

Priests for Life takes education campaign on abortion to Congress

WASHINGTON - Abortion supporters, including members of Congress and candidates for public office, are being challenged to explain their understanding of abortion by Priests for Life and other pro-life leaders.

In a campaign that was taken to both houses of Congress over three days in mid-September, the pro-life leaders asked the elected officials, "Is this what you mean by abortion?" after showing them graphic diagrams, quotes from medical texts and testimony about the most common abortion procedure by a physician who once performed the procedure.

The campaign is designed to come to a common understanding of the term abortion, said Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, during a media briefing Sept. 18 at the National Press Club.

Joining the effort was Alveda C. King, the niece of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and Dr. Anthony Levatino, an obstetrician-gynecologist who said he performed about 1,200 first- and second-trimester abortions during his first five years in private practice.

"To have a meaningful debate on any topic, those having the debate must have a common starting point," said Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life.

"In the abortion debate, however, the debating sides are rarely talking about the same thing," he said. "The purpose of our effort is to establish a common starting point, so that those discussing abortion have the same thing in mind when they start off the discussion."

Responding to recent comments about the Catholic Church and abortion by two prominent Catholic lawmakers, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Democratic vice-presidential candidate Sen. Joseph Biden, Priests for Life said that "those who support legal abortion are all too often unable or unwilling to describe

what it is that they are supporting.”

On NBC’s “Meet the Press” Aug. 24, Pelosi said church leaders for centuries had not been able to agree on when life begins. On Sept. 7 Biden said on “Meet the Press” that he accepted Catholic teaching that life begins at conception but did not believe that he could impose his beliefs on others.

Many people are in denial that abortion actually is “an act of violence that kills a child,” Father Pavone said.

Regarding the upcoming elections, Priests for Life said the main goal of its educational campaign is to make politicians who support legalized abortion aware of what the abortion procedure is and ask them if that is what they are supporting.

“The question in and of itself does not even raise the issue of morality or legality of abortion,” Father Pavone said. “It simply asks what you mean by the word. Anyone using the word should be able to answer that question. Moreover, the project is completely nonpartisan and applies to people of any party or no party.”

Ms. King, a Priests for Life associate who is a leader of the African-American culture of life movement, referenced what her uncle said about racial conflict in the 1960s: “America will not reject racism unless they see racism.” Today, “America will not reject abortion unless it sees abortion,” she said.

“The strength of a nation springs from the value of human life, dignity and civil rights in every stage, from the womb to the tomb.” she said.

Ms. King emphasized that minorities in the U.S. are targeted by abortion, calling it “genocide” in the African-American and Hispanic communities; African-Americans account for 36 percent of abortions and Hispanics, for 22 percent.

After experiencing a life-changing conversion and beginning to feel like a “paid assassin,” Dr. Levatino said he gave up performing abortions. “I now speak publicly about my pro-life convictions. I want the general public to know, for you to know and the doctors to know: that this is a person,” he said.

He asks those who say they are “pro-choice” but not “pro-abortion” to explain the

difference.