

Yuba-Sutter Right to Life Committee

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Quarterly Bulletin

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President's Message

Dear Friends of Life,

Miriam, our Secretary and Newsletter Editor, will be having surgery this month and will be taking some time off to recuperate. We thought this recent *Sacramento Bee* editorial by Christine Cipperly would be a worthy substitute. My job is to tie it together with my Christmas message.

The article warns us of our arrogance in dealing with developing Countries. This arrogant approach is based upon a culture of death rather than life. I think it is in part a result of living with legalized abortion for nearly 30 years. This article is thought provoking and we hope you will take time to read it.

But take heart, the pro-life message is taking hold. More young people are standing up for life. The percentage of those opposed to abortion continues to grow and the pro-abortion side is decreasing. There are fewer Doctors who will perform abortions, fewer Nurses to assist, and we have a Pro-Life President who will choose Supreme Court Justices. A ban on Partial Birth Abortion is hopefully soon to come and we have a Senate and House that should support our President.

And let us not forget we have a God who is always faithful. He loves us so much that he sent us His only Son. As we celebrate Jesus' birth this year, may we be renewed in our commitment to stand up for Life.

Wishing you a joyful Christmas!

Maureen Guth

Cultural Imperialism, Yesterday and Today

Most Americans are well aware of the history of the colonization of the western hemisphere by Europe. Those of us of European descent can hardly feel comfortable when we hear about native populations being robbed of land and culture. With embarrassment we recall how they were deprived of their way of life and, far too often, of life itself.

If the lesson we seek to learn from this history is to avoid cultural imperialism, we are not learning our lesson well. Instead of trying to understand and respect the values of other cultures, far too many westerners, particularly those considered "experts" in the field of development and population issues, still persist in believing that our way is the only way.

Regardless how much we purport to celebrate "diversity," in fact we still argue that all cultures must become like ours in order to be saved. The difference now is that instead of trying to convert the natives to Christianity, we are attempting to impose our attitudes towards family size, sexual behavior and gender roles on all peoples of the Third World. The values and practices promoted at the highest levels of international relations often reflect more the western world's cultural and sexual revolt of the 1960s than the long-held values of local populations in less wealthy nations. The prevailing attitude that we are right in our beliefs, and that the poor women in other cultures need our

rescue is no less passionate—and no less myopic—than that of any missionary.

Sadly, this need to establish our way as the only way has blinded us to certain truths. For example, one often hears the claim that contraception and abortion "save lives" because women in Third World countries have a higher rate of death from pregnancy and childbirth than those in the Western industrialized nations. Such an assertion is ludicrous. These women die because they do not have access to appropriate medical care. Abortion and contraception do not save lives. Antibiotics, vaccines, nutritious food and sustainable employment do.

Despite popular belief, deaths from illegal abortions in the U.S. plummeted in the early 1950s due to the general availability of antibiotics. In fact, the annual death rate due to illegal abortions in the years immediately preceding *Roe v. Wade* was approximately the same number as die from post-abortion complications today.

A Not-So-Pretty Picture: Those who point to contraception, sterilization and legally sanctioned abortion as the holy grail of development often ignore other, more authentic needs. In their quest to eliminate poverty they end up stressing efforts to eliminate the poor. Physicians in East Africa, for example, relate stories of having dispensaries filled with crates of hormonal contraceptives, condoms and IUDs donated by western nations, yet being unable to obtain

simple medicines such as antibiotics, painkillers and malaria tablets.

Those who claim to promote women's health and well being must also reckon with the fact that sixteen of 17 statistically significant studies report that abortion increases risk of breast cancer. (A complete list of the studies can be found at www.AbortionBreastCancer.com.) Are we really helping the poor of other nations by helping them abort their children? Or are we going to be responsible for an epidemic of breast cancer in Third World countries 20 years from now?

For a culture which purports to understand ecology and the interconnectedness of the natural environment, the west seems to have lost an understanding of the natural connection between marriage, sexual intercourse and family. Beginning in the 1980s with accounts of China's forced abortion policy by Stanford graduate researcher Steven Mosher, a not-so-pretty picture has emerged: one of family planning agents descending on the poor and destitute of the world to diminish their families, interfere with private decisions which are usually between husband and wife, and endanger the health of women.

Burdens or Blessings? Unlike developed western nations, most countries still see children primarily as a blessing rather than a costly burden. In a country with little or no infrastructure, without welfare or education, and no retirement plans or Social Security benefits, a large family is both financially necessary and emotionally rewarding. They may feel that their lives and the lives of their children have intrinsic or even sacred value. They may hold the belief that fertility is not an ailment and that pregnancy is not a

disease. The existence of an extended family may have cultural meanings which we have already lost. China's inhumane enforcement of the one child policy means that the next generation will have no relatives except ancestors. No siblings means no aunts, uncles or cousins. Although we may perceive Third World women as oppressed by their husbands, these women may benefit more from learning natural means of fertility regulation and communication skills to improve their relationships with their husbands than they will from accepting advice from foreign family planning "experts" who seek to undermine the traditional structure of their families. The idea that a woman would even want to poison or mutilate herself in order to kill her unborn child may strike them as immoral or wrong. From their point of view, the idea that such a practice should be considered a "right" like voting or deciding on a career, may sound absurd. People and families are every nation's most valuable resource. Europe and Japan are already concerned about having too few young people to care for the elderly population in the near future. There is real danger of an infrastructure collapse. The sustainability of the United States population is currently dependent on our immigrants. Americans concerned about human rights and human dignity must forcefully challenge those who seek to eliminate poverty by eliminating the poor.

We Americans must be generous in supporting genuine relief programs such as World Neighbors, Bread for the World, the Food First Institute, Catholic Relief Services and Habitat for Humanity, which promote authentic development. We need the humility to learn from history rather than simply repeat its uglier chapters. Otherwise, history may judge us harshly, as today's efforts to eliminate poverty by promoting contraception, sterilization and abortion may one day be seen as the 21st century's version of handing out smallpox-infected blankets. *Christine Cipperly coordinates the Respect Life ministries for the Catholic Diocese of Sacramento.*

**Don't forget to watch
LifeTalk the first Sunday
each month from 4 to
4:30 p.m. on Cable
Channel 5,
or call us
(671-5347) to
borrow the tape.**

We are dependent upon your contributions, which are tax deductible to you. No one in our organization is paid for his or her time or effort. We do our best to be good stewards of your contributions.

