

## Cherish and Celebrate Human Life in all its Aspects

### Dancing With The Stars Eye-Opener:

**Vegetative State to ... Dancing!** At age 11, two rare disorders shut down Victoria Arlen's body and she fell into a **permanent vegetative state**. After two years, nothing had changed on the outside, but Arlen "woke up inside a body that could not move. I could hear the conversations going on around me, but I had no way of alerting anyone that I was aware they were there." Doctors told her parents that there was no hope. The experts said **their daughter would be a "vegetable" for the rest of her life**.

She lived for two more years unable to move or respond in any way. Most parents with a child in such a condition for four years would have followed the advice of the experts and pulled the plug. "But my parents believed in me. They set up a hospital room in our house in New Hampshire and took care of me. My three brothers talked to me and kept me in the know about what was going on outside of my room. They didn't know I could hear them, but I could."

Then, in 2009, Arlen made eye contact with her mother. Over the next year, she very slowly began "coming back to life." However, swelling had severely damaged her spinal cord. She was **permanently paralyzed** from the waist down. "You need to get used to being in a wheelchair" is what Arlen heard from every specialist. But again, there was something different about Victoria Arlen's case. "My idea of what is possible had changed. ... I'd already overcome the impossible. **My parents never lost hope**." They mortgaged their house to open Project Walk Boston, a paralysis recovery center. "Despite agonizing frustration, I put in everything I had every day, spending thousands of hours working and fighting for a sign that my legs were still alive."

Then, on November 11, 2015, "one of my trainers noticed a flicker, a tiny movement from within my right leg. It wasn't much, but it was all I needed." For 5 months, she trained her legs until they could hold her weight and she could keep her balance. On March 3, 2016, after 10 years paralyzed in a wheelchair, "I let go of the crutches and put one foot in front of the other. I haven't stopped since." While "walking is still challenging and I still have significant impairment," at age 22 Arlen competed in **ABC-TV's Dancing With The Stars**. Her

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"To women who have had an abortion, the Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a **painful and even shattering decision**. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But **do not lose hope**. Give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To the same Father and his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child."

[St. Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, ¶99]

### State and National Events

● National: The **March for Life** in Washington DC is set for Friday, **January 19, 2018**. Ever since the legalization of abortion, hundreds of thousands of people go each year to the nation's capital to promote a culture of life in which every human being is cherished, from conception to natural death. Check with your area respect life group for details. Many make this a day off from school or work. Why not join them?

● National: **Rachel's Vineyard**, the world's largest ministry for healing after abortion, offers weekend retreats that is "therapy for the soul." (See article on p. 2 for details)

● New Jersey: Bishop Serratelli will celebrate a **Respect Life Mass** at the beautiful & extensively renovated Saint John the Baptist Cathedral, in Paterson, on Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM. Light refreshments will follow.

● Illinois: Americans United for Life and Thomas More Society have challenged as unconstitutional a new law that **forces pregnancy centers to promote abortion**. Similar government-sponsored speech for pregnancy centers has been struck down as unconstitutional in Austin (TX), Baltimore and Montgomery County (MD) and New York City. The law requires medical professionals in all capacities to **go against deeply held religious conscience** by referring patients for abortions. Yet it does not require other healthcare professionals or organizations to counsel patients on alternatives to abortion such as parenting or placing for adoption. [Jay Hobbs, [PregnancyHelpNews.com](http://PregnancyHelpNews.com)]

● New York: In a resounding 5-0 decision, the New York Court of Appeals rejected proposed "aid in dying" legislation. The ruling affirmed that the state's constitution and laws **do not permit** the act of a doctor to help people kill themselves with lethal medication. "The assisted-suicide statutes apply to anyone who assists an attempted or completed suicide. There are no exceptions," Judge Jenny Rivera wrote.

The NY Catholic Conference, the NY Alliance Against Assisted Suicide and the Medical Society of NY all remain vigilant for the next phase--the legislature is examining new assisted-suicide bills. Church leaders said they wanted to redouble efforts to **educate Catholics** in the pews that assisted suicide is against Catholic teaching because it goes against the **dignity of human life** from conception to natural death. Individuals in pain need "aid in living," more access to palliative care, and hospice care. [P.J. Smith, "Assisted Suicide Denied in NY," *National Catholic Register*, 10/1/17]

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## Dancing with the Stars (continued)

routine with professional dancer Val Chmerkovskiy was about her own story, beginning in a wheelchair and ending in an episode-winning foxtrot.

Arlen has shown that “human ‘vegetable’” is an oxymoron. As columnist Wesley J. Smith puts it, **Christians must “never call (human beings) ‘vegetables,’** a term as denigrating and dehumanizing as a racial epithet.” “I was told it couldn’t be done; my dream was impossible,” Arlen said. **“With God, all things are possible, Jesus said.”** Last month, Arlen performed again on DWTS. She and her partner danced a nostalgia-filled jazz routine (available on YouTube) as Minnie and Mickey Mouse. [www.lifesitenews.com, 10/18/17]

## NY Times: Is A Fetus Really a Baby?

*The New York Times* revealed the humanity of children in the womb & their capability to feel pain in an article (Oct. 23) on experimental fetal surgery for spina bifida, using words like “mother,” identifying the baby as the couple’s “son,” and suggesting a fetus could “die.”

That the tiny offspring in a mother’s womb isn’t human or alive is a **common argument of pro-abortion activists**, but they frequently fall victim to slips of the tongue that acknowledge reality and science.

“The ideal time for the surgery is from 24 to 26 weeks of pregnancy, Dr. Belfort said — early enough to prevent some nerve damage, but late enough so that the baby has a decent chance of surviving and doing well if something goes wrong and it has to be delivered,” the paper wrote. So, the patient receiving surgery while still in the womb is a **“baby” who needs anesthesia**, has a spinal cord, and is a male. Oh, and has a “fetal heart rate.”

The truth that the being inside a pregnant woman – regardless of whether it’s an embryo, fetus, or called a “baby” – is human is impossible to hide. We are human from our very beginning. [C.Chretien, LifeSiteNews.com, 10/24/17]

## Healing from Porn Addiction

A recent newspaper article began with a true story: “Tom Ryan found his first **pornographic magazine** underneath a recliner when he was 9 years old. That experience and the sexual abuse he’d suffered two years earlier from neighborhood boys started him down the road to pornography addiction.”

Millions of Americans find themselves ensnared by habitual porn use:

- ◆ 47% of U.S. families reported that pornography is a problem in their home.

- ◆ Pornography use increases the rate of **marital infidelity** by more than 300%.

- ◆ Like other addictions, dealing with it involves attending 12-step programs such as Sex Addicts Anonymous, and asking for spiritual support and mercy.

“While Ryan is hopeful for his future, he regrets the time & **energy wasted on pornography** – and lost opportunities to marry and have a family. The craving is still there, but he believes he’s gaining ground. Though full recovery will take time, Ryan knows he’s not traveling alone.” [Susan Klemond, “Mercy Brings Healing From Porn Addiction,” *Our Sunday Visitor*, 10/15/17]

## Rachel’s Vineyard: Healing After Abortion

“I have been through 14 years of confession, therapy and anti-depressants. Just when I could take the pain no longer, I found Rachel’s Vineyard that literally saved my life.”

Every year men & women suffer the **after-effects of abortion**. Rachel’s Vineyard weekends are a beautiful opportunity for any person who has struggled with the emotional or spiritual pain of abortion. Participants often surface and **release repressed feelings** of anger, shame, guilt, and grief. Many of the group facilitators have suffered a similar loss.

The weekend is a chance to get away from daily life to focus on the buried emotions of the past and begin healing through a supportive trauma-sensitive process. The retreat provides a non-judgmental, safe environment to help your soul find a voice, and **transform the pain of the past** into hope and love. Make a confidential call to 1-877-467-3463.

## A Nun’s Right to Choose

Last month, the Health & Human Services Dept. Issued interim rules that will allow moral and **religious exemptions** to the now infamous contraception mandate that coerced Americans (even Catholic nuns) to pay for forms of birth control that violate their religious beliefs.

The previous administration threatened the **Little Sisters of the Poor**, who care for the elderly poor, with up to \$75 million in fines for refusing to pay for types of contraceptives the nuns view as abortifacients. The Little Sisters still need relief in court, which the new rule should make easier, but the regulatory change will launch a crush of new lawsuits from groups like the ACLU. That so many government resources and so much litigation is necessary to **allow nuns to practice their faith** is a testament to the toxic identify politics that corrodes American life. [from an editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, 10/9/17]

Editor’s note: other “mainstream” “liberal” newspapers called the interim rules an “Attack on Birth Control” (*New York Times*) and “Taking us Backward on Birth Control” (*Newark Star-Ledger*.)