



University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics
Authority Board
600 Highland Avenue
Madison, WI 53792

February 4, 2008

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of the UW Hospitals and Clinics Authority Board,

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to offer a few words in regard to your discussion on whether to allow for second term abortions at the Madison Surgery Center. I am sorry that I am unable to be here in person, as I am currently concluding a meeting of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, of whose board I am chair.

I write to you today as one charged with caring not only for the 270,000 Catholics in the Diocese of Madison, but for all men and women in southwestern Wisconsin. These are men and women who are your patients and future patients, your doctors, nurses, and staffs. I offer these words today out of care for *you* – and truly I do care for you.

And though I am a Catholic Bishop I write to you today, cognizant of the fact that not all of you may be Catholic or Christian at all. I write today with an appeal to reason and good will, common to all men and women. Christians, Jews, and Muslims know that every person is created in the image and likeness of God, but putting aside our faith or lack thereof, each of us, by nature of our being human, can know, by reason alone and by simple biology that even at the earliest stages of its existence, a human embryo is a unique, living individual of the human species, one with its own unique DNA. Under consideration here is a question regarding individuals who are even easier to recognize as unique; individuals with the same inherent dignity as you and I, and deserving of particular rights.

The unique persons in question, those who are between thirteen and twenty-two weeks of gestation, are at the very least, on the verge of viability. Some could be within days or even hours of being considered (were they to be born prematurely) your most helpless and desperate patients – in need of constant, intensive care and protection. And yet actions are being considered which would treat them not as unique individuals and patients, but as pieces of tissue.

Nor can we simply rely upon the argument that the proposed actions are perfectly legal. Our world has learned, ever-so-tragically, that what is legal does not necessarily constitute what is morally right. When looking at the official or unofficial policies and despicable pogroms of foreign countries, the very legal, albeit embarrassing, hatred and disenfranchisement of individuals in our own nation's history, or more recent allowable actions, it is easy to see that legal acts often are simply not morally tolerable. We do not have to choose to participate in these "legal evils," rather we must choose to respect every unique individual human being, regardless of their race, creed, or stage of mental or physical development.

To cooperate in these procedures would be to act not only in violation of all that hospitals stand for, but in violation of our humanity. This proposed expansion in the destruction of innocent life will serve only as a further humiliation of our human dignity and as such I remain diametrically opposed to it.

On behalf of the quarter million Catholics in this area and all men and women of good will, on behalf of the voiceless human lives who come through your doors, I ask you to preserve the purity of your art, working to bring about healing and throwing off the temptation to act as God with regard to human life. I ask you to use your awesome responsibility to choose warmth, sympathy, and understanding for the most weak in your care.

Thank you for listening to my reflections in this matter.

Faithfully yours,



The Most Rev. Robert C. Morlino
Bishop of Madison

O F F I C E O F T H E B I S H O P

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