

HISTORY OF THE "RESPECT FOR LIFE" COMMITTEE

(This is a review or "history" of the Wisconsin State Council Pro-Life program now known as the "Respect for Life" Committee that was prepared in 1994.)

The first mention of a Pro-Life Program was for the 1974-75 fraternal year. Don Daniewicz, of Sauk City, was the first Pro-Life Chairman. He was followed by George Koch, Wauwatosa; Vincent Ackeret, Medford; John McEwen, Schofield; Martin Salm, Chilton; Richard Martens, Shawano; and Kenneth Hoffman, Tomah. Convention reports, through the years, indicate gradual growth and development, slower than desired, but basically sound stable growth.

Since 1975, perhaps earlier, Pro-Life resolutions have been adopted regularly, with some being renewed each year. Committee reports and Pro-Life resolutions continue as important items for our State Conventions. Resolutions tend to: (1) encourage membership support of the Pope and Bishops in protection of the right to life for all persons; (2) stress cooperation with other Pro-Life organizations; (3) urge the appointment of council Pro-Life Directors; and generally encourage active participation in support of Pro-Life activities and legislation. Resolutions also encourage councils to establish Pro-Life programs in harmony with Supreme and State Councils and to have their Pro-Life Director attend annual conventions of Wisconsin Right to Life and/or other pro-life organizations.

A 1986 resolution protested, to the Bishops, the support by some Catholic groups and a few clergy of the "choice" of abortion. Another advocated that councils present to the mother of the first baby born after midnight Christmas Eve, a gift of roses honoring the gift of LIFE. This was renewed for several years.

At the 1975 convention Pro-Life contributions of \$350 were received from delegates and others. Educational films were purchased. There is no further mention of funds until 1985, when Pro-Life Consultant Vincent Ackeret reported a relatively small amount had been contributed by councils. An organized effort to supply funds for LIFE was not mentioned until 1987 when Pro-Life Chairman, John McEwen reported that Knights had contributed \$25,000 to Wisconsin Right to Life in response "...to the most concentrated effort, to date, to win the battle for life." Some of those funds helped support a "Life Education" day for Wisconsin Legislators.

Delegates to the 1988 convention adopted Resolution 16 ...in RE: ESTABLISHING A PRO-LIFE FUND AND COMMITTEE." With the adoption of this resolution the "Pro-Life Fund and Committee (now called "Respect for Life Committee and Fund") was officially established.

The first Pro-Life Fund appeal letter, written by State Secretary Haase, was distributed in October 1988 to the 41,000 members of the State Council. At the 1989 convention receipts of \$28,000 were reported. Pro-Life Chairman Martin Salm reported funds would go to Gerard Hall, Rosalie Manor and Wisconsin Right to Life. During following years, this expanded to include Pregnancy Counseling and Resource Centers, Birthright Educational Programs and others in all parts of the state. Other Pro-Life Drives followed with receipts growing until a drop in 1991-92 was followed by a severe drop in 1992-93. The 1991-93 drive relied on the Badger Bulletin and the State Council Newsletter for communication rather than a direct mailing letter to the membership. Direct mail was used again in 1993-94 and resulted in a "best ever" result with funds reaching \$57,000. With charity in our hearts and a unity of effort the statewide goal of \$100,000 can easily be achieved.

For 1990-91, State Deputy Haase established a six person committee — one person representing each diocese, plus a Pro-Life Coordinator. Martin Salm was the Coordinator; working with him was: Richard Martens, Green Bay Diocese, George Koch, Milwaukee Archdiocese; Charles Tullis, Madison Diocese, Vincent Ackeret, Superior Diocese and Rick Daniels, LaCrosse Diocese. Rick Daniels resigned in July 1991 and was replaced by Kenneth Hoffman.

With the end of the 1991-92 year, Martin Salm resigned from the Committee promising to continue to support LIFE. In his final report to the convention, he urged members to pray the Rosary daily for the Pro-Life movement.

For the 1992-93 year the Committee was decreased to three members, including the Coordinator. Rick Martens served as Coordinator and represented the Green Bay and Milwaukee dioceses; Charles Tullis represented Madison Diocese and Ken Hoffman, La Crosse Diocese and Superior Diocese. In 1993-94 Ken Hoffman, served as Coordinator, with the Diocesan Program Coordinators assisting in their respective dioceses.

The Respect for Life Essay contest was introduced during 1991-92. The contest got off to a good start, though much more council participation is needed for it to really develop. Originally made available for grades nine through 12, it was expanded in 1992-93 to include grades seven and eight as well. More growth is needed, but the program is growing.

A 1991 resolution established, "Pro-Life" awards for each council achieving "100% participation" in the fund drive. 100% is being determined on the basis of an average of \$3.00 per member, with membership being the number of members as of July 1 of the current fraternal year. The resolution was renewed in 1992. In 1993 and in 1994 a paragraph was added to the renewal of the resolution establishing the Pro-Life Fund and Committee, without specification of a dollar amount required. The details were to be announced at the beginning of each drive. A delegate to the 1994 brought an amendment from the floor to insert that awards be given to councils achieving "100% participation based on an average of \$3.50 per member to qualify."

A resolution submitted to the 1993 convention and adopted changed the Committee name from "Pro-Life Fund and Committee" to "Respect for Life Committee "

A resolution adopted, in the 1994 convention urged councils to establish prayer sessions averaging one hour or more per week in their councils, parishes communities and/or homes, with prayers offered for the protection of life from conception to natural death and for an end to the scourge of unnatural death inflicted by man upon mankind. The resolution also encouraged members to promote, support and to induce others to promote and support Pro-Life legislation.

During the 1991-92 fraternal year State Officers and Committee worked hard, with the Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the State Bishops, the advertising agency for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and pro-life organizations, for the passage of Assembly Bill 622. While the bill did not prevent abortions, it would have reduced them because of help it would offer to those in crisis situations. State Deputy Haase and committee members spoke in support of AB622 at a public hearing which was attended by a large crowd of pro-life people including many Knights. Unfortunately the Chairperson of the committee handling the bill kept the bill locked in committee until the close of the legislative session, and thus prevented a vote, and effectively prevents passage of the bill in spite of the great demand for it.

With the 1993 convention, Respect Life Coordinator Dick Martens arranged for phones to be available which made it possible for delegates and others to phone a telegram to Senators and Representatives to express opposition to FOCA, the notorious Freedom of Choice Act which would permit abortions on an even greater scale than ever before.

Speaking to the Supreme Convention of 1992, Cardinal O'Connor recommended establishing monuments to the unborn. We quote the following paragraph from the October 1992 Columbia magazine as it reported on the Cardinal's talk, "Cardinal O'Connor asked the Order to continue its light, especially its aggressive fight against abortion, by erecting a tomb to the unborn in each Catholic cemetery of the diocese, with the Ordinary's permission. The tomb, he said, would help raise the consciousness of all those visiting the cemetery that each unborn child put to death by abortion is as fully human as those who are also buried there."

There has been some response to that suggestion by the Wisconsin jurisdiction. We are aware of four monuments established by councils, since October 1992, a few prior to that. There have also been a few established by other organizations. Normally this would not be a burial place for the unborn, but a monument to their memory to generate an awareness of their humanity.

RESPECT FOR LIFE COMMITTEE

Goal: Protection of human Life from Conception until Natural Death

Objectives to attain the goal:

A. Promote Respect for Life

- Promote and build the Respect for Life fund through council activities.
- Develop council activities to generate pro-life awareness and action in the council, the parish and the community.

- B. Promote the Respect for Life Essay Contest
 - Use it as an educational tool for young people.
 - Continue to encourage students to participate in the contest. Ask and encourage teachers to promote the contest in their schools.
- C. Diocesan Respect for Life Coordinators are asked to work with Council Respect for Life Couples in promoting the essay contest, the Respect for Life Fund and other State and Supreme Council recommended activities.
- D. The State Respect for Life Committee:
 - Will be available to councils for speaking engagements to help promote good moral ethics in regard to LIFE issues, such as abortion, infanticide, assisted suicide. etc.
 - Will provide financial assistance to worthy organizations, for pro-life counseling, help to unwed mothers, mothers with small children, pro-life education, post abortion counseling and others.
- E. To respect, honor and promote non-violent pro-life activities, separately and in cooperation with other pro-life organizations.
- F. To promote prayer, especially the Rosary, and to establish prayer sessions in councils, churches, schools, and homes for the protection of all human life from conception to natural death.

These objectives put into practice will help councils generate more involvement in the Respect for Life movement. Feel free to contact your Diocesan or State Respect for Life Coordinators for information or to express ideas or wishes of your individual council.

RESPECT FOR LIFE FUND - GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of the Respect for Life Fund is to provide pro-life education to young and adults; to provide pregnancy counseling, education and help for unwed mothers; to provide post-abortion counseling; to provide many other helps and services. In some instances these helps are prodded directly, but mainly in cooperation with and service to, other groups organized for the specific purpose.

"RESPECT FOR LIFE FUND - 100% PARTICIPATION AWARD"

1. To qualify, contributions from the membership and/or the council itself must average \$3.50 for each member of record, as of July 1 of the current fraternal year (the July preceding the drive).
2. This minimum is not in any way to restrict or confine any member to giving only the amount of \$3.50.
3. Every individual member is encouraged to give according to his means and in consideration of the value of LIFE. Contributions ranging from \$25 to even as much as \$1,000 have not been unusual.
4. Councils may, in fact are encouraged, through fund raisers or any means available to supplement the amount given in total by the council members. Not for the mere purpose of reaching the council goal but rather to exceed the goal.
5. For purposes of the award" contributions are calculated from July 1 to the following May 1. The 12 months will credit for "100% participation".
6. The desired starting date for the fund drive is "RESPECT FOR LIFE SUNDAY" the first Sunday of October. To qualify for the award funds must reach the State Office on or before May 1st.

RESPECT FOR LIFE ESSAY CONTEST

"The Respect for Life Essay Contest rules for the students and teachers are in the Essay Booklet. Copy the materials for students, teachers, plus the forms; then return the original to the Wisconsin Book after copying.

The essays are written in January and are to be received by the council no later than January 31. Council judging should follow immediately. The essays winning first place are to reach the Diocesan Respect Life Couple by February 20th.

The Diocesan Respect Life Couple arrange and schedule the diocesan judging. They make certain the essays winning first and second in the Diocese reach the State Respect Life Coordinator by March 10th.

State judging will be completed before the end of March.

MONUMENTS TO THE UNBORN

At the 1992 Supreme Convention, Cardinal O'Connor asked the Order to erect a tomb to the unborn in each Catholic cemetery of the Diocese, with the Ordinary's permission. The tomb would help raise the awareness, of those who visit the cemetery that each unborn child put to death by abortion is as fully human as those who are also buried there.

In a letter to State Deputies, the Supreme Knight explained the Tomb of The Unborn project. The convention passed a resolution encouraging construction, with the Bishop's permission, of a fitting monument in at least one Catholic cemetery in every diocese. The following guidelines have been established:

- Each jurisdiction should implement its own program in agreement with the Ordinary of the Diocese.
- The regulations of each cemetery must be observed.
- The monument should include the Knights of Columbus emblem or script identifying the Order.
- The matter of burying aborted children near the monument or inscribing the monument with children's names must be decided by the Bishop.
- A ceremony of blessing and dedication should be held with the Bishop or his representative.
- Finally, councils in the diocese should be organized to visit and to pray at the monument on a regular basis.

Actual construction of the tomb need not be expensive. The objective is that the design be of simple dignity and that bring out awareness that the unborn children in whose memory it is constructed were never allowed the "right to life" and its blessing because of the decision of another person.

The State Respect for Life Coordinator and/or State Officers may be of help in providing information gained from councils having already established Monuments to The Unborn. Contact them.

RESPECT LIFE COMMITTEE

Continuing with 1995-96 through 1998-99

At this writing we are one month into the last council year of the century. The year 1999-2000 will end our efforts for the twentieth century. The year beginning July 1, 2000 and closing June 30, 2001 will be the first council year of the new millennium. The Respect Life goals have remained determined and consistent: Prayer, Education and Action. Three are small words - but a wide range of endeavor.

PRAYER

With prayer being vitally important, various 'prayer' activities have been encouraged. The latest being the Daily Living Rosary. In this, groups of 15 - KC members, spouses, children, parishioners - agree to pray a 15 decade rosary daily. Each member of the group prays one decade each day, moving to the next decade on the following day. Thus, each group of 15 completes a 15 decade rosary daily and each individual completes two 15 decade rosaries each month. There should be several groups in every council area. Spouses, families and parish members who are not KC's should be invited to join. It's intended to become a parish prayer activity as well as a Knights of Columbus program.

The intentions suggested, in our program, are for an increase in priestly vocations and an end to the culture of death.

The group doesn't meet for the prayers. Each person prays his/her assigned decade wherever he/she happens to be. Because we haven't asked for reports, it isn't known how widely accepted this program has been. There should be some arrangement for communication between members of the group — a captain to co-ordinate each group.

MEMORIALS

The Memorial to the Unborn, a program suggested by Cardinal O'Connor at the Supreme Convention in 1992, is really taking off— it peaked in 1998-99 and is still growing. Continued growth is encouraged.

In 1998 the Supreme Council asked all State Deputies to report the number, location and dates of erection of all Memorials to the Unborn in their jurisdiction. A book listing all Memorials in all jurisdictions is being prepared to be available to all councils in the year 2000.

This information has also been provided to our State Historian for the ten-year supplement to the State history book and to our State Respect Life Director for display at conventions, District Deputies meetings and Diocesan meetings. Only a few councils failed to report. We would still appreciate hearing from them

RESPECT LIFE FUND

The Respect Life Fund drive has been increasing annually---- but not to the extent desired to reach a state goal averaging \$3.50 per member for each Wisconsin Knight. We are heartened by the great numbers who give much more than the \$3.50. Still we are disappointed in the many who give nothing. There is no more admirable, no more important responsibility than that of the protection of human life. Human life is God's most precious gift to us. Mankind has been privileged in that we are created in His image. It's vital that we hold God's precious gift of LIFE dear and protect it, with our every action and effort.

We were able to distribute funds in the following amounts: In 1996 - \$42,954; in 1997-\$50, 539; in 1998-\$68,082; in 1999 -\$60,005. The goal for 1999-2000 is \$139,000 plus.

Gifts from members range from 0 to \$1,000 with several over \$100, many over \$25 and lots and lots between \$5 and \$25. These indicate that there should be no problem to "average" \$3.50 — It is a matter of people working together to help people.

From 1987 to 1999, based on reports to the annual convention — and with at least two reports missing from my files — it is estimated that the State Council has raised and distributed approximately \$500,000. With an average of \$3.50 per member, per year, that would have been at least \$1,000,000 plus. The good news is the program IS growing. The bad news is that as a program for the protection and saving of lives, it isn't growing as fast as other programs.

Possibly fund raisers involving our parishes and communities should be considered. We have so many more requests than we can provide. More lives could be saved with a stronger program. More people could be informed and know exactly what abortion is, and that with abortion a population equivalent to the total population of Canada and six or seven mid-west states no longer exist. This murder knows no end and will not quit until we, all of us "get into the act." "Forgive me Father for I have sinned, in what I have done, but more in what I have failed to do."

RESPECT LIFE ESSAY CONTEST

The Essay Contest has been growing slowly — and even bouncing around a bit.

1994 - 18 councils with 364 contestants

1995 - 28 councils with 294 contestants

1996 - 36 councils with 964 contestants

1997 - 36 councils with 922 contestants

1998 - 42 councils with 874 contestants

Grades 7 & 8 quite consistently account for 75% to 85% of all contestants.

July 1, 1998, the beginning of the last council year, there were 263 councils listed in Wisconsin. Forty-two of those councils took part in the Respect Life Essay-less than 16 %; a dismally low percentage. This indicates an "unconcerned," or "do-nothing" attitude about LIFE — How can anyone be unconcerned about life? Where would we be without it?

If the students get the information and theme, they are interested, willing and enthusiastic about writing essays. Non-participation, on the part of the council, denies hundreds of young people the opportunity to write and take part in the contest - a part of the pro-life movement.

PRO-LIFE ACTION

Members are encouraged to be Pro -Life Act write letters to editors, to State and Federal legislators supporting pro-life bills and opposing anti-life bills. Members are asked to encourage such action in councils, parishes and communities. It is by being active in the Culture of Life, and by being active in the lawmaking process, in all levels of government, and by supporting strong pro-life candidates that the battle for Pro-Life will be won.