

August 26, 2008

Dear Fathers, Deacons, Diocesan Staff, Catholic Charities Staff and Seminarians,

As many of you are aware the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, made comments this past Sunday on "Meet the Press." Her comments on the subject of abortion and Catholic teaching were misinformed. By her statement in a public manner she has created confusion in regard to Catholic teaching. People of good will who have studied the present day Catholic teaching as given in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, John Paul II's Encyclical, The Gospel of Life, and have read the fathers of the Church, can easily recognize the flaws in her remarks on the teaching of the Church concerning when human life begins. The right to life from conception is the pre-eminent social justice and human rights issue of our time. As your bishop, I have the responsibility to present to you the authentic teaching of the Church, to correct the misinformation she has given, and finally to warn you that those who oppose the true teaching are not in good standing with the Church.

Archbishop Chaput, and his auxiliary, Bishop Conley, of Denver, issued a statement yesterday concerning the matter. I fully support their statement. Rather than crafting my own statement when an excellent one exists, I want you to read carefully the attached statement. It speaks the truth about the teaching of the Church on when human life begins.

The Christian teaching on abortion throughout history is unchanged. Human life from the moment of conception is to always be respected, treated with dignity, and protected. Catholics who support so called abortion rights support a false right, promote a culture of death, and are guided by the "father of lies" rather than by the light and truth of Jesus Christ. Out of respect for the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Church, any Catholic who supports abortion rights has placed himself or herself outside of visible unity with the Church and thus should refrain from receiving Holy Communion. Catholics have a responsibility to study the teaching of the Church on human life and when life begins. This teaching is affirmed by revelation and is a basic truth of natural reason. I ask all of you in your presentations, teaching, or preaching to state the truth of this teaching in an unequivocal manner.

I pray that each one of us may continue to build a culture of life and that our nation may return to the truth that our forefathers recognized. A truth enshrined in the Declaration of Independence is that there are certain rights which are self-evident, bestowed by the Creator, and are inalienable. Those rights are "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Unless the right to life is guaranteed, the pursuit of liberty and happiness is severely frustrated.

May our Lord fill you with His peace.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila
Bishop of Fargo