

May-June 2010

The final edition of *The Interim Plus* for this academic year focuses on what teachers and educators have learned about the pro-life cause over the past year. What new resources, strategies, networking have resulted from our collective efforts to promote the cause of life? We extend our thanks to teachers in different parts of the country who have contributed their ideas and resources over the past ten months.



The March for Life of May 13, 2010 was the most successful ever in terms of people participation and the extent of media coverage of the event. Perhaps there was a combination of factors that worked in concert to produce the impact that it had. For many schools the March for Life was a culmination of their year's activities devoted to the promotion of pro-life issues. In addition to local and school based pro-life activities thousands used the annual March as their main forum to express their pro-life convictions.

Teachers from Hamilton-Wentworth CDSB, Durham CDSB, York Region CDSB, Dufferin-Peel CDSB, Ottawa CDSB and many other school boards have independently developed good resources of a pro-life nature. Within these jurisdictions individual teachers and subject curriculum leaders are doing yeoman work. An opportunity exists to foster an effective means to develop strong links between boards and individual teachers intent on promoting a real culture of life.

The Teacher

The classroom teacher, imbued with faith and armed with effective pedagogical skills, can be the catalyst for this pro-life curriculum growth. The educator can make a difference in the lives of the students and through them ultimately in society at large, for as we believe what the teacher says and does in and outside the classroom has a great impact on the students regardless of the teacher's intentions.

What follows below are a series of questions designed to stimulate thinking on how to effectively present life issues in the daily life of schools. Is it possible to promote the culture of life in an environment besotted with the pursuit of pleasure in all forms at whatever the costs to self and society? What is the alternative if an effort is not made to do just that?

An overarching aim should be to have a school board accept and then actively promote curriculum priorities to reflect the primacy of life issues. As phrased by Archbishop Terrance Prendergast of Ottawa in a May 26 press conference: "to be actively in favor of life is to contribute to the renewal of society through the promotion of the common good....It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop. There can be no true peace unless life is defended and promoted.....For, the right to life is primordial." The point is that too often there is a blurring of social justice principles. Many have seen the readiness and enthusiasm of students and administrators to support legitimate "social justice" aims in missionary lands, in the efforts to reduce poverty, to bolster human rights, etc., but very reluctant to transfer those interests and energies to local human rights /social justice issues like abortion. The latter denies and destroys the right to life of the most innocent of human beings. Here follows a series of questions that may help develop a vibrant pro-life program within a school system.



Questions

1. Does a template exist or can one be developed that would help teachers to establish the “primacy of life issues” in the everyday curriculum?
2. Is the defense of unborn human life not the distinguishing characteristic of a good Christian school? Or perhaps the true *raison d’être* of the Catholic schools in particular?
3. How could a teacher, or a department, or a school board articulate a vision of what it means to be both anti-abortion and pro-life?
4. Does it start at the school level? Can it become a board-wide initiative? Can it become a province wide effort? Could several organizations or groups cooperate to produce resources, training, leadership camps, regular workshops? How?
5. In the Toronto area, what role could be played by the Office of Catholic Youth? Are there equivalent bodies in other dioceses or religious jurisdictions?
6. How are student leaders created, recruited, developed for the pro-life cause?
7. Where, how, when and by whom could training and leadership be provided to students and fellow teachers?
8. What opportunities exist currently for pursuing such training and leadership development?
9. Are board trustees aware of or even interested in the pro-life cause? If yes, how is it displayed? If not, what can be done to inform them and bring them on side?
10. What role do principals, senior administrators and chaplaincy offices play in the process of developing a pro-life movement or presence within the school, or within the board?
11. Is the development of appropriate curriculum resources something that could be done collaboratively by people across the various board jurisdictions?
12. What organizations exist to help in this area of curriculum services and production of learning materials, speaker programs, etc.?
13. Are there scholarship programs and various contests that young people could plug into to further their pro-life interests?
14. Do schools and school boards make provision for pro-life initiatives in their respective budgets?
15. Are there local events or national events/activi-

ties that might stir interest and generate significant student participation in the event? Is there support for involvement in such events?

16. Does a pro-life group exist and operate in the school, whatever the group is actually called? (social justice, respect life, friends of life, circle of life, warriors for life etc.)

If you have answers to any of these questions or if you would like to pursue answers/solutions to such questions in a systematic and cooperative way please contact me, dirocco@theinterim.com

The Meaning of the Annual March for Life

The March for Life is a public manifestation of one generation’s solidarity with unborn generations. It is a yes to life and rejection of the culture of death so willingly accepted by a society enamored and enslaved by materialism and the cult of convenience. The editorial of *The Interim* written prior to the 2010 March for Life offers appealing reasons for participation in the manifestation in large numbers.

Why we march

Editorial, Paul Tuns *The Interim* May 2010

This May, thousands of Canadians will attend the annual National March for Life and numerous provincial marches for life. They will come from every part of the country and they will be members of every race and religion. They will come, rain or shine, to our federal and provincial capitals and will witness to the sanctity of all human life. But what good is such a witness? Why, for a 13th consecutive year, will so many conscientious Canadians make this march, this pilgrimage? Why do we walk at all?

First, we walk for **unborn children** who cannot raise their voices in alarm at the danger to themselves or their developing hands in defence against the abortionist’s suction tube. We also walk for the **elderly and infirm** who can walk no longer and who are, thus, imperiled by a depraved society that preys on the weak in the name of “dignity.” We walk, too, for the **disabled and the handicapped** who are no less precious because of their condition. We walk, then, to shine a protecting light on those in the darkness of the womb and at the margins of the world. We walk for these, our brothers and

sisters; we walk, therefore, for ourselves.

We also **walk for encouragement**. The pro-life community in Canada is a loving family, whereas the picket line is a lonely place. In Ottawa, then, we are reminded of the breadth of our movement; we are reminded that, when we march for life, we do not march alone.

But we also **walk – nay, march – for history**, so that later generations of Canadians can look back with pride at the small contingent of their countrymen who were willing to witness to the truth in an intolerant age. In Ottawa, then, we entrust the legacy of our just witnessing to a generation yet unborn. The National March for Life represents the beginning of a new, civilized chapter in Canadian history and the end of a dark age of barbarism.

That this coming community is imperiled before its birth is not surprising; but, unlike so many innocent unborn infants, the birth of this new community is assured. Thus, in May, we will march in our capital cities and we will march for a future we long to see. Marching for life reminds us that, on this journey, we do not walk alone or in vain. With our pro-life family, we walk and work for a brighter future in which the sanctity of all life is defended and affirmed.



Impact

Post-march events showed the consequences of a large public presence on Parliament Hill. The statement of Cardinal Marc Ouellett of Quebec upholding church teaching on abortion was attacked by the press and politicians in Quebec, even leading to a unanimous resolution in the Quebec Assembly calling on the Harper government to affirm the right to free access of abortion and to stop cutting funding for pro-choice women's groups. This manufactured firestorm led the Cardinal to hold a press conference together with

Archbishop Terrance Prendergast of Ottawa on May 26. They called for a renewed debate on abortion, stressing the need to defend the innocent child, even in cases of rape, being mindful of “the dignity of women in all circumstances, and the respect due to all new human life.”



The cardinal explained that there's ‘a real social malaise around abortion’, with a lot of suffering for women and families, which makes it difficult to speak about the issue. But, he emphasized that abortion must be addressed for the health of society. The human conscience is assailed and bothered by it. It will not go away and if ignored the sad consequences only multiply for society. He decried Prime Minister Stephen Harper's refusal to discuss abortion: “*I deplore this attitude of many of our representatives who do not appear willing to face up to the injustice our country condones in offering no legal protection for a child in its mother's womb.*” The two church leaders launched an appeal that “*more effective aid programs for women facing a difficult pregnancy be implemented at every level, governmental, medical and social, so that the largest possible number may avoid abortion.*”

Archbishop Prendergast further insisted that “*to be actively in favor of life is to contribute to the renewal of society through the promotion of the common good....It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop. There can be no true peace unless life is defended and promoted....We cannot ignore the other great challenges faced by humanity today....But that is not*

our topic today....For, the right to life is primordial.” Cardinal Ouellet added that while many Canadians believe the country is at the forefront of promoting human rights, the fact is that “*we have no lessons to offer to anyone in this field.....We should even be more open to what is done elsewhere to have a clearer view of what we must improve to protect the voiceless children who wish to come into the world.*” Appealing to the conscience of his fellow Canadians he asked for a renewal of the debate “*so that together we may one day call for a change in this unjust situation in our country – the current legal void in abortion matters. Let us not fear this debate that will shape the future of our nation.*”

See full report and follow up articles written by Patrick B. Craine at <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/printerfriendly.html?articleid=10052609>
<http://www.thestar.com/opinion/letters/article/809895>
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/quebec/statement-from-catholic-cardinal-about-abortion-and-rape-causes-uproar/article1572473/>
<http://network.nationalpost.com/NP/blogs/holy-post/archive/2010/05/01/abortion-the-debate-politicians-are-afraid-to-reopen.aspx>
http://www.campaignlifecoalition.com/index.php?p=March_For_Life

At this site one can access videos of the most recent March for Life.

Questions

1. Why do people march for a cause? Are marches in protest of something or to support something a good vehicle to bring about change?
2. Can you provide three examples in history where marches made a difference?
3. How do the marchers benefit from the experience?
4. What is the barbarism that the editorial author refers to?
5. How does the march represent a new civilized chapter in Canadian history?
6. In our world where society seems to be rapidly advancing, in what areas is society also failing, based on the reasons for the march?
7. There are many negative consequences to abortion and euthanasia, in what ways can the National March for Life and pro-life groups help avoid such consequences?
8. In what very real sense are people marching to guarantee a future?
9. How would the annual March for Life in Ottawa be characterized, pro-life or anti-abortion? Does it make a

difference as to how it is viewed, as primarily one way or the other?

10. Did the May 13, 2010 march achieve the aims as outlined by Tuns in his Interim editorial?
11. What accounted for the unparalleled coverage by national media? (for example, the Toronto Star had three consecutive days coverage of full pages, plus letters to the editor, and ditto for the Globe & Mail, National Post)
12. Why did the Quebec media and provincial politicians go ballistic in response to the comments of Cardinal Marc Ouellett when he called for the federal government to reopen the abortion debate?

Wrong priorities for Africa

Michael Coren, *The Interim* June 2010, page 5

Sometimes I wonder why the people of Africa do not positively detest Europe and North America. We have exploited, colonized and raped their continent for centuries and continue to sell arms to their dictators whom we have put in place and then condemn them for spending money on wars. We invaded their countries, destroyed their culture and enforced white privilege and now moan that they are corrupt and inefficient.

We enslaved them, then imported them as cheap labour, then complained that immigration was destroying our way of life. Perhaps most pernicious of all, while imposing our supposedly superior values on them we allowed wealthy men from the United States in particular to travel to Africa for cheap sex and then bring the AIDS virus back to the west.

Men, women, and children had been dying of AIDS in their millions for decades in Africa before this but we heard hardly a word about it. Once it killed Californians it became a major issue and every celebrity worth the name appeared at a fundraiser and screamed at politicians to do more. Why? Africans are black and often poor and don't matter. North Americans and Europeans are much nicer and better.

This has become horribly evident earlier this year when western media reacted so hysterically to a proposed bill in Uganda that could have led to gay men facing the death penalty. That was a repugnant idea, which is why the Ugandan President and establishment, the Roman

Catholic Church in Uganda, and evangelical leaders throughout the world opposed it.

The bill did not become law in its original form and was always the initiative of a single politician. Even so, there were endless calls for foreign aid to be withdrawn from Uganda, which would have meant, of course, the deaths of many people because of the poor health and living conditions that still exist in a country that was a European colony and then the plaything of western governments. Aid is our moral duty – their right and not their privilege.

The agonizing deaths of Ugandan women and children, it seems, are nowhere near as important as punishing a man who dared to say some nasty things about homosexuals. Entire pages of Canadian newspapers have been devoted to the story but mass starvation in the same region hardly receives a mention in our press.



Africans are not animals or fools. They do not exist to be patronized by western gay activists. While punishment and even death for one's sexuality is an abhorrent idea, worse is the contrived neglect and abuse of an entire continent that leads to a suffering so vast and so long that it is beyond the comprehension of most of us.

Uganda has come through war and instability to develop an increasingly peaceful society, a promising economy, an evolving democracy and an anti-AIDS campaign that is the envy of Africa. Instead of encouraging this great country we threaten it. That anti-AIDS campaign was based not on an obsession with condoms but with an informed and compelling chastity education campaign that changed the hearts as well as the minds and actions of millions throughout the country.

More recently we have seen the usual suspects creep ghoul-like out of their political coffins to moan and yell as the abortion issue is discussed once again in Ottawa – as well as knew it would one day. It wasn't pro-lifers who made this a discussion, but pro-abortion fanatics who tried to insist that our government demand African women abort their babies as part of Canada's international maternal aid agenda.



These zealots assumed that the people of the country would once again say little but this time enough people in the media made enough noise that enough politicians developed enough spine to say, well, enough is enough. The argument for linking abortion facilities to aid to African women was based on dark logic. African women often die in or after childbirth because they do not have access to the most basic health care that Canadian women take for granted. The solution? Help them to kill their babies.

No, no, no! The solution is to make sure that they have their babies in a clean hospital with good doctors and first-class facilities. It's rather like saying we can stop all human suffering if we kill all humans. Which is perhaps not that far from what the aborticrazies wants. Africa says no, Canada says no, we say no, humanity says no.

Michael Coren can be booked for speaking engagements at michaelcoren.com.

Questions

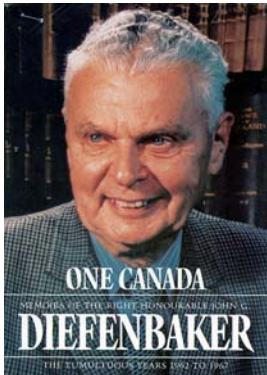
1. What is the litany of crimes and injustices visited by European powers on the continent of Africa and its inhabitants according to Michael Coren?
2. What issue regarding Uganda appalls Coren more than other issues?

3. Does Coren have a point when he points out the imbalance of press coverage? (law against gay men vs. mass starvation in the same region)
4. How is the maternal health controversy and the plight of Uganda an example of western interference with African values?

Youth, Elections and Civic Responsibilities: Video Recording the Candidates in Preparation for the Election Cycle

Within the next nine months Canada will likely face a national election. Canadians get to choose their government and set new direction for their future as a nation. Regular honest elections are a trademark of well-ordered, free and open societies.

Much sweat and much sacrifice have gone into creating, developing and strengthening this traditional system of government that is also responsible for our well being as a society. Even while recognizing its limitations and human imperfections, we can feel pride in our form of government and share the sentiments of former Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker when he declared



I am a Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, or free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.

Many other statements have been written about this form of government: some extol its merits; others caution about its dangers; and others cynically comment on its shortcomings.

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.
Winston Churchill

In a democracy the poor will have more power than the rich, because there are more of them, and the will of the majority is supreme. **Aristotle**

Democracy is the only system that persists in asking the powers that be whether they are the powers that ought to be. **Sydney J. Harris**

Democracy consists of choosing your dictators, after they've told you what you think it is you want to hear.
Alan Coren



Democracy cannot function properly without an informed and active citizenry. People must be free to express their political preferences. But people should also take their responsibilities seriously, becoming sufficiently informed so as to cast an informed vote at elections. The reality is that votes are cast on a variety of issues and for a variety of motives. Nonetheless, one ought to take to heart the advice of John Quincy Adams when he said: *Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost.*

Voters have many resources and modes of communication to help them become well-informed both before and during election campaigns: media coverage, interviews, pamphlets, door-to-door canvassing, political advertisements, all-candidates meetings, public debates, news-reports, radio talk shows, neighbourhood coffee socials. Are these sources equally reliable? Are some sources more effective and trustworthy than others? Who or what determines what the main issues for an election are to be: the media, political parties, special interest groups? Obviously the political system is complex, delicate and subject to tremendous pressures. But it is also dynamic, exciting and offers the opportunity for activism.

Voter turnout appears to be in steep decline judging from the numbers of the past two decades. Typical of this decline is the 2000 election when only 58% voted and only 22% of young people in the 18-24 age bracket.



The extremely low youth vote drags down the overall percentage. Why is the youth vote so low? A criticism often made about youth is their lack of interest in the political system. They tend not to vote at elections. They tend not to be interested in the issues. They lack commitment and involvement and are even more apathetic than the general population. While the percentage of eligible voters that vote in Canadian federal elections seldom exceeds 62% anymore (only 58.8% in the 2008 federal election), the percentage for young people is much lower than that. Not everyone sees lower voter turnout as a bad thing. A low turnout may be due to disillusionment or indifference, or even complacent satisfaction with the way the country is being governed. However, the vast majority of election analysts consider a high voter turnout to be preferable to a low turnout because it means that the government will more likely reflect the interests of a larger share of the population and hence claim a genuine mandate. Low voter turnout implies that the democratic system may not be reflecting the interests of all citizens, and hence creates alienation and the feeling of illegitimacy for the government.



Studies and reports show that there are many reasons for this sad state of affairs. The Elections Canada study of 2004 found that the *reasons for not going to the polls include lack of interest in the election, negative attitudes toward politics, and personal factors or circumstances. For example, people are less likely to cast a ballot if they feel they have no influence over government actions, do not feel voting is an essential civic act, or do not feel the election is competitive enough to make their votes matter to the outcome, either at the national or the local constituency level.....Some have negative views toward politicians, parties, leaders, candidates, and the government in general... Others see the issues as being phony, the real issues are not raised, and policies are misguided....Others feel that party platforms offer no real choice.... For too many people politics is seen as meaningless, a futile exercise that brings no genuine change, having no real effect on their personal life..... Young people in particular feel cut off, distanced from politics and most of them lack knowledge, feel ignored and not represented.*

The foregoing presents a very negative appraisal of the current situation. Here are some questions to address the problem:

Questions

1. What can be done to engage people more and especially young people?
2. What can be done to change the political attitudes of youth, including the ways in which young people might be encouraged to take a greater interest in politics?
3. Are there issues, for example, that could draw greater interest because they are more relevant to youth or at least perceived to be so?
4. Is it a question of more education, more information, more exposure to the political process?
5. What can candidates and political parties do to address Canadian youths more directly during elections?
6. Could the internet be used as a means of increasing political awareness amongst Canadian youth and providing information on how to participate?
7. Are there specific sites that would be helpful in engaging young people? What are possible with Facebook, Youtube, Twitter?

<http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=pas&document=turnout&lang=e&textonly=false>
<http://www.elections.ca/loi/tur/tud/TurnoutDecline.pdf>
<http://www.mapleleafweb.com/features/voter-turnout-canada>
<http://www.lifesitenews.com/>
<http://www.campaignlifecoalition.com/>

In late September, in our first edition for the 2010-2011 school year we shall address the question of how to involve students in the political process so that they too can contribute to a positive renewal of their society. Included in that framework for direct involvement will be ways and means by which students could:

1. Develop skills of communication and put them to good use
2. Learn about the election issues
3. Put their faith into practice
4. Act on behalf of the unborn victims of tragic choices
5. Express their solidarity with people in need

One such method to be outlined and explained in some detail will be the Video recording of 'ALL-CANDIDATES' meetings and/or party nomination meetings and/or working in a political election campaign.



1. How would this be a learning experience?
2. What preparations would need to be done in class in order to make it a successful experience?
3. What equipment would be needed?
4. How does one learn of dates of meetings?
5. What questions can be prepared?
6. Who asks the question?
7. To whom is the information reported or forwarded?
8. What form of evaluation is to accompany this?
9. Are students to be recruited voluntarily or is it to be an assignment for the whole class?
10. Could the school host an all-candidates' meeting?
11. If the latter, what would be the protocol for getting such an event organized?
12. Which students/grade would be invited? Only those eligible to vote or a grade where government/civics is being studied?

