokenness does not diminish our value as children of God.

Almost every ministerial part of the Mass is performed by a person with a disability, from distributing the Holy Eucharist to joining in song and proclaiming the readings; the congregation is filled with the same, as well as their family, friends, caregivers and members of the wider Catholic community. This year around 250 people attended the celebration. The most moving part of the Mass is the offertory procession, where, in addition to the bread & wine, people with disabilities bring forward figurines from the Nativity scene that will be displayed in front of the altar. One attendant, who is deaf, said that this is his favorite liturgy of the year.

This year’s celebration is made more poignant when looked at in conjunction with the Year of Mercy, which began the week after the Mass. Dennis McNulty, Director of Disability Services, points out that the metaphor of “throwing open the doors,” which has become a rallying cry for the Year of Mercy, is so appropriate for the “Journey to Bethlehem” and what his department does year round. By inviting people with disabilities to participate in a very real way at the Mass, the opening of the doors is both literal and figurative. They can bring their talents and abilities to the Eucharistic table; they welcome participation and recognize limitations while also recognizing the gifts everyone brings.

Marilyn Scott, Program Director for Disability Services, noted that when working with persons with disabilities, the Corporal Works of Mercy, such as “feed the hungry” or “give drink to the thirsty,” take on a double meaning. They are not only feeding them physically, but in a spiritual sense as well, by satisfying their hunger and thirst for community and inclusion in society, as well as providing opportunities to use their unique gifts & talents, as they do most strikingly at the annual Mass. Both Dennis and Marilyn have come to understand that their ministry for persons with disabilities is not “for” those they serve, but truly “with” them. It is clear that this Year of Mercy goes hand-in-hand with what they do daily and is best illustrated in the annual “Journey to Bethlehem” Mass. They invite you to mark your calendars for December 3, 2016, so you can join them at this beautiful Christmas celebration!
FROM THE DIRECTOR

The value of human life seems to be decreasing, with new acts of violence that we hear about daily in the news. We’ve seen bombings, shootings, capsized rescue boats, catastrophic floods and more. It becomes very heavy for me at times, maybe for you also. However, Pope Francis gives us pretty clear instructions about how to combat evil, as he refers to it so often.

He says we must dialogue with those who we disagree show mercy to everyone who needs compassionate love, speak to the wrongs, ask God for direction in our lives and be joyful. These five activities will lead to peace. Of course, as they say, it’s easier said than done. But if you look a little further than the headlines, you can find many ways that life is being upheld in our country and beyond.

The Holy Father tells us to go out to the world. And, he says further, love above judgment. Here are some concrete ways this is being accomplished.

The latest issue of the Northeast Ohio Catholic shows our diocese’s good, humble, merciful response to the persons who have been involved with abortion in any way. This has been and continues to be the manner in which we offer the healing of Jesus, through the living Body of Christ. I invoke the aid of the saints and souls in my ministry, so it could be said that the whole body of Christ is working together in the ministry of Project Rachel.

In response to society’s call to stop the penalty of death, more and more executions are delayed or reversed and states are outlawing the penalty of death. This is definitely mercy on the upswing for those incarcerated on death row.

Catholic youth and young adults are getting involved in the social issues of the Church to bring about God’s Kingdom on earth. From our diocese, approximately 488 young people are attending the Youth Rally and Mass in Washington D.C. on January 22, 2016, before the March for Life. Others will attend the Mass for Life downtown at the Cathedral on Friday, January 22, at 10am to mark this day and honor the unborn whose lives have been ended. Note the time change and see the flyer in this issue to share with friends & your parish. A color copy can be found in the online For Life.

Human trafficking awareness and arrests are up, so this secret crime is coming out of hiding. In Ohio, there is greater awareness and greater support for those trying to end this crime against human dignity. Just last week, Cleveland received a large Federal grant to continue the strides the community has made toward an end to this modern day slavery.

Ohio legislation keeps putting more and more restrictions on abortions, thereby reducing both the facilities that perform them and the total number of abortions performed. Many lives are changed with laws that support life.

Finally, just last week, I read about a company in New Mexico who developed nuclear weaponry during the Second World War. They have now changed their focus to developing cures for cancer. They have moved from inventing things that destroy life to things that sustain life.

Let these great works be an inspiration to us in the Year of Mercy and this New Year of 2016!

Peggy Gerovac

2016 World Day for Migrants and Refugees

Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us: The Response of the Gospel of Mercy

The Diocese of Cleveland will be celebrating this day on January 24, 2016 with a special liturgy celebrated by Bishop Richard Lennon at St. Michael the Archangel Parish, 3114 Scrantion Road, Cleveland, 44109 at 12 noon.

Following the liturgy, refreshments reflective of our cultural diversity will be served at a reception in the lower hall. There is no cost and everyone is invited and encouraged to attend.
New Study Adds to Knowledge of How Abortion Impacts Men

Existing research exploring the psychological impact of abortion on men has been limited. A new study by clinician/researchers Catherine Coyle & Vincent Rue, entitled “A Thematic Analysis of Men’s Experience with a Partner’s Elective Abortion” was just published in Counseling & Values in the Fall issue for 2015. The authors used online surveys to obtain data on 89 men. According to the authors, three salient themes emerged after analyzing the content of men’s responses to open-ended questions about their partner’s abortion. These themes were (a) loss and grief, (b) helplessness and/or victimization, and (c) spiritual healing.

**Loss & Grief.** The findings from this study suggest men can intensely feel the loss of both their unborn child and the loss of fatherhood following abortion and that these losses are associated with intense grief. One male indicated: “I was a father one day and not the next. She told me she had a miscarriage, then I got a call from the abortion clinic, she forgot her medication. I have never felt so awful in my life.” For some men, grief included guilt or regret which was associated with a loss of self-esteem and with judgments of personal failure. Another respondent stated: “The absolute worst thing I have ever done. Words can’t describe the pain and overwhelming guilt that is always with me. I have no one to blame but myself.” Another source of the men’s grief related to the loss of their relationships or damage to the quality of their relationships with their partners. The authors found the persistence of the men’s sorrow “particularly striking, with many of the men sharing the still raw pain of the abortion experience decades after its occurrence.”

**Helplessness and/or Victimization.** Feelings of helplessness and/or victimization are not commonly discovered in male narratives. In this study, the researchers found these feelings common in the responses of men who have experienced an abortion. Feelings of powerlessness and feeling minimized and disrespected were evident and often associated with anger: “I feel dehumanized. I had no say whatsoever.” Despite expressed feelings of helplessness or anger, men often attempted to be helpful and supportive of their partners as well: “I acceded to her wishes, although I stifled my own concerns about the morality of the decision and the ultimate impact it would have on both of us.”

**Spiritual Healing.** While not investigating types of postabortion healing per se, this study reported that men chose to comment regarding their spiritual healing from a Christian perspective. The vast majority of these men’s statements concerning healing included some mention of forgiveness, including receiving forgiveness, self-forgiveness, or both. Overall, the researchers concluded induced abortion for men was not a benign or neutral event. Rather it was often described as a painful loss, inducing profound grief, guilt, loss of self-esteem, feelings of helplessness and/or victimization, anger, and the need for spiritual healing and forgiveness. Additionally, the study provides counseling implications and calls for the inclusion of men in the pregnancy outcome decision-making process. The researchers concluded: “Involved men are more likely to provide support to their partners, thus enhancing women’s reproductive health as well.”

Create in Me a Clean Heart—A Pastoral Response to Pornography from the USCCB

At their annual Fall General Assembly in Baltimore, November 17, the US Bishops approved this formal statement regarding the use of pornography and offering a pastoral resource for those ministering to the faithful. This is an excerpt from the introduction:

“As pastors of the Catholic Church, we offer this statement to give a word of hope and healing to those who have been harmed by pornography and to raise awareness of its pervasiveness and harms. In the confessional and in our daily ministry and work with families, we have seen the corrosive damage caused by pornography—children whose innocence is stolen; men and women who feel great guilt and shame for viewing pornography occasionally or habitually; spouses who feel betrayed and traumatized; and men, women and children exploited by the pornography industry. While the production and use of pornography has always been a problem, in recent years its impact has grown exponentially, in large part due to the Internet and mobile technology. Some have even described it as a public health crisis. Everyone, in some way, is affected by increased pornography use in society. We all suffer negative consequences from its distorted view of the human person and sexuality. As bishops, we are called to proclaim anew the abundant mercy and healing of God found in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and through his Church.

The audience of this statement is broad because pornography affects so many people’s lives and requires a collaborative, concentrated effort by all of us to counter its harms. The statement itself is addressed primarily to parents, clergy, diocesan and parish leaders, educators, mental health professionals, and all those in positions to help protect children from pornography and heal the men, women, and young people who have been harmed by its use. We also hope the statement will be helpful for men, women, and young people who themselves view pornography, whether occasionally or habitually, or who have been victimized by pornography. Finally, we speak to religious allies and all people of good will who want to work together toward a culture of purity that upholds the dignity of every person and the sacredness of human sexuality.”


A Resource for Wives
Jeannie Hannemann, RECLAIM and Elizabeth Ministries Co-Founder, co-authored this booklet of hope and healing for wives who have a husband struggling with pornography. If you or someone you know could receive comfort from this resource, visit http://shopelizabethministry.mybigcommerce.com/fighting-for-your-marriage/.

It’s unjust to make women choose between sacrificing their life dreams and plans or sacrificing their own offspring. It’s not a choice women should feel compelled to make in order to participate freely and equally in society.

As the first woman to run for president, Victoria Woodhull wrote in 1875, “Men must no longer insult all womanhood by saying that freedom means the degradation of woman. Every woman knows that if she were free, she would never bear an unwished-for child, nor think of murdering one before its birth.”

-Excerpt from Marilyn Kopp’s Letter to the Editor in the Cleveland Plain Dealer on September 21, 2015, regarding “Abortion in conflict with original feminist principles”
**Never Take No for an Answer**
(excerpt from www.notdeadyet.org)

My name is Terrie Lincoln and I am a 31 year old quadriplegic. I live in Rochester, New York and work as a Systems Advocate. I have two degrees and am working on my master’s degree. At the age of 19, I had an automobile accident, where I severed my spine and broke my neck. The doctors told my parents they were going to do a neck fusion, putting a plate in my neck. The doctors said that there was no way I could survive a broken neck. My Mom said: “We’ll see about that.”

The surgery turned out well and I started recuperating. While I was in bed, the doctors would come and ask my mom if she was ready to pull the plug. My mom, being the strong woman she is, asked the doctor if he would pull the plug on his child. The next day the doctor informed us that I was going to be in a “veggie” state for the rest of my life. My dad asked what veggie I was going to be because I hated green beans and would be mad if I was one. The doctors knew they were killing me slowly with the lack of care I was receiving. I was life-flighted out on the fifteenth day.

The doctors came in the next morning earlier than usual and told us they were prepping me for surgery. He said he couldn’t sleep the night and he was going to put me on a ventilator, which would breathe for me. When I got out of surgery they had a rotating bed for me, which helped break up the stuff in my lungs. After a matter of weeks, my health improved. I got released to a nursing home where I refused to have my feeding tube, G-tube, and J-tube anymore. I felt safer and healthier having the tubes out instead of in.

We started working on weaning off the ventilator. We knew my health was improving and we were thanking Jesus. I was spending hours a day off the ventilator and the doctors were still asking if I wanted to live the rest of my life with this condition. If I chose no, they would keep me off the ventilator and I would die. I could get injected with Morphine so I couldn’t feel it. What gives them the right to convince someone to end their life?

My respiratory therapist said when I get off the ventilator I could go to physical therapy. One Friday we did our daily disconnecting of the ventilator - and never connected it back. I ended up staying off of the ventilator for good. Weeks later I started therapy, getting discharged after 5 months of being in the hospital. When I returned for my follow-up appointment a year later, I made it a priority to see that team of doctors. When I rolled into the office pushing my own power chair, without a ventilator, healthy as can be, their jaws dropped to the floor and their eyes began to fill with tears.

Through my journey, my two biggest advocates were Jesus and my mommy. She never stopped fighting and never took no for an answer.

**Physician-Assisted Suicide Advances in California**

The National Catholic Bioethics Center I October 7, 2015

On October 5, 2015, Gov. Edmund Brown made California the 5th state legalizing physician-assisted suicide, as an “End of Life Option.” In some states such legislation has been entitled “Death with Dignity.” Such labels are clearly misnomers. The harsh reality is that the “options” create victims of physician-assisted suicide (PAS) through social coercion, and have nothing to do with the “dignity” innate in every human being.

A growing body of sociological data demonstrates that when vulnerable persons see suicide as a “good” from which the state no longer provides protection, suicide rates in general rise. For example, in Oregon, the first state to legalize PAS, suicide rates overall (excluding those from PAS) have skyrocketed. Oregon has the second highest suicide rate in the country, again, excluding PAS. Evidence shows that despite supposed restrictions of PAS to those with “terminal illness,” those with disabilities are routinely viewed by social policymakers as less worthy than others of the legal protection against suicide. PAS becomes an open invitation to patient abuse.

When government secures such rights for some but not others, when it relaxes laws against aiding the suicide of terminal patients but not the able-bodied, it is saying this class deserves less protection of their lives, its members deserve less safeguards of their unalienable rights —in other words, they deserve less respect because in some way they are less human. In discounting such rights entrusted to its care, government denies, not enhances, human dignity, and thus compromises the very grounds on which government is instituted. Persons with disabilities have grave concerns for such lack of protection by government. As physical impairments that substantially limit life activities, terminal conditions are disabilities. Those with disabling conditions which can cause death within six months, but only if treatment were removed, are terminal for purposes of ABX2-15. The high cost of keeping such people alive could provide insurance carriers a powerful incentive to develop reimbursement policies for those with disabilities and terminal illness that become a coercive factor in a patient’s decision to seek the less costly butbarbative prescription to end one’s life.

Governor Brown has stated that the reason he signed ABX2-15 into law was that if persons were “suffering prolonged and excruciating pain ... it would be a comfort to be able to consider the options afforded by this bill.” This is a completely fallacious reason for this dangerous change in public policy. The Oregon Public Health Division has been collecting data, annually since 1998, on the reasons persons have availed themselves of PAS. Consistently, the least frequent reasons for such a request are pain and finances. The primary reasons terminal patients give for requesting PAS are loss of autonomy, loss of dignity, and inability to participate in activities that make life enjoyable. Clearly, these reasons speak to why PAS is being sought: fear of social abandonment, now enabled by a government that has removed protections from such abandonment.

For Life | 5
“Why Do I Do What I Do?”

Bernadette Boguski, Development Director at Womankind

Recently, I attended a fundraising professional’s luncheon where the keynote speaker talked about “Why I do what I do.” It got me thinking—why do I do what I do? I have had many people tell me they couldn’t do what I do. “I could never ask people for money,” they say. It’s not for everyone, that’s for sure. You can’t be shy, and you can’t be thin-skinned. Rejection comes with the territory.

I do what I do because I believe in the mission of our organization. I know that we provide women with real choices to continue a pregnancy that may be overwhelming, or for which they feel unsupported or unprepared. I have seen the difference we have made in the lives of women from all walks of life. I have seen the dedication of volunteers who give so unselfishly of their time, who remain committed to be here week after week, year after year, to provide support and encouragement to each and every client. When you believe in and have a passion for the mission, asking for a gift isn’t a solicitation as much as it is an invitation to participate and be a part of something life-changing. That isn’t difficult; that is a joy.

Perhaps the bigger question is what drives me to believe in the mission, and what sustains me and keeps me motivated, passionate, and committed. There is no question for me that my faith is what keeps me grounded, what sustains me, and what enables me to persevere. Growing up as the youngest of seven in a traditional Catholic family, my religious beliefs were ingrained in me from the moment of my first cry. I was 12 when my oldest brother was ordained to the priesthood. I have him to thank for strengthening my faith and helping me to develop my prayer life.

I don’t think there was ever a time when I was anything other than pro-life. What that has meant for me has changed a lot over the years as I witnessed and experienced life in all its dimensions. While I have never strayed from my belief in the sanctity of life at all stages, as I have gotten older I have come to understand that life can be very messy at times, particularly for some of the women we serve.

There is no typical day at the office. We experience moments of grace and moments of heartache, from the call of a mom who is on her last bottle of formula, to the woman who has just found out she is pregnant and sighs when you tell her “you’ve called the right place. We can help.” While I occasionally deal directly with clients, my primary function is to raise the funds to support our work. Being a one-person development office, I am always juggling the tasks involved; donor solicitation, gift acknowledgements, meetings, website, newsletters, grant writing, etc. Many days I am going from one task to another with little or no time to collect my thoughts.

This is one of the many reasons I treasure my Holy Hour in front of the Eucharist. Our parish opened an adoration chapel in 2012, and it has been a blessing in so many ways. Some days, I sit before the Lord and besiege Him with requests, healings for those who are sick, and comfort for those who grieve. When I am facing a particularly difficult situation, I just say “it’s all Yours, You have to take it from here, because I don’t know what else to do.” It’s the hour when it’s just me and Jesus, and sometimes it’s just about being. After all, God can’t speak to you if you are doing all of the talking. What I can tell you is that every hour spent with Him bears fruit; whether it’s getting an answer to a prayer or just a renewed sense of calm in the midst of a chaotic life, it makes all the difference in being able to face another day.

Working in the pro-life arena is a marathon, not a sprint. Two quotes from Blessed Mother Teresa inspire me on a daily basis: “We are not called to be successful; we are called to be faithful” and “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”

Year of Mercy Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief. Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: “If you knew the gift of God!”

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with His anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind. We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.
Georgetown University making the school a better place for pregnant and parenting students

Feminists for Life (FFL) President Serrin M. Foster will moderate the 20th annual Pregnancy Resource Forum at Georgetown University in October. The forum will build on two decades of groundbreaking work by students and faculty at Georgetown University (GU) to make the school a better place for pregnant and parenting students.

After an FFL board member shared her experience searching for on-campus resources then suffering a miscarriage while attending college, Foster worked with clinic staff from that university and a GU alum who was the executive director of the Northwest Center, sending six hundred and fifty kits across the country to health centers at top colleges and universities. But more was needed. Foster went to GU-Right to Life leaders to take the next crucial step.

In January 1997, Foster moderated the first-ever FFL Pregnancy Resource Forum at Georgetown University. She asked if women had the choice to have children and stay at Georgetown. At that time, a myth had been circulating that if a student was pregnant or parenting at Georgetown, she would have to drop out, which appeared to result in women having abortions or dropping out without completing the degree that could have economically empowered the mother and her family.

Soon after the first forum, Georgetown opened a daycare facility and Health Education Services offered free home pregnancy testing kits and a pregnancy hotline. Two years later a townhouse was designated for the use of student mothers and their children. A “safety net” helps to ensure that no pregnant woman, expectant father, parent or birthmother will fall through the cracks. GU-RTL started a volunteer babysitting co-op and continues to support the Northwest Pregnancy Center in addition to hosting the annual Forum. Over the years pregnant women, parents and birthmothers have participated in the forum. "Their participation has been essential in helping to identify the resources they appreciated and those they still needed and in helping to educate others on the campus that there is support at GU," Foster said.

This first event established the model for schools across the nation. Colleges and universities have followed in Georgetown’s footsteps, taking this crucial first step to open dialogue. Feminists for Life has taken this program to other campuses across the country that have in turn come up with more creative solutions tailored for their school. In 2010, FFL’s Pregnancy Resource Forums became the inspiration for Pregnancy Assistance Fund grants by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As creator of the Women Deserve Better® campaign, Foster has been an outspoken opponent of pregnancy discrimination and has focused on developing on-campus resources and support for under-served pregnant and parenting students. She said, "You cannot underestimate the impact this event has made on the lives of individuals at Georgetown and around the country. Just think. There are women who were able to complete their education and avoid poverty while raising their children. And there are also college-age students here today because their mothers were supported at Georgetown and other forward-thinking institutions of higher education."

"[Jesus] showed us the self-sacrificial nature of love when he laid down His life for us, and we are called to follow in his footsteps. We are called to be his hands and feet, caring for and loving others."
- USCCB 2015-16 Respect Life Program Prayer and Program Guide (www.goo.gl/2nrphg)

"Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion. How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings... If we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties?"
- Pope Francis, Laudatio Si, no. 120
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"We were made to love and be loved; we are meant to depend on one another, serving each other in humility and walking together in times of suffering. Our relationships are meant to help us grow in perfect love."
- Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley, O.F.M. Cap.
2015 Respect Life Month Statement: Every Life is Worth Living (www.goo.gl/GVYQZY)

*When scanned on your smartphone, these QR codes will take you directly to the referenced document.*
Time To Speak Up For Conscience Rights

October 30, 2015 | Richard Doerflinger

What if you spent years training to help the sick as a nurse — only to find that to keep your job, you must take part in the killing of a defenseless five-month-old unborn child?

What if a church in your town lived up to its teaching on healing the sick by providing its employees with excellent health coverage — but was told that is illegal, unless it pays for abortions that violate its teaching on life itself?

What if your local Catholic charitable agency were providing excellent service for some of the most marginalized people in our society — victims of human trafficking — but lost its federal grant to secular agencies that are less qualified, because it couldn’t comply with a new government mandate to do abortion referrals?

Projections of a nightmare future, where respect for human life and religious freedom are a thing of the past? No, each of these things happened recently in our country — and will keep happening, unless we stand up as citizens and demand a change in the law.

The nurse is Cathy DeCarlo, who was forced to assist in an elective late-term abortion at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York on threat of being fired. The experience gave her nightmares and emotional trauma, so she filed suit to keep it from happening to others. But the court dismissed her case: The federal law protecting her rights could only be enforced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). That agency sat on the case for three years, then declared it resolved after the hospital changed its policy. Cathy never had her day in court, and she and other health care providers remain vulnerable.

It is the California department of managed health care that has ordered almost all health coverage statewide — even coverage provided by churches and other religious organizations — to include unlimited abortion coverage. California’s mandate violates a federal law known as the Weldon amendment, but the federal agency assigned to enforce it has taken no action since complaints were filed over a year ago. Other states may follow California’s lead.

And the federal grant to serve human trafficking victims was taken away from the U.S. bishops’ Migration and Refugee Services agency and its nationwide network of Catholic subgrantees in 2011. Despite a congressional investigation, and calls for the government to obey its own conscience laws, government pressure on pro-life social service providers continues.

How can these things happen, if there are laws on the books to protect conscientious objection to abortion? The fact is, current laws have loopholes and legal weaknesses that opponents of conscience rights have learned to exploit. The biggest loophole is that none of these laws includes a “private right of action,” allowing victims of discrimination to go to court to defend their rights. When the only enforcer against a government body’s coercive actions is that same government body, the law can become a paper tiger.

A solution is available and we should be part of it. Congress has long been considering a remedy called the Abortion Non-Discrimination Act, to close these loopholes and provide a private right of action. Introduced in the past as a free-standing bill, it is now part of the House of Representatives’ appropriations bill for funding HHS. By December, Congress needs to pass a law funding government programs in Fiscal Year 2016 — and this urgently needed reform should be part of that final bill. We must speak up now to protect our cherished right of conscience.

In a partisan and divisive political climate, this is one issue that should bring Congress together. Conscience laws on abortion have been approved by Congresses and Presidents of both major parties for decades. President Obama has said he supports current federal conscience laws — and he should not object to letting them work effectively. Many “pro-choice” people realize that freedom of choice is meaningless unless it protects a choice not to be involved in taking unborn human life.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, with the help of its partner organization the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment (NCHLA), is working to see the Abortion Non-Discrimination Act over the finish line this year. We can urge Congress to support this modest but essential law. NCHLA has made it easy to do so. Just go to their website to send a message to your elected representatives. Together we can make a difference!

Mr. Doerflinger is Associate Director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. For more on conscience rights see www.usccb.org/conscience.
“Be merciful like the heavenly Father.”
- Prayer of Pope Francis

2016 MASS for LIFE

1.22.2016

Join Bishop Richard G. Lennon at this special mass to commemorate the 42nd anniversary of Roe v. Wade in this Jubilee Year of Mercy.

**Friday, January 22, 2016 - 10:00 a.m.**
Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
Cleveland, Ohio

- All are welcome - school and parish groups are encouraged to join us in solidarity with those at the March for Life in Washington, D.C.
- Stay after mass to participate in a Rosary for Life.
- Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist is an official Door of Mercy.
- Visit [www.ccdocle.org/Mass4LifeCLE](http://www.ccdocle.org/Mass4LifeCLE) to register and to learn more.
Letter to the Editor from Julianne Wiley: Compassion?

Consistent Life  | Peace & Life Connections #263  | June 5, 2015

You said that some Consistent-Life advocates are absolutely against all killing; others would allow exceptions based on compassion ("less pure, but less rigid.") Mine would be a different approach, based not on compassion but on justice.

Compassion is more a characteristic of the compassionate-the compassioner-than of the compassion-ee. A compassionate person needs only to justify things to herself and it’s enough: that you convince yourself, and possibly other similarly gifted, sensitive, empathetic people. It’s a form of intolerance-the intolerance of pain.

I don’t think I told you that I almost died-or rather, did die, sort of- last January, with septic shock brought on by an infected kidney stone. I was on a ventilator for 16 days, and I fell into “ICU psychosis”, a very common experience in critically ill patients dependent on mechanical ventilation. I became paranoid; I thought they were trying to kill me; I hallucinated; I turned combative; I do remember trying to spit at the respiratory therapist; I do remember trying to break the fingers of skilled nurses; I do remember being forcibly restrained. I hated the ventilator. At no point did I consent to it. I tried repeatedly to tear it out. I can’t tell you how cruel it felt except that it drove me out of my mind.

Now I am glad to be alive. I shudder now to think what would have been my fate had my life and death been dependent upon sensitive and warmly responsive persons who could feel my pain. I thank God that my survival was in the hands, not of the compassionate, but of the just.

THE U.S. BISHOPS ANNUAL NOVENA “9 DAYS FOR LIFE” TAKES PLACE SATURDAY, JANUARY 16 – SUNDAY, JANUARY 24. PRAY FOR THE RESPECT AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN LIFE WITH NEW INTENTIONS, BRIEF REFLECTIONS, AND MORE EACH DAY.

DOWNLOAD THE NOVENA ONLINE, OR PARTICIPATE THROUGH FACEBOOK, EMAIL, TEXT MESSAGE OR AN APP. JOIN AT WWW.9DAYSFORLIFE.COM!

RECEIVE A LINK TO THE NEW NOVENA CONTENT ON YOUR PHONE EACH DAY!

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