

In Defence of Life

Edmonton Prolife's Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 2

'educating for life'

Spring 2004

Slippery slope goes free fall

Paula Rebstock

President of Edmonton Prolife

On May 14, 1969 the Parliament of Canada passed the omnibus bill that made abortion legal in Canada. Almost thirty-five years later, the Parliament of Canada has passed Bill C-6, the Assisted Human Reproduction Act which will among other things regulate research on human embryos (very young persons). Years ago when I first became acquainted with pro-life issues, the term *slippery slope* was often used to describe how and where we were going. This winter as I followed the debate or lack of as to "what to do with surplus embryos", what came to mind was not slippery slope but moral *free fall*. Canada has a problem. In labs or freezers somewhere are little persons, surplus persons... and we ask what are we do with them? And so what played out was a big values clarification game, an ugly reality game of 'You (*little surplus persons*) have been voted out of the human race, but before you go we will use you so that we might live better and longer.' Waste not, want not!

How do we respond? In face of this madness, more than ever, pro-lifers must speak out to be the voice of the weak and defenceless. As in any battle, we must know the lay of the land. At the heart of these life issues, is a cultural malaise, arising from a profound philosophical distortion of what it is to be human. To understand abortion and euthanasia is to know man, to know his fears, his desires, his deepest longings. We must study and learn about this profound crisis of culture, the loss of the sense of what it is to be human. In particular, every pro-lifer must understand what is meant by *human personhood*.

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We must respond by courageously proclaiming with both *clarity and charity* the Gospel of Life.

This issue of *In Defence of Life* points to accessible material where one can learn more about the issues of human personhood.

- We review 'Real Choices' by Frederica Mathewes-Green. She spent a year talking to women, who have faced unexpected pregnancies, many who chose abortion. Story after story made it clear that they never wanted to hate or kill anyone; what they really sought was "love".
- We have reprinted an article on *personhood* by Robert Spitzer of *Life Principles*. Read it in light of the Parliament of Canada's Bill C-6.
- We also review *The Gospel of Life* by John Paul II. This proclamation on the sanctity of life is a must-read for anyone who wants to better understand the big picture.
- Finally, I point to an article by Mark Pickup on 'Significant Communities' (see Dec/03 issue at www.edmontonprolife.org) We received many thanks for his article. His words in favour of significant communities spoke not only to physical disability but to the very human condition, that of inter-dependence. Significant communities... Isn't that what every pregnant woman needs? And where every pregnancy, the expected and unexpected, can be brought to life.

On behalf of the board of Edmonton Prolife, I thank all those who have helped over the course of the year. My two-year term as president is complete as of our annual general meeting May 18. I ask that you please give your support to the new board. Several generous souls have stepped forward to stand for board positions. Finally, if you have not taken out a membership, please consider doing so.

Have a wonderful summer.



Protest at the Legislature – May 14 – 10:30am



Your next (EPL sponsored) opportunity to peacefully protest abortion will be May 14th at the steps of the Alberta Legislature. Signs will be available at 10:30 a.m. Bring a picnic for afterwards.

Why May 14th? - May 14th is the 35th anniversary of the passing of the Omnibus Bill that legalized abortion in Canada.

Why at the Alberta Legislature? – Abortion is not just a federal matter. All levels of government take some responsibility. The federal government legalized abortion, but its funding and regulation is a provincial matter. Furthermore, the Legislature is the visible sign of our democratic system in Edmonton, and it's a safe, open area for families to gather and make their voices heard.

Upcoming Events

- **May 14, 2004 - Protest at Legislature.** 35th anniversary of the passing of the Omnibus Bill, legalizing abortion in Canada. Show your solidarity with the unborn. Peaceful protest at the steps of the Alberta Legislature at 10:30 to 12:00 noon. Signs will be provided. Bring a picnic lunch for afterwards.
- **May 14-16, 2004 – Rachel's Vineyard Retreat** - Psychological and Spiritual Journey for Healing after Abortion. For more information and registration, please call Lucie at (780) 741-3863 or 425-4538. Or you can email her at luciebutterfly@hotmail.com (upcoming retreats **October 22-24, 2004** and **January 28-30, 2005**)
- **May 18, 2004 – Edmonton ProLife Annual General Meeting.** Election of new president and board. All members are encouraged to attend. Consider coming on board our Board! Phone Karen at the office if you would like to stand for election. Jill Cahoon of *Real Women* will be our guest speaker. At the Edmonton ProLife office. 7:30 pm.
- **May 28-29, 2004 – Awakening Hope for Life: A Conference for Health Care Professionals and Others.** Calgary. Sponsored by the Catholic Archdiocese of Calgary. For info., call Julia Kohler at (403) 218-5504
- **July 22- 31, 2004 - Edmonton ProLife's annual Klondike Days booth.** Phone Karen at the office to volunteer.
- **August 7, 2004 - Silent No More Benefit Concert.** Contact Denise Moutenay at 421-7747 for information.
- **September 18, 2004 - Love Them Both Walkathon 2004.** Rundle Park. Mark your calendars!
- **October 14-16, 2004 – National Pro-Life Conference: "Alive and Loving It",** hosted by League for Life in Manitoba to be held Winnipeg downtown at the Delta Hotel. Call (204) 638-6013 for more information.
- **October 30, 2004 – Youth Conference: *What's Life all About?*** Drayton Valley. Guest speaker, Natalie Hudson of *Toronto Right-to-Life*. Speaking on the *Life Principles*. Call office for more details.

For information on any of the above events, call the Edmonton ProLife office at 425-1637 or email us at edmpl@interbaun.com

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EPL Board: President: Paula Rebstock, Vice-President: Denise Fedoruk, Treasurer: Glen Woolger, Recording Secretary: Mary Zak, John Wallish, Patricia Stephens, Corrie Morcos

Office Manager: Karen Richert

New board members welcomed. Meetings first Tuesday of each month at EPL office. All EPL members welcome to attend.

Real Choices: Offering Practical Life-Affirming Alternatives to Abortion by Frederica Mathewes-Green

Why do women have abortions? What makes continuing a pregnancy hard to do? Frederica Mathewes-Green set out to answer these questions in her book "Real Choices" and was surprised by the answers.

"While the financial and practical needs of these women are great, the surprising thing I learned while researching my book, ... was that women said what they needed most was a friend. As I traveled the country holding "listening groups" with women who'd had abortions, I always asked, "What situation caused you to make this decision?" I expected to hear tales of financial or material woe, yet nearly ninety percent of the time women told me they'd had their abortion because of a relationship--because someone they loved, a boyfriend or parent, told them to. When asked what anyone could have done to have helped them complete the pregnancy, over and over the answer was: just stand by me. "I would have had that baby," I heard repeatedly, "if only I'd had one person to stand by me."

"When post-abortion women talk about the reasons for their decision, they talk most often about the failure of the baby's father to be supportive, to fill the father's role. Unexpected pregnancy can raise some breathtaking problems, but a partner's vigilant love has a way of easing them. Imagine a woman discovering a pregnancy in a difficult situation, but her partner saying to her, "I love you, I love our baby, I'll do anything I can to make this family work." On the other hand, imagine a story from one of my listening groups: a married woman with two kids, living in reasonable security, to whom her husband says, "Only ignorant people have more than two kids. I don't want this baby. You have to have an abortion." Which child will survive?

"Life outside the womb is lonely. We look all our lives for an experience of similar intimacy and safety even though many, as the saying goes, look in all the wrong places. When pregnancy begins, a woman is plunged into an experience of intimacy more profound than any of her adult life; she is knit, literally, to another human, one half-made of her own self. In the same blow she is



linked to the child's father, whose half-life lives on as well within her body. Yet this being formed of two halves is more than their sum, a radical third never before seen on earth.

She shoots from her parents' bodies like an arrow from a bow, carrying their immortality into the future, beyond the reach of their crumbling arms.

Pregnancy is about connectedness. It spins the wheel tighter, and centrifugal force draws the players together, more aware than ever of their mutual dependence.

Pregnancy problems have to do with broken connections: broken trust, fear, loneliness, abandonment.



Abortion-rights rhetoric recognizes the riskiness of trust and urges the woman to rely only on herself--my body, my rights, my decision. This argument twists necessity into a virtue, and offers a wry consolation prize: life as a steely atom, spinning without contact, without the dangerous and tender cloak of skin.

If pregnancy turns a wheel that draws all together, abortion breaks the wheel, spinning the participants out into isolation. It severs at one blow the woman from the child who trusts her, and from the man she wants to trust. As French feminist Simone de Beauvoir wrote, after abortion women "learn to believe no longer in what men say...the one thing they are sure of is this rifled and bleeding womb, these shreds of crimson life, this child that is not there. It is at her first abortion that a woman begins to 'know.' For many women the world will never be the same."

Mathewes-Green relates the story of Marie.

"I was 21 when I had my abortion. My husband was going to school and I was home with the two kids; I got pregnant again when Rachel was not yet one year old. When I told Victor he got really upset--he has a pretty controlling personality. He said that only ignorant people have more than two kids. It was the population control idea: Two in, two out.... So at last I went to the doctor. When he asked me what I wanted to do, I said that my husband wanted an abortion, but the baby...and he interrupted me, saying, 'What have you been reading? It's a fetus.' So I scheduled the abortion. I had about a week of waiting, hoping that Victor would turn around and say, 'No, I want this baby!'"

Marie pauses, woeful. "It never took place. He never rushed in and saved me. All the prayers I said--it never happened. It never happened."

Abortion is the result of failure within the family. As pro-lifers, we must strengthen our own families and through support of crisis pregnancy centers become family to women whose own immediate families have abandoned them.

Real Choices can be borrowed from the EPL office.



News Clippings

Pope Ends Debate over Nutrition and Hydration for Patients in Vegetative State ROME, March 20, 2004 (LifeSiteNews.com)

In a speech today to the international congress on

"Life- sustaining treatments and the vegetative state", Pope John Paul II has made the first definitive statement on nutrition and hydration, ending years of debate among theologians. The Pope clarified that removal of nutrition and hydration from patients in a vegetative state who are not otherwise dying is gravely immoral.

Alex Schadenberg, of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition is in Rome at the conference and told LifeSiteNews.com, that the issue has been troubling for Catholic Church leaders for many years with different bishops and theologians coming to different conclusions on the matter. "The Bishops of Texas said a couple of years ago that nutrition and hydration in the case of a patient in a vegetative state was optional, however the Bishops of Pennsylvania said that nutrition and hydration were mandatory, just as the Pope has affirmed today."

In his address the Pope taught "In particular, I want to emphasize that the administration of water and food . . . always represents a natural means of preservation of life, not a medical treatment." He continued, "Its employment is therefore is to be considered, in principle, proportionate and ordinary, and as such morally obligatory."

Thus John Paul II confirmed that by commission or omission, euthanasia is "a serious violation of the Law of God" and is the "morally unacceptable deliberate killing of a human person."

Schadenberg told LifeSite that the Pope directly contradicted Catholic theologians such as the famed Kevin O'Rourke who suggest that when a person is no longer able to exercise higher functioning he ceases to be a person. The Pope said, "I feel the duty to reaffirm with vigor that the intrinsic value and the personal dignity of every human being does not change." He said, "A man, even if seriously sick or unable to exercise his higher functions, is and will be always a man, he will never become a 'vegetable' or an 'animal'."

The Pope said cost cannot be a factor as human life is of supreme value. Moreover considerations of "quality of life" and pain management cannot factor into the equation when dealing with denying nutrition and hydration since such considerations stem from a principle of eugenics.

Repeat abortion rate climbs to 37% Reprinted from *The Rose*



Almost 40% of the abortions performed in Alberta in 2001 were on women who already had one or more abortions. Alberta Health released this information in March to Alberta Pro-Life in response to a Freedom of Information request by the group.

There were 10,589 abortions in 2001, according to the report and 3,904, or 37%, were repeats. The last time APL requested this information in 1998, the rate was 33%.

The report shows that 2,937 women had their second abortion in 2001. 720 women had their third abortion, 177 were on their fourth and 70 women were reported to have had four or more abortions.

"How can anyone pretend that these are medically necessary procedures?" asked APL president, Joanne Byfield. Alberta's official policy is that taxpayers pay only for medically necessary abortions.

"Taxpayers picked up the tab for all these abortions," she said. "So why are we paying for people to have their second, third, fourth and who knows how many other abortions?"

In a media release issued March 11, Mrs. Byfield said, "It's particularly galling when we know that private, for-profit clinics perform almost half of the abortions in the province. They are in the business. Are they going to tell women that an abortion is not medically necessary?"

The repeat rate has climbed steadily the past three years. In 1999, it was 34%. In 2000, the rate peaked at 37.3%.



Medical Student Reinstated (LifeSiteNews.com)

A medical student in his last year at the University of Manitoba Medical School who was threatened for years with failure for his unwillingness to partake in any abortion-related activity has finally been reinstated in good standing.

The Christian student, who wishes to remain unnamed, has for years lost successive appeals on a failing grade in an Obstetrics and Gynecology portion of his program for his refusal to perform or refer for any abortive procedure. Prior to this reversal, three separate appeals to the Medical School beginning in October last year all failed to correct the matter.

Judge Declares Terri's Law Unconstitutional MIAMI, May 6, 2004 (LifeSiteNews.com)

The law passed by the Florida legislature last October to allow Governor Jeb Bush to order a feeding tube reinserted into disabled patient Terri Schiavo to prevent her death by starvation has been declared unconstitutional. Pinellas County Circuit Court Judge Douglas Baird ruled yesterday that the law violated the state constitution since it overrode earlier court judgments and contravened the right to privacy.



Terri responding to her mother

The ruling from Baird came as no surprise since lawyers for Governor Bush had unsuccessfully requested a replacement judge in the case noting that Baird was biased. In fact, in February a higher court ruled that Baird "did not follow judicial rules" in denying Gov. Bush and

Terri Schiavo's parents the right to intervene in the constitutional challenge to Terri's law.

While she cannot move, speak or eat on her own Terri Schiavo interacts with blinks and groans to her parents who have paid constant visits to her during her over 10 years with the disability. The parents have been battling the efforts of Schiavo's estranged husband Michael Schiavo who has sought through the courts to have her nutrition and hydration removed which will cause her to starve to death. Michael has recently forbidden her parents to visit Terri and they have not been able to visit her for nearly 40 days.

Terri's feeding tube was twice removed. Once the courts intervened to have the tube reinserted and the second time the Florida legislature passed Terri's law, a measure allowing the Governor to intervene to have the tube reinserted.

The case is expected to reach the Florida Supreme Court. However, with Terri's law revoked by Baird, Michael Schiavo is free to order Terri's feeding tube removed once again.

Flaws of Canadian Stem Cell Bill C-6 (files from LifeSiteNews.com)

Dr. John Shea, who has extensively researched the reproductive technologies issues related to the Canadian Stem Cell Bill C-6 has produced a brief, point-form list of the major flaws of the bill, which passed the Senate last month.

1. The Bill allows **in-vitro fertilization of human beings**.



2. Because of the inadequate definition given for the words "**human clone**", the Bill allows the following kinds of **cloning of human beings**: pronuclear, mitochondrial, germ-line nuclear transfer, germ-line recombinant DNA manipulation and cloning involving the use of artificially constructed genetic materials.

3. The Bill allows the creation of a **hybrid**. The Bill defines "**hybrid**" as a) a **human ovum** fertilized by a **non-human sperm**, b) a **non-human ovum** fertilized by a **human sperm**, c) a **human ovum** into which a **non-human life form** has been introduced, d) a **non-human ovum** into which the **nucleus of a human cell** has been introduced e) a **human ovum** or a **non-human life form** that otherwise contains haploid sets of chromosomes from both a **human being** and a **non human life form**. "

4. The Bill fails to define "**human being**" and to recognize the **humanity of the embryo and fetus**. Therefore, the human rights of the unborn are not protected by law, in Canada.

5. The Bill allows creation of an **invitro embryo** for the purpose of "...improving or providing instruction in assisted reproduction procedures." **Any research on the embryo or fetus** could be allowed if it were represented as improving assisted reproduction.

6. The Bill allows surrogate motherhood.

7. The Bill allows parents to consent to the use of their **unborn offspring for research purposes**.

8. The Bill allows post mortem harvesting of sperm and ova.

9. The Bill forbids the maintenance of an **embryo's life** outside the body of a female person after the fourteenth day of its existence and therefore mandates **the killing of an invitro embryo** if it is not implanted in a female person's uterus, or its development suspended by cryopreservation.

10. The Bill allows for the performance of any procedure and the provision, prescription, or administration of anything that would ensure or increase the probability **that an embryo will be of a particular sex, or that would identify the sex of an invitro embryo**.

Dr. Shea states that "the only positive aspect of Bill C-6 is that it prohibits **the purchase or sale of human sperm, ova and embryos**."



A Message on Personhood By Robert Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D.

An incomplete definition of 'person' can adversely affect individual persons and the culture."

**When is a fetus a person?
What does it mean to be a person?
Does an unborn baby have dignity?**

To say that a single-celled human being at conception is no larger than the dot at the end of this sentence is to simply give a **description** based on **appearance**. It is not an **explanation** or **definition** of what this human being is. Aristotle 2400 years ago noted that to obtain a true definition of what something is, you must discover what its powers are and what it is meant to be.

This ancient Greek philosopher noticed that all living creatures are designed to reach a certain goal. Every species has a different goal. They called this goal "telos" which means "end." If you can discover what something's telos (final goal) is, then you will know what that creature is. For example, the goal of an acorn is "oak tree." It's the goal of "oak tree" which causes the acorn to grow and change the way it does. Acorns already have "oak tree" written within their nature. That's what they are, only in a very young stage. In the same way, if we can discover the "end" or "goal" of the **human** being, we will know what the **human** being is.



At conception each of us becomes a self-possessed **human** person. We possess our own future; it belongs to us uniquely and no one else. **No matter our size**, present within us at conception is the complete design of what we are meant to be and a guiding force that brings that development about. This power and the information necessary to direct it must be present at conception in order for development to occur.

Personhood is not dependent on whether one is currently manifesting all one's powers or not. It is not a temporary state that comes and goes with our degree of **functionality**. A machine could conceivably be designed to look like us, and mimic numerous **human** traits, but to mimic functionality is not **personhood**. Indeed, there are already machines that actually function more efficiently than we do at specific tasks, but I seriously doubt your vacuum cleaner ever wonders about the fairness of it all. You, however, are intrinsically oriented toward that unique **human** characteristic, evident even in young children, to desire and reflect on transcendent realities like justice and truth.

Our dignity at conception is often obscured by **labels** assigned to stages of development such as zygote, blastocyst, fetus, or infant. But, an embryo is not less of a **human** being than an infant, anymore than a child is less of a **human** being before puberty than after. At every stage we are whole **human** beings. This problem with labels is not new. In fact, Abraham Lincoln used to illustrate it by humorously asking how many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg? The answer is four, because it makes no difference if you call it a leg, it is still a tail. In the same way, how we **label** a stage of development doesn't change the **fundamental nature** or reality of that which we label.

Nor does the inability to perceive **personhood** in others serve as proof that it must not be present. Our own lack of clarity does not alter objective reality. **We can not earn for ourselves, or bestow on others, what is already ours by nature.**

Our culture's eclipse of reason has resulted in untold suffering and a relentless violation of inalienable rights. The unborn, the elderly, the disabled are all targets of these self-appointed final arbiters of **personhood**. Inevitably, none of us are immune from their arbitrary judgements. Healing the culture must begin with acknowledging that at conception, a unique, self-possessed **human** person comes into being. Their future, as well as ours, depends on it.

The Life Principles curriculum was created in 1993 when Robert Spitzer recognized that something integral to the message of a pro-life philosophy was missing in public discourse. He recognized that modern man is not intentionally withdrawing from the values and virtues traditionally defended, but is suffering from a severe malaise brought on by an identity crisis of the worst kind. This identity crisis has slowly slipped into our way of thinking and is gradually taken hold in the human heart.

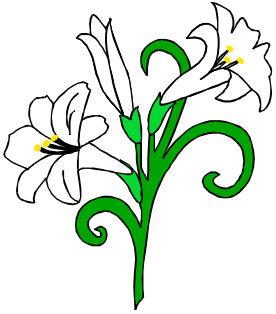
Attacks against human life in the form of abortion and euthanasia occur typically as a response to emptiness. An emptiness that is produced by a culture that has been ineffective in supporting and promoting a deeper level of meaning and purpose in life.

Life Principles aims to build up a culture of life. We do this by awakening human hearts and expanding world views using philosophical means. Each human heart must be acquainted with the nature of his or her own dignity, destiny, and ultimate desire for unconditional love

Last year, Edmonton ProLife purchased several copies of the Life Principles Video Series. If you are interested in learning more about the Life Principles Series, please give Karen a call at the office or visit www.lifeprinciples.net

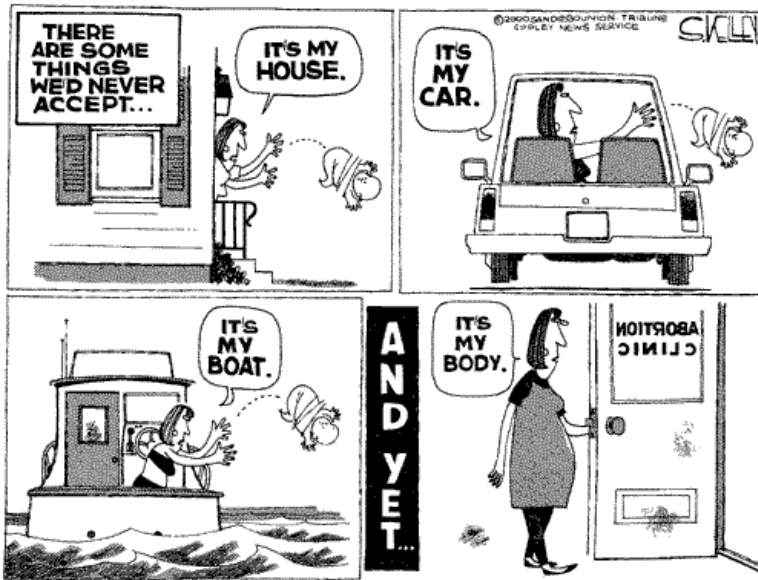
**The Gospel of Life by John Paul II
(Evangelium Vitae. 1995)**

Reviewed by Paula Rebstock



John Paul II's letter to mankind on the value and inviolability of human life is now nearly ten years old. For anyone who wants to understand what is meant by *the culture of life and the culture of death* this is still a must read. John Paul II, a pre-eminent philosopher of our day knows well that the root of all the modern attacks on human life lies in the loss of the sense of what it to be human. A survivor of both Nazism and Soviet communism, he came to know the importance of the dignity of each and every person. *The Gospel of Life* is a letter to the Catholic faithful but it is very accessible to people of all faiths. *The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel.* John Paul II

It can be downloaded from the Internet by going to www.newadvent.org/docs/jp02ev.htm



Steve Kelley, San Diego, CA, The San Diego Union Tribune not carry any stories on this event, which will be sure to have a similar sized crowd, please take the time to write a letter to the editor drawing attention to their intentional non-reporting!

100.... or so people celebrate National Pro-choice day
by Patty Nixon, Director of Alberta Pro-Life

Last Sunday was the day that was set aside by the Planned Parenthood Federation & other pro-choice organizations to celebrate the killing of unborn babies. How many turned up at the Ottawa rally? Well, just over 100 people. Do you know how many newspapers carried a news wire story about the event? Over a hundred papers! Compare this to last year's pro-life rally in Ottawa which had over 2500 people attending. How many newspapers covered that event?

None....zero. Media bias is alive & well in Canada. Keep an eye on your major papers on May 14th....this is the day after this year's national pro-life march is scheduled in Ottawa. If your papers do

Love-Them-Both Walk-a-Thon Announces Honourary Chair!

Graham Hicks of the Edmonton Sun has agreed to be this year's honorary chair of the Annual Love-Them-Both Walkathon. September 18 in Rundle Park. Thanks Graham! We look forward to working with you!

If you want to sponsor Graham, call the office and we'll take your information.



Pledge sheets will be coming out with the August newsletter.

Edmonton Prolife: Working With Others for Life

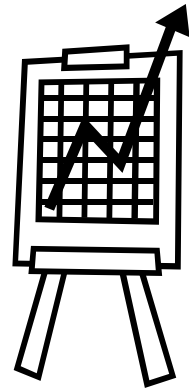
Life Canada - Edmonton Prolife is an Associate Member of Life Canada, the national Pro-Life educational group. The object of Life Canada is the establishment and operation of a national association of local and provincial educational pro-life groups across Canada. In co-ordination with local groups, they seek to foster and promote public understanding and knowledge of life issues. *Life Canada News* is published six times a year. To subscribe to *Life Canada News* or to read back issues, go to www.lifecanada.org

Alberta Pro-Life - Edmonton Prolife is affiliated with Alberta Pro-Life, the provincial pro-life umbrella group. A portion of your membership fee goes to support their work with local and national groups to effect change in our society. *The Rose* is published four times a year. To read *The Rose* online, go to www.albertaprolife.com

R.L.S.P. – Real Life Saving Plan

Investment Opportunity! Real Life Saving Plan – 10 fold returns guaranteed (redeemable in the hereafter!)

Your help be it time, talent, or treasure is an investment in the lives of others. We proclaim in the face of current cultural distortion, the truth about the dignity of the human person, every human person. We need your help in proclaiming this truth. Edmonton Prolife's work is ongoing and so are our needs. All help is appreciated. All donations are tax deductible. Again, I would ask that you consider becoming a monthly donor. All the how tos are in the box below. Thank you.



Paula



Clip out and send to Edmonton Prolife, 212, 11125-107 Ave, Edmonton, AB T5H 0X9

Yes, I would like to help Edmonton Prolife in their work in defence of life.

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Our Aims and Objectives

To promote respect for all human life from conception to natural death.

To uphold and defend the right to life, the basic human right on which all other rights depend.

To contribute to the understanding of the people of Edmonton and the surrounding areas, by education, that society has a duty to protect this right.

We are committed to peaceful actions to fulfill our mission.

(2:2)