

World & Nation

Pro-life group buries 2,000 aborted fetuses 'with dignity'

Chicago (NC) — Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago led more than 500 pro-life activists in a service at a Catholic cemetery near the city, to "bury with dignity" the remains of nearly 2,000 unborn babies.

The July 30 event consisted of a memorial Mass in a chapel at the cemetery and a simple gravesite rite, celebrated by Cardinal Bernardin at the request of anti-abortion groups organized by the Pro-Life Action League.

The league previously had been critical of Cardinal Bernardin's "consistent ethic of life" approach to abortion, capital punishment, nuclear war and other life-and-death issues.

In a homily, the cardinal told the overflow crowd that the gathering was a "witness to our belief that every human being is created 'in the

image and likeness of God.' This means that every human life — at every stage of development, from conception to natural death — in all its circumstances — is sacred and beloved by God.

"As we mourn the aborted lives of the babies whose remains we bury with respect today, we also renew our firm commitment to protect and defend human life, especially those who are most vulnerable," Cardinal Bernardin continued.

At the gravesite the cardinal blessed two tiny white caskets and placed sprigs of wheat and red roses on them as a sign of life.

During an impromptu press conference, Cardinal Bernardin told reporters near the grave that he had agreed as a pastor to preside

at the event because "it was a corporal work of mercy. It is a witness to the respect we should have for God's great gift of life"

Joseph M. Scheidler, executive director of

the Pro-Life Action League, said that he regarded the service as "opening the way for similar memorials" for the unborn in other parts of the country.

Arrests continue in Atlanta as 100 pro-lifers await trial

By Rita McInerney

Atlanta (NC) — While more than 100 anti-abortion demonstrators arrested during the Democratic National Convention awaited trial on criminal trespass charges, two more "Operation Rescue" protests took place in Atlanta, involving 23 more arrests.

A total of 134 demonstrators were arrested July 19 at the Atlanta SurgiCenter. Protesters told municipal court judges during arraignment hearings that their names were "Baby Jane Doe" or "Baby John Doe." Authorities would not allow them to post bond under those names.

On July 29, as the third and final day of hearings for the July 19 demonstrators was to begin in municipal court, 13 more anti-

abortion demonstrators were arrested in phase two of "Operation Rescue" at Atlanta SurgiCenter.

The following day 10 more protesters were arrested at the Atlanta Women's Medical Center.

Bob Fierer, an attorney for the pro-life prisoners, said trial dates for the original group could be set for "anywhere from six weeks to six months, and my guess is it will be closer to six months."

Hearings for the 23 protesters arrested July 29 and July 30 began August 1 in municipal court.

Many of the demonstrators who came to Atlanta for the protest during the Democratic National Convention were from the New York and Philadelphia areas.

Father Edwin Arentsen of Addieville, Ill., a priest of the Diocese of Belleville, Ill., was arrested at that time. He remained confined with the majority of protesters at the Fulton County Jail.

Father Arentsen said in an interview that "we are trying to show that we the people think government is wrong. Government is for, by and of the people ... and we want to show them that abortion is murder."

Archbishop Eugene A. Marino of Atlanta visited the prisoners July 30 and accompanied Father John Adamski, pastor of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Atlanta, who had visited earlier and concelebrated Mass with Father Arentsen.

Operation Rescue director Randall Terry of Binghamton, N.Y., who was among those jailed in Atlanta, said the prisoners "provide a national symbol of resistance to the Goliath of the nation's abortion industry."

U.S. bishops approve one-month criterion for general absolution

By Jerry Filteau

Washington (NC) — The U.S. bishops have approved a one-month rule as a criterion for when general absolution can be used in the United States.

The final vote on the issue, 205-72, was released by the bishops' Office of Public Affairs in Washington August 1. The decision was to be sent to Rome for Vatican approval before taking effect.

If Rome approves, the decision means that when a bishop is faced with the question of whether to allow general absolution in a particular situation in his diocese, one criterion he should use is whether, in his pastoral judgment, the penitents would otherwise not have access to the sacraments for at least a month.

General absolution — the forgiveness of the sins of a group of people without individual confession — is a legitimate form of the sacrament of penance, but only in cases of serious need and when certain conditions set out by Church law are met. One of the conditions is that the people would otherwise be deprived of sacramental grace "for a long time," but the general law does not spell out what "a long time" means.

The bishops debated and voted on the one-month criterion June 25 during a plenary meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Collegeville, Minn. But the vote at that time, 168-62, did not reach the two-thirds majority of all conference members, which was required for passage. Some 230 of the nation's 300 active bishops were at the meeting.

Following conference procedures for such cases, the NCCB polled the absent bishops by mail in July. The mail responses put the total of yes votes over the 200 mark needed for passage.

During discussion of the proposal at Collegeville, some bishops expressed concern about abuses of general absolution, but most bishops who spoke supported the use of the form, within the Vatican norms, as a positive force to reconcile people and draw them back to individual confession.

Several bishops who supported the norm emphasized that the criterion does not replace a bishop's pastoral judgment in his own diocese but only helps to guide it.

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