

Denouncing Violence

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Priests for Life denounces the incidents of violence that have occurred against abortion providers. Echoing Pope John Paul II, we declare that *"not even a murderer loses his personal dignity"* (EV #9).

We also denounce the efforts continuously made by abortion advocates to blame pro-life groups for that violence. If anything, the violence done against abortionists is encouraged by the mentality and actions of those who *promote* abortion. Briefly, here's why.

First of all, for over 25 years, the so-called "pro-choice" mentality has been telling us that sometimes it's OK to choose to end a life to solve a problem. Though some try to defend abortion by saying "It's not a human life," more and more -- both on the streets and in leadership -- are abandoning that line of reasoning and admitting that abortion takes a human life. Naomi Wolfe wrote along these lines in her *New Republic* article *Our Bodies, Our Souls*, and the same thinking was conveyed to me on the street by a man supporting abortion rights by holding a sign saying "Keep Baby-Killing Legal."

Besides the dangerous pro-choice rhetoric, the constant efforts of abortion supporters to suppress peaceful pro-life activity contributes to a "pressure-cooker" effect in society that can lead to violence. The FACE law (Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances) signed by President Clinton in 1994, for example, does not simply punish violent activity. It also punishes the perfectly *peaceful* activity of blockading a doorway into which another human being is going to be brought to be killed. Whether one agrees with the strategy or not is beside the point. The point is that what the person does in that instance is *peaceful*. The law now treats it as criminal.

President John F. Kennedy once said that if you make peaceful protest impossible, you make violent protest inevitable. I found it interesting, for example, to read the story of Richard Andrews, who admitted to setting fire to seven abortion facilities. In the 1980's, this man *peacefully and prayerfully* blockaded the entrances to these facilities. His violent activity did not start until after something changed in the early 1990's -- namely, a group of Washington facilities successfully sued to stop the blockades. This, of course, does not *prove* anything. But it would be shortsighted not to include this dynamic in our evaluation of the causes of violence against abortion providers.

All violence must be opposed, whatever one's beliefs about social issues. The government and the abortion supporters will agree with these words. Bill Lann Lee, for instance, as acting attorney general for civil rights stated, "Even those who disagree [with abortion rights] must agree that the violent destruction of property has no place in our society." Dr. Garson Romalis, himself wounded in an attack, said, "No matter what people's beliefs are with regard to the abortion issue, the shooting of a doctor is a violent act. It's a terrorist act."

We agree.

But then we also wonder why, at the same time, one's "belief" that abortion is justifiable takes precedence over that fact that it, too, is a violent act.