



DIOCESE OF THE MISSOURI VALLEY

Anglican Church in America



3728 Payson Rd.
Quincy, IL 62305
(217) 223-1766

The Rt. Rev. Stephen D. Strawn, Bishop Ordinary
Mrs. Mary Wilcox, Diocesan Secretary
Mr. Robert T. Fluent, Diocesan Treasurer
Mrs. Tara Keehr, Chancellor
Mrs. Virginia Euwer, Administrative Assistant

Pastoral Letter

March 21, 2009

To all Clergy, and Laity of the Diocese of the Missouri Valley ACA/TAC:

Greetings:

The Affirmation of St. Louis (1977), the Magna Carta of Anglicans that are genuinely orthodox, and considered one of our cornerstones, reminds us that the conscience, as the inherent knowledge of right and wrong, cannot stand alone as a sovereign arbiter of morals. Further, the *Affirmation* reminds us that every Christian is obligated to form his/her conscience by the Divine Moral Law and the Mind of Christ as revealed in Holy Scriptures, and by the teaching and Tradition of the Church. With respect to human life it further states that every human being, from the time of his conception, is a creature and child of God, made in His image and likeness, an infinitely precious soul; and that the unjustifiable or inexcusable taking of life is always sinful and that it is the duty of the Church and her members to bear witness to Christian Morality, to follow it in their lives, and to reject the false standards of the world.

Therefore, it is under the guidance of Holy Scripture and Holy Church that I would like to address the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) now being considered by Congress. The FOCA is a bill that represents the most radical piece of legislation on abortion in the history of the United States, even exceeding the protections of abortion in *Roe v. Wade*, in which the 1973 Supreme Court decision guaranteed a right to abortion.

FOCA states that a government may not “(1) deny or interfere with a woman’s right to choose—(A) to bear a child; (B) to terminate a pregnancy prior to viability; or (C) to terminate a pregnancy after viability where termination is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman; or (2) discriminate against the exercise” of these rights “in the regulation or provision of benefits, facilities, services, or information.” The scope of this bill is as sweeping as what it prohibits: “This Act applies to every Federal, State, and local statute, ordinance, regulation, administrative order, decision, policy, practice, or other action enacted, adopted, or implemented before, on, or after the date of enactment of this Act.”

It is clear that FOCA would immediately make null and void every current restriction on abortion in all jurisdictions. According to the Family Research Council, if FOCA was passed it would automatically overturn:

- State abortion reporting requirements in all 50 states
- Forty-four states’ laws concerning parental involvement
- Forty states’ laws on restricting later-term abortions
- Forty-six states’ conscience protection laws for individual health care providers
- Twenty-seven states’ conscience protection laws for institutions
- Thirty-eight states’ bans on partial-birth abortions

- Thirty-three states' laws on requiring counseling before an abortion
- Sixteen states' laws concerning ultrasounds before an abortion

In effect, FOCA would undo most, or even all, of the existing restrictions on abortion under a patchwork of state and federal laws. "For the first time, abortion on demand would be a national entitlement that government must condone and promote in all public programs affecting pregnant women." This would require faith based hospitals and medical providers to provide abortion services which are in violation of their religious beliefs. This likely will lead to discontinuance of obstetrics and at the very least and even the closing of these hospitals. Indeed, the passing of this act could lead to the suspension of all obstetric services provided by all Christian physicians because once obtaining an abortion becomes a right in law, they would have no civil authority to deny that service.

So one can see that the FOCA is a menacing development that represents a destructive setback in the effort to thwart abortion and support pregnant women and families and that will result in a life-threatening impact on health care. Therefore it is incumbent upon Christians to pray and work for the defeat of this bill.

In addressing this issue, the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church in America has adopted and issued the following statement:

The so-called "Freedom of Choice Act" now working its way through Congress eliminates any choice at all, first for the thousands of unborn babies who will be slaughtered at taxpayer expense, and also for conscientious medical practitioners with moral and/or religious objections to performing abortions. The former will be dead, and the latter will be subject to legal penalties, including forfeiture of their licenses to practice medicine, if they refuse to provide fodder for the charnel houses.

This legislation constitutes the epitome of the death culture's grab for power in our country.

As bishops in the Church of God, we the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church in America call on all such medical providers to practice the quiet, peaceable civil disobedience which once triumphed over "Jim Crow" laws, by continuing to provide principled medical care. And we call upon all faithful Christians to seek and obtain medical care from such practitioners. If this creates a "white market" in medical care, so be it. If it comes at a cost to some or many, it will be no more than the cost of obtaining civil rights for all some forty years ago.

*I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore choose life,
(Deut. 30:19)*

Therefore, I encourage all parishes/missions of the Diocese of the Missouri Valley to post this statement for all parishioners to see. Additionally, I encourage that this statement be released to all local media outlets and to be posted on their parish websites. Finally, I encourage all clergy and parishioners to write their state and federal representatives and senators urging the defeat of FOCA and to include the above Statement from the House of Bishops in their communication.

Finally I invite you to begin your Mass commemorating the Feast on the Annunciation (March 25th) with the Litany of the Unborn Christ Child. You may find that at http://www.unbornwordalliance.com/book_app_2.htm. May our Lord grant us his grace as we pray and work for all children yet to be born.

In the Service of God

+Stephen D. Strawn

II Bishop of the Missouri Valley