



Missouri Catholic Conference

Good News

February 2014 Vol. 33 Issue 2

Bringing the Light of Christ to Missouri.

In This Issue

Legislation Calls
for Reflection
Before Abortion
Decision

Of Pope Francis,
Dostoevsky, and
the Death Penalty

How to Join
MADP

Missouri Right to
Life Touts 2014
Legislation



Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion.

- Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

Legislation Calls for Reflection Before Abortion Decision

By: Sam Lee

Legislation is moving through the Missouri Legislature that would give a woman a longer reflection period before deciding whether to have an abortion. Senate Bill 519, sponsored by Senator David Sater (R-Cassville), has the support of many pro-life advocates, including the Missouri Catholic Conference. The companion house bill is HB 1307, which is sponsored by Representative Kevin Elmer (R-Nixa).

What does the legislation do?

The legislation extends the current reflection or waiting period for an abortion from the current 24-hours to 72-hours after the woman is provided the information required by law (section 188.027, RSMo) to make a truly informed decision.

The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld waiting periods, finding them related to legitimate state interests.

The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Pennsylvania's 24-hour waiting period law in 1992. The Court found that giving a woman sufficient time to deliberate on her decision whether or not to have an abortion is important. "The idea that important decisions will be more informed and deliberate if they follow some period of reflection does not strike us as unreasonable, particularly where the statute directs that important information become part of the background of the decision."

In a separate opinion, four Justices maintained that, "We are of the view that, in providing time for reflection and reconsideration, the waiting period helps ensure that a woman's decision to abort is a well-considered one, and reasonably furthers the State's legitimate interest in maternal health and in the unborn life of the fetus. It is surely a small cost to impose to ensure that the woman's decision is well-considered in light of its certain and irreparable consequences on fetal life, and the possible effects on her own."

Continued >>



>>Continued: Reflection Before Abortion Decision

There are similar waiting period laws in other states.

The *Guttmacher Institute* reports that 26 states have a law in effect that requires a woman to wait a specified amount of time between the counseling and the abortion procedure. In two of those states – Utah and South Dakota – the waiting period is 72-hours.

The American public strongly supports reflection/waiting periods before an abortion.

Consistently, public opinion polls find that Americans strongly support such legislation. For example, in January 2014 a *Marist College Institute for Public Opinion* poll found that 79% of Americans believe women who want an abortion should wait 24 hours between consulting with a health care professional and the abortion procedure.

Regarding a 72-hour wait, a 2011 *Rasmussen Reports* national survey taken around the time South Dakota passed its law, found that 65% of Americans support a three-day waiting period and counseling before an abortion, and 65% believe a waiting period and counseling are somewhat likely or very likely to reduce the number of abortions.

Waiting periods before an abortion have health benefits for women.

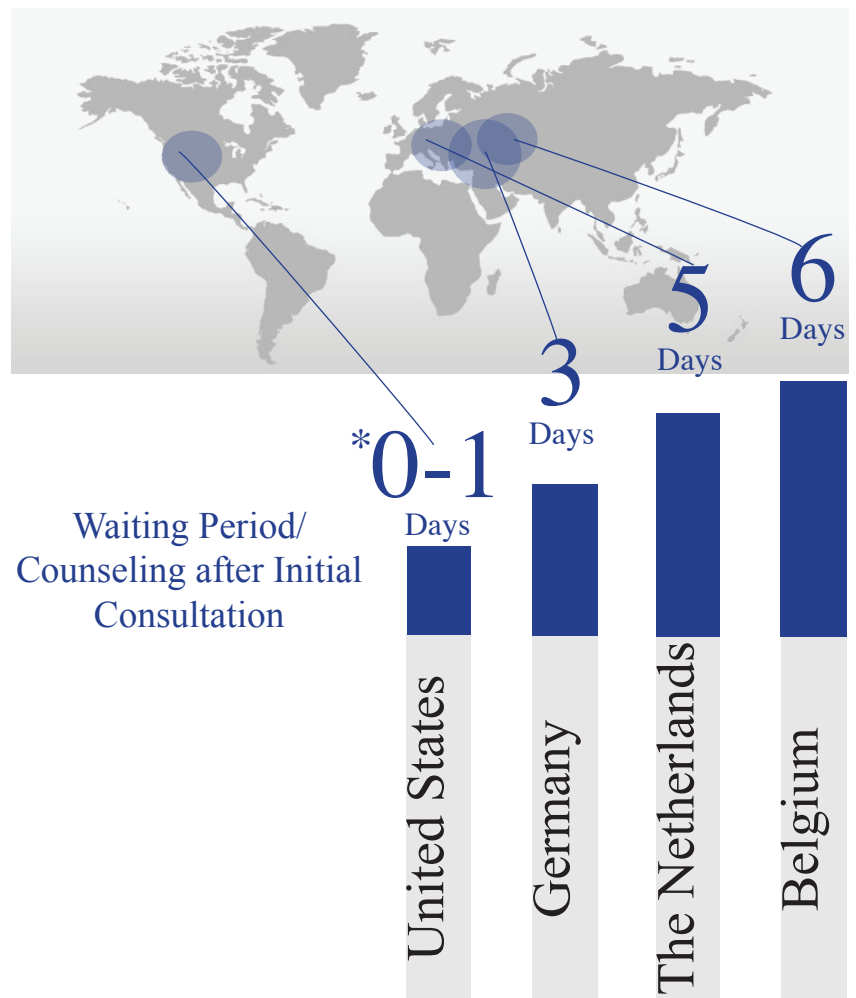
A 2012 study by researchers at Stanford University Medical Center found that women who obtain abortions in states with a waiting period have 21% fewer complications than women who get abortions in states without a waiting period.

A 2006 law review article using data from the CDC, found that “the adoption of mandatory waiting periods reduces female suicide rates anywhere between 10 and 30 percent,” and: "It would appear as though waiting periods (and the counseling that usually accompanies them) induce a more reasoned approach to the abortion decision, avoiding rash decisions on the part of the pregnant women. Better decision-making processes

presumably lead to fewer regrets later on, lowering the incidence of depression and, ultimately, suicide. These results suggest mandatory waiting periods represent public policies that generate large welfare gains for women faced with unwanted pregnancies."

Policies in other countries support the extension of a waiting period before an abortion.

Some Western European countries that allow abortion on request in the 1st trimester require 3-day or longer waiting period and counseling, and have much lower abortion rates than the U.S. The 24-hour waiting period typical in many American states still results in almost 20 abortions per 1,000 women (ages 15 to 44). In contrast, Germany requires a 3-day waiting period, and their abortion rate in 2010 was just over 6 abortions per 1,000 women (age 15 to 44).



*Varies by state; normally no wait or 24 hours

—Sam Lee is the Director of Campaign Life Missouri. Contact Campaign Life Missouri at 314-368-4242

Of Pope Francis, Dostoevsky, and the Death Penalty

By: Mike Hoey

In an interview with the Italian Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica* last fall, Pope Francis cited the 19th century Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky as one of his favorite authors. In the context of what we have learned so far about the Holy Father, this is not a surprising choice. Dostoevsky is a celebrator of God's love and forgiveness but only after the sinner has accepted that he must repent.

Reading one of Dostoevsky's most celebrated works, *Crime and Punishment*, can be instructive when considering issues surrounding the death penalty. In the novel Raskolnikov confesses to Sonya that he has committed murder but she offers little comfort or room for rationalizations, "You have deserted God and God has stricken you, and given you over to the devil."

Raskolnikov eventually confesses his crime to the authorities, "It was I who killed the old pawnbroker woman and her sister Lizaveta with an axe and robbed them." He is sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. But sincere repentance comes to Raskolnikov only near the end of his prison term. In his cell he takes up the Gospels Sonya has given him and begins to read about the good news of Jesus Christ.

This potential for repentance should never be discounted, even for someone who has committed a murder. Yet Sonya's first reaction to Raskolnikov's confession is just. Her response is not unlike that of the Lord in speaking to Cain after he murders Abel, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."

This cry of anguish is re-echoed by the loved ones of every murder victim. At the heart of the debate over the death penalty hangs this awful question: how can the scales of justice ever be righted? No argument about the non-deterrent value of capital punishment can respond to this anguished question, for this question comes from an interlocutor not concerned with facts but with obtaining justice.

In the passion of the moment some may want swift justice, even if it means exacting vengeance themselves on the murderer. But this can lead to a tit-for-tat cycle of violence that no civilized society can tolerate; therefore, the power to punish is held solely by the state acting in the interest of the entire community.

Catholic teaching recognizes that "[L]egitimate public authority has the right and the duty to inflict punishment proportionate to the gravity of the offense," (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2266). However, this same teaching calls for the use of "non-lethal means" when this is sufficient to protect people's safety. Why this mildness, is this not a betrayal of the demands of justice? Should not the murderer forfeit his life for the life he or she has taken?

At the center of the Catholic perspective on the death penalty stands a very clear recognition of the dignity of every human person. Not even grave crimes such as murder can completely wipe out this God-given dignity. And so the Church calls for the use of alternatives to the death sentence and observes that "The cases in which execution of the offender is an absolute necessity are very rare, if not practically non-existent," (*Catechism*, par. 2267).

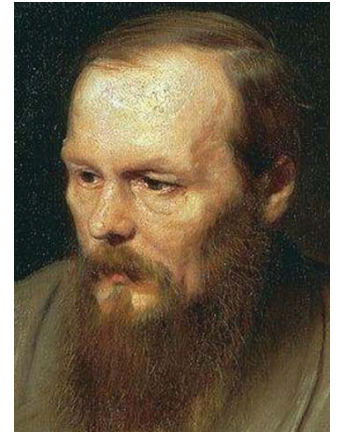
In rejecting the use of the death penalty the State says to its citizens that problems should be solved nonviolently. On a more personal level opting not to execute an offender gives that person precious time to repent and ask for forgiveness. And by the grace of God the loved ones of murder victims may be led to forgive and then to move on. An execution, however, cuts these opportunities short.

Dostoevsky knew the value of having more time. As a young man he was arrested for being a member of a secret utopian society and sentenced to death. On a wintery day in 1849, he was taken from prison and driven to the Semyonovsky Parade Ground in St. Petersburg for the execution. In a letter to a friend Dostoevsky described the scene:

There the death sentence was read to us all, we were given the cross to kiss, swords were broken over our heads, and our final toilet was arranged (white shirts). Then three of us were set against the posts so as to carry out the execution. We were summoned in threes; consequently I was in the second group, and there was not more than a minute left to live ... Finally the retreat was sounded, those who had been tied to the posts were led back, and they read to us that His Imperial Majesty granted us our lives.

This act of pardon by Czar Nikolai I made a lasting impression on Dostoevsky, "Only to live, to live and live. Life whatever it may be!" Some may see such stories as romantic, but as Pope Francis has said, "God does not mislead hope; God cannot deny himself. God is all promise."

—Mike Hoey is the Executive Director of the MCC



—Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881)

Opposed to the Death Penalty?

You may want to join MADP!

Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (MADP) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to ending the use of capital punishment in Missouri. For more information on how to join, please visit www.madpmo.org or call 816-931-4177.

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Missouri Right to Life Touts 2014 Legislation

By Pam Fichter

Missouri Right to Life (MRL) views the 2014 legislative session with great optimism. Following up on the excellent pro-life accomplishments of 2013, including the success of the MRL-sponsored bill to ban webcam abortions in Missouri, the 2014 legislative session also has great potential to provide additional protections for mothers and their unborn children.

MRL believes that atrocities at abortion clinics throughout the country, most notably at the infamous Gosnell clinic in Philadelphia, and the recent revelation of multiple violations of health requirements at the Planned Parenthood facility in St. Louis, call for legislative action.

Therefore, MRL has written legislation to place in statute stricter inspection requirements and more accountability for Missouri abortion clinics. HB 1478, sponsored by Rep. Kathy Swan of Cape Girardeau and 107 co-sponsors, and SB 770, sponsored by Sen. Wayne Wallingford, also of Cape Girardeau, known as “The Women’s Health Care Protection Act,” accomplishes this goal. By placing these inspection requirements in statute, the oversight and enforcement of critical health standards for Missouri abortion clinics will no longer be subject to the whim or political agenda of a particular agency or administration.

With ambulances witnessed at the Planned Parenthood facility in St. Louis, the only active abortion clinic in Missouri, multiple times in the last few years, and lists of health violations including rusty surgical tables and equipment, expired drugs and violations of infection prevention protocols, MRL is calling for greater protection for Missouri women. HB 1478 and SB 770 would provide that protection.

MRL is also encouraged by the introduction of other great pro-life legislation like the 72-hour waiting period and the legislation giving protection for rights of conscience to medical and research professionals. Pro-Life Missourians can support “The Women’s Health Care Protection Act” and other excellent pro-life legislation by attending the “Show Me Life” Pro-Life Action Day on Tuesday, March 11 at the State Capitol.

—Pam Fichter is the President of Missouri Right to Life.

Contact Missouri Right to Life at 573-635-5110 or visit their website at www.missourilife.org.