



## **AN ECUMENICAL CONFESSIOIN FOR LIFE: Teaching Truthfully and Ministering Mercifully**

### **Our Situation**

In our time and place, the dignity of the human person is under attack. Year after year, horrendously high numbers of abortions are performed in American society. Also, the proliferation of embryonic stem cell research, eugenics, euthanasia, and other similar problems exhibit a casual disregard for human dignity. Occasionally, in the political arena and within church life, the great debate regarding human dignity surfaces. But most often, literally fearing disagreement, churches simply remain silent about these matters. Through their silence, churches in America prove themselves accommodated to American society and deepen their accommodation. Thus routine attacks on the dignity of the human person, in our country, can continue with few serious challenges.

In our time and place, it is crucial that churches (Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic) rely on God's Word and grace, demonstrate the unity that Jesus Christ gives, set aside fearful silence, and strive to teach truthfully and minister mercifully, "in season and out of season" (II Timothy 4:2, RSV here and following), with regard to abortion and other life issues. To assist churches in those tasks, the following ecumenical confession is offered.

### **Our Confession**

**I. We believe** in the one, true, living, loving, Triune God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This God reveals Himself in history -- through faithful encounter with Israel, most fully through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Church (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) in Word and Sacrament. This God speaks and acts. This God is not the creation of humanity's pious imaginations or spiritual enthusiasms.

**II. We believe** that God the Father is the Creator of humanity -- that is, of each and every human person. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27) People are not just products of biological processes.

**III. We believe** that God the Son, Jesus Christ, is the Redeemer of the world. "[I]n Christ God was reconciling the world to himself..." (II Corinthians 5:19) Because of the Redeemer Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, no person in this world is without reason to hope. Even those who have participated in abortion or other degradations of humanity, in any way, are lavished with divine forgiveness upon repentance.

**IV. We believe** that God the Spirit gathers the Church to teach God's truth and to minister God's mercy. "[S]peaking the truth in love..." (Ephesians 4:15) "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40) The Church has no authority to develop teachings or initiate ministries that contradict God's Word and will.

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**V. We believe** that God commands the Church universal, for the sake of justice, to protect and defend the unborn child and mother from abortion -- and other weak, defenseless, and voiceless people from violence. This divine command has been heard and understood since the earliest days of the apostolic Church. "You shall not kill." (Exodus 20:13) In a society that now hosts 1,200,000 abortions a year, in a society that convinces many of its citizens that a US Supreme Court decision that permits abortion also makes it right, in a society that seduces some churches to forget and/or resist God's Word about life, the Church's message and ministry on life will often be rejected.

**VI. We believe** that God calls the Church to be public about her position on life and abortion. "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-14) When the Church is silent or inactive on abortion, she rebels against the Lord of Life and His Gospel. Because Jesus Christ is Life, and came that we might have life, His Gospel can be called a "Gospel of Life."

**VII. We believe** that God, at The End of History, "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4) Until the glorious End, the Church will neither grow weary nor pause for rest in proclaiming and celebrating the Gospel of Life, and serving the Lord of Life.

### *National Pro-Life Religious Council*

*May 1, 2010*

- ◆ Georgette Forney, Anglicans for Life
- ◆ Rev. J. Kirk van der Swaagh, Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC)
- ◆ Rev. Terry Gensemer, International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church (CEC for Life)
- ◆ Dennis DiMauro, Lutherans for Life (LFL)
- ◆ Marie Bowen, Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL)
- ◆ Fr. Frank Pavone, Priests for Life
- ◆ Ernie Ohlhoff (Individual Board Member) Director, Outreach Department, National Right to Life Committee
- ◆ Rev. Paul Stallworth, Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS)/Lifewatch
- ◆ Ed Szeto, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)
- ◆ Rev. John Brown, United Friends for Life (UFL), United Church of Christ