FROM THE DESK OF FATHER MURASSO

The Dignity of Human Life

In society today, there continues to be an ongoing debate about the preservation of life. In the recent past there has been a heightened interest with regard to the humane treatment of animals and wildlife in general. There are numerous campaigns to prevent the mistreatment of dogs and cats as well as crusades to save the deer, the whale, the dolphin, and other creatures that inhabit our rapidly depleting woodlands and deteriorating oceans, ponds and streams. There is increased concern about the necessity of preserving the environment, the air we breath, the water we drink, the earth we till. Society becomes outraged when as a result of human carelessness tankers pollute our waters killing marine life and infecting our beaches. Society becomes equally enraged when at the careless strike of a match, forests displace thousands of animals and birds. This same society becomes incensed when pollutants enter the atmosphere and threaten the air we breathe. Yet when the preservation of human life is called into question, whether the issue involves the unborn or the living, society appears less vocal. Few people are as incensed, few wage campaigns or crusades, unless of course it is the politically correct thing to do because of an election year. In any case, few express interest or concern about the lack of respect shown to the *dignity* of the person; i.e. the unborn, the child, the elderly or the handicapped.

We live in a society where human life, from the womb to the grave is compromised for the sake of what our society calls *rights.* Abortion on demand is a good example of a society pretending not to know the difference between right and wrong. We attempt to ease society's *collective conscience* by calling abortion a woman's *choice*, when we know quite well *choice* is not the issue. Society attempts to free itself by embracing a *morality of convenience.* Moral decisions result from that which can provide the greatest amount of pleasure or from what might appear *convenient* or popular at any given time. When human desires appear contrary to the *status quo* or appear too difficult to obtain, we as a society pretend that the easy way out is also the morally acceptable way out.

Secular Humanism continues to infect our society on all levels. Most people are unaware of the deceitfulness of this secular humanistic philosophy that couches itself in short-sighted attempts on the part of its disciples to *build a better world.* Secular humanism is a false philosophy that is based upon the experience of the individual, with no appeal to supernatural revelation or to God. The secular humanist maintains that if human experience reveals that something promotes human growth, it is moral; if human experience reveals that something prevents or stifles human growth, then it is immoral. It admits to no absolutes. Consequently, according to this philosophy, what may have been immoral fifty or twenty years ago, may not be immoral today because the standard of judgement is *human experience*, and not the gospel. Human experience is always changing, and is not the result of rational behavior, directed toward obtaining the *Good.* Until human behavior becomes an extension of God's laws, man will constantly mistake evil for the *Good.*

We as a society lack a stable and accurate value system because as a society we have lost sight of our Creator, and of organized religion. The deterioration of organized religion in modern times means that religion is no longer the uncontested center and root of man's life. The decline of a *religious consciousness* also means that the church is no longer the final and unquestionable home of man's being. The affect of this religious decline is due to a transformation in man's conscious outlook or frame of reference. The vision of

God held by our society has been biased by secularism. This is evidenced by the fact that the values of a Judeo-Christian world are no longer reflected in the public forum. The absence of a religious outlook has left man with feelings of emptiness. Moral absolutes no longer exist in society; thus can no longer provide man with a *hierarchy of values* from which to draw when making decisions and life choices. Modern man is losing his sense of *rootedness.* He is losing sight of his sacred origin. Man in the 21st no longer lives life from his soul. In the past religion created a solid psychological matrix surrounding the individual's life from birth to death that sanctified and endorsed all its ordinary and extraordinary experiences in sacrament and ritual. The loss of a *church-centered consciousness* is the loss of a whole system of symbols, images, dogmas, and rites which once reinforced and validated man's immediate experience. These religious symbols and rituals gave man a true sense of his identity, origin, and destiny. Therefore in losing sight of religion, man has lost his faith in God, and in the process, has lost a part of himself. A society whose people are unsure of their true identity and origin assume other identities that result in the endorsement of false doctrines.

Men and women of faith cannot express an honest interest in the well-being of animals, the atmosphere, or the environment and at the same time *appear* indifferent to the dignity of human life, specifically to unborn human life. A person cannot be a Jew or a Christian and honestly hold a pro-choice belief. Opinionated groups with a variety of political *axes to grind* have become a real source of confusion for people struggling to make right decisions. In removing the Creator from His creation it has become progressively easier for incomplete and false philosophies to control people's lives and their values. Men and women of all creeds need to recognize that in the one God whom we all worship, all share in His image and likeness and as such are called to live sacred and holy lives that are governed by Truth.

In this new millennium men and women of faith must assume leadership in assisting society and its leaders, both secular and religious, in placing the Creator back in His creation. Until mankind assumes a *vision* in faith from which to make decisions and from which to live one's life, society as a whole will fall short of the dignity which God calls each of us to assume. The Old Testament writers tell us, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."* Let us pray for *vision,* a vision that will provide mankind with faith strong enough to reflect God's true image in *all* his creation.