

# Hypocrisy or Redemptive Action?

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In a recent article appearing in the Courier-Journal on Jan. 29, 1975, Father Greeley stated that all Right to Life members who do not agree with his deep concern on such diverse and collateral issues as gun control, food crises, and industrial safety are bigots, hypocrites, fanatics and maladjusted.

Agreement on the issues he raises, important as they are, is not a necessary prerequisite for

legitimate and unified political action in the area of the protection of unborn life.

To require Right to Life members to have universal agreement on all collateral issues would eliminate the broad base of the growing pro-life movement, whose members now include feminists, ecologists, war veterans, anti-war activists, birth control advocates, members of a variety of religious denominations, racial groups, political parties and political persuasions. Together they bring to the Right to Life movement a common perception of the fundamental principle of the basic dignity of human life at its beginning and at its end, regardless of imperfection; they embody the unanimous agreement that no goal can or should be achieved by the in-

tentional massive killing of a helpless minority.

Such arguments as Father Greeley presents would have justified the passive neutrality of the German people to the destruction of innocent Jewish lives on the grounds that any concerted action to stop this immoral killing would have required unanimity against inflation, war, food, unemployment, and the other pressing social problems of the German people.

The Right to Life efforts already cover a broad range of activities which include:

(1) Seeking the enactment of a Human Life Amendment to the United States Constitution acknowledging government protection of every human being's God-given right to life, including the unborn, elderly, and imperfect.

(2) Supporting federal and state legislation prohibiting the use of taxpayers' monies to destroy innocent lives.

(3) Supporting federal and state legislation protecting individuals and doctors from being compelled to engage in abortion, whether the compulsion is direct, as in Sweden, or indirect by withholding needed funds.

(4) Supporting federal and state conscience clauses protecting institutions from being compelled to perform abortions, which compulsion is legally being advocated by the American Civil Liberties Union.

(5) Supporting federal and state legislation to regulate the continued tragic misuse of our educational system and facilities to indoctrinate our children with anti-life philosophies that are contrary to their parents' deepest moral convictions.

(6) Opposing legalization of the intentional killing of the elderly and the imperfect.

(7) Aiding retarded and mentally handicapped children.

(8) Alerting the public to the legislative direction or non-direction of our political leaders in the area of abortion, euthanasia, and infanticide.

(9) Promoting and advocating assistance to the starving people of the world.

Father Greeley's gratuitous comment regarding the "political ineptitude" of Right to Life is as incorrect as it is superficial. Right to Life has had major political victories. For example, in New York, it convinced the Legislature in 1972 to restore the prior restrictive abortion law, and one man, Gov. Rockefeller, was responsible for New York's

continuation of that permissive abortion statute. In 1974, Right to Life successfully supported the enactment of New York legislation mandating medical attention to children aborted alive and giving financial aid to adoptive parents of handicapped children. Right to Life has successfully supported federal legislation prohibiting abortion funding in Family Planning areas, and suspending federal funding of live human experimentation. Its other victories in federal and state legislatures aiding the unborn and helping to eliminate the underlying causes of abortion are numerous.

Of course, we seek and solicit a broader coalition of any and all groups and persons who can work together with us towards the achievement of mankind's common denominator — the protection of one's God-given right to life at all ages.

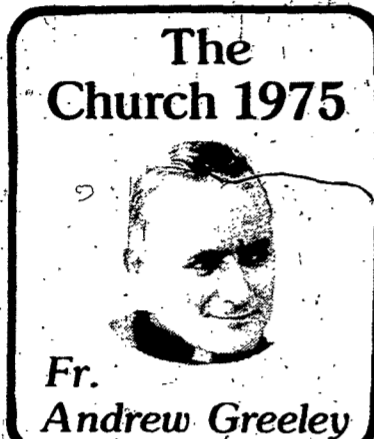
We do not seek the superficial coalition of our opposition, which are often alliances in name only, and where one can discern the same small group of people interchangeable on the Boards of Directors of Planned Parenthood, ZPC, NOW, and the Euthanasia

Society (the latter organization now euphemistically refers to itself as the Right to a Humane Death).

These groups who espouse a "quality of life" concept do not have coalition on such issues as gun control or industrial safety. Their lack of activity in those areas does not make them hypocrites, fanatics, bigots, or maladjusted.

Illogical needless name calling and ad hominem arguments are non-productive of our goals. True scholarship and intellectual honesty requires dispassionate and thorough objective analysis of the issues and not attacks against individuals.

Father Greeley has expressed support of our goal. He is welcome to participate directly in our efforts, even though he may not agree with all of the members of Right to Life on all other issues. It is puzzling that Father Greeley is so critical of those persons working together towards a common goal which he concedes is just. Even a life-long thief was allowed to redeem himself on the cross for acknowledging society's unjust killing of one, innocent person.



The Church 1975  
Fr. Andrew Greeley

It's not just the bishops who are currently into the hate-America thing. The NCCB workbook "Liberty and Justice for All" is an attempt to celebrate the bicentennial of our republic by tearing the American accomplishment to pieces. And the so-called "hearings" they are having around the country (like the recent one in Washington) are merely occasions for all the sick America-haters around to pour out their bile on the United States — with the Catholic laity picking up the tab for their travel expenses.

But it isn't just the Bishops. Msgr. George Casey, the gifted columnist of the "Boston Pilot," has recently observed (in response to me) that the American pluralist experiment hasn't worked well at all. There was the Ku Klux Klan, and racism, and riots and discrimination. Not much to be proud about, he seems to think.

The good monsignor is a victim of the peculiar myopia which seems to be afflicting all kinds of people these days. Like the people who put together the NCCB bicentennial book, he focuses on what went wrong and ignores what went right. The trouble with such a style is not merely that it is unbalanced: it overlooks the resources and the traditions in a society which are available to right the wrongs that still exist.

Furthermore this approach harasses and harasses people who know that by and large they are pretty good at getting along with other people, and who don't feel like being blamed for things that happened a hundred years ago, when they were not alive, and their parents may well not have been in the country.

One can only say to Msgr. Casey that riots, prejudice, racism and discrimination are part of the human condition, and are certainly to be found in any large multi-ethnic society. What is impressive about America, given its size, its heterogeneity and the haste with which it was put together, is that there has been only one civil war, relatively few riots, and much less discrimination than exists in other multi-racial and multi-ethnic societies. Furthermore, while discrimination continues, no one in America seriously tries to justify it any more. The American creed is so powerful that bigotry — once it is forced out in the open — eventually collapses.

The miracle of American pluralism is its survival despite intense centrifugal forces which ought to have torn it apart many times. Not only has it survived, however, it has survived with relative internal peace (compared to similar countries), relatively little physical oppression (after the Civil War), and relatively rapid progress towards social justice.

They let us Catholic immigrants in — despite their better judgment; they gave us political and social and economic power. Now we make more money and get more schooling than they do. We are now letting the non-white groups in and some of them (the Chinese and the Japanese, most notably) are getting better educations and making more money than we do. There is a national commitment to full equality for all races, one that before the end of the century (and maybe earlier) will be successful.

I don't hate it. On the contrary I'm grateful for what America made possible for my family and proud to be part of a country that is trying to make it possible for all families. I cannot understand why many Catholics (including the NCCB, which I suspect does not speak for most individual bishops) seem so ashamed of being American.

I, for one, am proud to be an American. I plead guilty to the sin of patriotism. I believe that real patriotism, based on a sophisticated understanding of the American heritage and the American politics of coalition building, is the best motivation we have for making the country even better than it is.

When the leadership of the Church and wise men like Msgr. Casey turn against the American heritage and the American technique of coalition-building, I do become ashamed — but not of being American. I become ashamed of the Church. It ought to know better.

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