

Catholic doctor speaks on abortion, conversion



Ken and Willa Berkes established the Anawim Healing Center in March 1985. The center combines low cost medical care, Christian counseling and healing prayer in a wholistic approach to human care. Presently, they care for an average of 15 people per day.

By Dr. Kenneth Berkes

Dr. Kenneth Berkes is a 48-year-old general surgeon, a graduate of Hamilton College and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. He and his wife, Willa, have four grown children and live outside Penn Yan, N.Y. As members of the Anawim Community, centered in Corning, the Berkeses are involved in spiritual renewal activities in the Church.

In March, 1985, Kenneth and Willa Berkes opened the Anawim Healing Center in their home. Christian counseling, reasonably priced general medical care and healing prayer are the elements of their medical ministry.

A member of the Catholic Physician's Guild, Dr. Berkes sent this "witness," which has been previously printed in "The Anawim Witness" and the "Linacre Quarterly" of February, 1985.

I recall vividly the first childbirth I ever saw. I was in my second year of medical school and our obstetrician kindly let me observe the birth of our first child, Kyle. I was overwhelmed by the miracle of birth, new life and the fruitfulness of our love. What a joy to be present at this sacred moment, to be a part of Willa's labor and delivery, and to realize in a deeper way the responsibility I had as a husband and now as a father.

I was not actively practicing my faith as a Catholic at the time. My studies and subsequent surgical training left little time for God and religion. Besides, medical science seemed to have all the answers. Like so many other physicians, I saw artificial birth control as a solution to our own "fertility problem" and prescribed it for my patients. I certainly didn't have the self-control necessary to make natural family planning practical. The Church warned that the liberal use of artificial birth control would lead to abortion and abortion would lead to infanticide and euthanasia. My "enlightened" fellow physicians and I agreed that these pronouncements were hysterical poppycock. Sadly, they have all come true.

To my dismay, the noble profession of medicine, my fellow physicians, are intimately involved in the killing. Perhaps, because we know the truth, we bear the biggest burden of guilt. In spite of the Supreme Court decision of 1973 (Roe v.

Wade), physicians know that at the moment of conception a unique, human life begins. It is life from life. It is human. It is a child.

As physicians, we are sworn to protect life. Yet, in abortion, we destroy life, human life, the life of an unborn child. Somehow, I repressed those facts when in 1970 I terminated the pregnancy of an unwed high school senior with a promising college career ahead of her. Another Catholic doctor, also at odds with the Church's teaching, prevailed on my human compassion. Fearful of losing his respect, I acceded to his wishes and aborted the life within her. It was a distasteful business; I vowed I'd never do another. The full horror of what I had done didn't impact my consciousness, however, until many years later.

Most physicians, even those doing abortions, know that they are destroying a human life. To protect their sensibilities and those of their patients, the baby is referred to as the "product of conception" or at best a "fetus." We participate in the deception by allowing the procedure to be listed on the operating room schedule as a "D & C" rather than as an elective abortion. Those in favor keep telling us of the compassionate need for the procedure in cases of rape or incest or where the baby is severely defective or the mother's health is threatened by the pregnancy. Those cases constitute only 1 percent of the 4,000 abortions done daily in the United States, and a human life is still taken.

Not long ago, a friend called her obstetrician to report that she was pregnant. The secretary responded, "I'm sorry to have to ask you this, but are you *having* your baby?" Is your child to be born? The very physicians who deliver babies are also the ones who do hospital abortions. While most are done in abortion "clinics," many are done in the same hospitals we go to when our lives are threatened by serious illness. We put our faith in doctors who may either be performing abortions, referring women for abortions, or at least not speaking out against the taking of innocent unborn lives.

In spite of their knowledge and training, physicians are intimidated by the fear of losing the respect of their colleagues. They worry about losing patients and referrals from other physicians if they become vocal

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