

Cardinal Keeler Mourns Tragic Death of Terri Schiavo

WASHINGTON (March 31, 2005)— Cardinal William H. Keeler, chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities, made the following statement today on the death of Terri Schiavo.

We mourn the tragic death of Terri Schindler Schiavo, who died today from dehydration and starvation.

Terri Schiavo's plight brought to light a critical question: To be a society that is truly human, how should we care for those most helpless patients who cannot speak for themselves?

A year ago Pope John Paul II answered this question, when he reaffirmed that "the administration of food and water, even when provided by artificial means," should be considered "morally obligatory" as long as it provides nourishment and alleviates suffering for such patients.

"Any man's death diminishes me," said the poet John Donne, "because I am involved in mankind." We are all diminished by this woman's death, a death that speaks to the moral confusion we face today. Ours is a culture in which human life is increasingly devalued and violated, especially where that life is most weak and fragile.

We pray this human tragedy will lead our nation to a greater commitment to protect helpless patients and all the weakest among us. "Yes, every man is his 'brother's keeper,'" as the Holy Father teaches "because God entrusts us to one another" (*The Gospel of Life*, 19).

May the soul of Theresa Marie Schindler Schiavo rest in the peace and mercy of God. And may God have mercy on our society which failed to protect this innocent human life.

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