

# OPPOSITION NOTES

AN INVESTIGATIVE SERIES ON THOSE WHO OPPOSE  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

## Faithless Politics: Priests for Life Defies Constitution and Conscience

### INTRODUCTION

**P**riests for Life national director Frank Pavone has spent more than 15 years trying vainly to grow his Catholic antichoice group into the mass clerical movement envisioned in its rhetoric, only to find himself banished to a Texan wasteland.

In a country with some 40,000 Catholic priests, Priests for Life (PFL) has never claimed more than 5,000 members—and quietly stopped counting some time around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unapologetic electoral campaigning, and unabashed cooperation with the most militant antichoice figures, have not brought PFL membership numbers to match the New York priest's ambitions.

Pavone's nonprofit says it is “for everyone who wants to stop abortion and euthanasia,” “not an association that seeks to be some sort of separate and elite group of priests who claim to be more pro-life than all the rest”; it boasts the church hierarchy's approval, strict orthodoxy and a board of archbishops and cardinals. Even by PFL's own optimistic

estimates, however, Pavone appears never to have attracted a membership of more than one in five US priests. His reaction has been to all but give up on the existing priesthood, which he regularly castigates as too timid on abortion, and to seek to mold young priests in his image at his new Texas refuge.

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Faced with clerical indifference and hamstrung by superiors in his more egregious campaigns, Pavone has sought a new start out West—namely, in the remote mission diocese of Amarillo, which covers 25,000 square miles of the Texas Panhandle but serves very few Catholics. Having obtained latitude from Bishop John Yanta that he could not

## KEY FINDINGS

- Despite official church endorsement and national director Frank Pavone's vision of a mass clerical movement, PFL has run up against priestly indifference and superiors' frequent disapproval.
- PFL finds itself banished from New York to a Texas refuge, where it has reportedly recruited three priests to train as the next generation of antichoice activists. Pavone continues to badger the US priests about what he sees as their insufficient orthodoxy.
- PFL electioneers unambiguously at every national election in favor of Republican candidates, is especially loyal to US president George W. Bush and has criticized Catholics' traditional alignment with Democrats. PFL loyalties to Republican conservative positions appear at times to outweigh its obedience to the Vatican, as when PFL enthusiastically endorsed the Iraq war despite obvious papal reservations and the absence of any Vatican characterization of the war as just.
- PFL's defense of its electoral campaigning contradicts directly Internal Revenue Service guidelines on such activity by tax-exempt nonprofits and the IRS has recently issued warnings about increasing levels of banned political activity by tax-exempt groups.
- PFL is implicated in an ever-shifting network of overlapping Washington, DC, advocacy groups run by Pavone and twin brothers Rob and Paul Schenck and dedicated to inserting extremist "Christian" conservatism into public policy.
- Pavone encourages a cult of personality around himself, comparing himself favorably to saints and prophets and featuring large photographs of himself on many advertisements and other materials.
- Pavone defied the overwhelming public consensus and contradicted medical opinion in the Terri Schiavo end-of-life case, calling for government intervention into the family's affairs and describing the patient as laughing and smiling.
- PFL traffics in myths and lies about subjects ranging from abortion and contraception to Planned Parenthood and tax law.
- PFL's allies have included specialists of extreme and sometimes illegal protest, and Pavone's denunciations of violence against abortion clinics have been consistently ambiguous and insensitive.
- PFL's financial performance is rated below average by a charity watchdog, with a particular weakness in the area of efficiency.

secure in the Archdiocese of New York, Pavone became a priest of the Diocese of Amarillo<sup>2</sup> and in 2005 founded a society of priests devoted to opposing reproductive choice. As of this writing, the society has publicized the enrollment of three candidates for membership. Recruitment appears focused on young men who have just completed their seminary studies, as Pavone tries to build from scratch the movement he found himself unable to assemble within what he saw as a natural constituency.

PFL's positions on abortion and its other preoccupations are ultraorthodox, alienating many laypeople and priests alike, and its links to the antichoice movement's extreme, aggressive fringe have been a constant scandal. The group's identity is inseparable from that of its top priest. Pavone has always personalized the PFL message and image, selling himself—often with large photos of himself on PFL billboards—much as a candidate for office might do. The approach is fitting, given PFL's long history of inappropriate electoral activities. The tax-exempt nonprofit, whose yearly budget is in the \$5 million–\$7 million range, makes no apology for its electoral focus, instead offering an elaborate defense that amounts to an unsanctioned alternative to Internal Revenue Service rules and guidance. PFL purports to accept church-state separation but advances a version of the principle that is at odds with the conventional one and calls openly for more church in the state. Some of PFL's attempts at electoral influence pass through a tangled web of antichoice groups with offices in Washington, DC, and overlapping leadership and ambitions.

Alongside PFL's electoral activity, there is the frequent claim of obedience only to a divine authority who outranks any government agency. Pavone complained in 2002, for example, of "legalistic jargon" that demanded PFL respect "nondiscrimination" and other mainstream values—"all of it, of course, 'as required by law,'" he said.

“As required by law????” Pavone marveled [emphasis in original]. “When are we going to stop running our Church like lawyers and begin running it like prophets?”<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, Pavone’s self-promotion has sometimes been literally hagiographic. On PFL’s Web site, the priest likens himself to saints Francis of Assisi and Ignatius of Loyola, each called by God to confront a “great moral crisis.” Pavone calls abortion the greatest of all these crises and implies with little room for ambiguity that he is the saint for the job.<sup>4</sup>

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Literally since its inception, PFL has been dedicated to electoral campaigning: Founder Lee Kaylor organized a letter-writing campaign in 1990 urging his fellow priests throughout California to mobilize parishioners against a prochoice ballot measure; within months, PFL emerged out of that effort, and Kaylor determined the group’s primary activity would be sending an antichoice newsletter to priests around the country via their dioceses.

San Francisco archbishop John Quinn almost immediately granted the new organization his stamp of approval. Soon,<sup>5</sup> Kaylor had handed over control of PFL to Frank Pavone and was participating in the first US-Iraq war as a chaplain.<sup>6</sup> Pavone moved PFL to his home base, Staten Island, New York.

In 1995, twins Paul and Rob Schenck started the Washington, DC, Pentecostal church that would lead to a tangled web of politically minded conservative-Christian groups. Pavone, who would become deeply involved in that network, in 1996 met with “Republican revolution” leader Newt Gingrich, told the House of Representatives prolife caucus he had “heard enough of what churches cannot do in the political arena”<sup>7</sup> and denounced Democratic president Bill Clinton.<sup>8</sup>

Pavone received Norma McCorvey into the church in 1998, giving first communion to and confirming the newly antichoice figure who had been the plaintiff in the landmark *Roe v. Wade* case, which led to the Supreme Court’s 1973 decision that states may not ban abortion. PFL states clearly that Pavone confirmed McCorvey<sup>9</sup>; it is unclear whether the confirmation was authorized as would be required by church teachings. According to the 1994 *Catechism*, “the bishop may for grave reasons concede to priests the faculty of administering Confirmation” but “it is appropriate from the very meaning of the sacrament that he should confer it himself.”<sup>10</sup>

In 2000, PFL attracted some of the most intense media coverage in its brief history with its Campaign for Life, an election-year antichoice advertising push that included a full-page *New York Times* advertisement and was accompanied by Pavone’s brazen endorsement of Republican presidential candidate

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George W. Bush as a “breath of fresh air.”<sup>11</sup> New York archbishop Cardinal Edward Egan in 2001 ordered Pavone to stop running PFL and return to parochial ministry in the New York archdiocese. Pavone would soon return from the reassignment to resume work as full-time head of PFL.

Egan’s decision to reassign Pavone to parish work came amid continued appeals and publicity in the National Organization for Women’s case against Joseph Scheidler, a close PFL ally who had been found guilty of extortion and threats of violence for his obstruction tactics at abortion clinics. “I know nobody in the world,” Pavone had said in 1999, “more opposed to violence than Joseph Scheidler”<sup>12</sup>; but in 2001, an appeals court called the record of Scheidler and his associates “replete with

evidence of instances in which their conduct crossed the line from protected speech to illegal acts, including acts of violence.”<sup>13,14</sup> That same year, following numerous violent incidents at abortion clinics, PFL offered a \$50,000 reward for turning in clinic shooters—an act undercut considerably by Pavone’s history of equating prochoice advocates with those who kill abortion doctors.

In 2002, Pavone predicted “major Church-State conflicts” unless government policies began to follow a conservative Catholic line.<sup>15</sup> The following year, PFL undertook the latest in a series of PFL pro-Republican electoral campaigns, disguised as a nonpartisan voter drive for the coming presidential election.

The 2004 electoral campaign saw PFL intervene more flagrantly than ever before, including through a political sermon at a prochoice candidate’s parish church, approving posts of Bush speeches on the PFL Web site and explicit

process of establishing a headquarters” in Amarillo, Texas, while still planning to maintain branches in New York; Washington, DC; Virginia; California; and Rome. In Amarillo, PFL is trying to build an order of priests devoted solely to antichoice activity.<sup>18</sup> PFL’s electoral focus continues: As 2006 began, Pavone asked supporters to “fire up the engines for another election.”<sup>19</sup>

## FINANCES

In the US presidential campaign year of 2004, PFL saw a jump in revenue and spending, which each exceeded \$7 million after several years in the \$5 million-\$6 million range. PFL’s \$4.5 million in program spending in 2004 was a \$1 million increase over 2003. The group takes in more than 99 percent of its revenue in the form of direct public support, and its largest expenditures are for raising funds and compensating employees, who numbered 35 in 2004. The organization had \$379,000 in net assets as of the end of 2004.

PFL’s 2004 financial performance was worse than that of most similar groups, with inefficiency a particular weakness, according to the respected independent nonprofit evaluator Charity Navigator. The watchdog awarded PFL two of a possible four stars overall, meaning PFL “underperforms most charities in its Cause,” and one star for efficiency, in which area PFL “fails to meet industry standards and performs well below most charities in its Cause.”<sup>20</sup>

The largest single figure among PFL’s 2004 functional expenses was \$1.15 million for postage and shipping, nearly all of which was for fundraising, a purpose for which PFL spent \$1.73 million in all. A little more than one-fourth of program spending in 2004 was for pay and benefits and the associated taxes.

The highest-paid employee was executive director Anthony DeStefano, who earned \$175,000 from PFL and another \$36,000 from Rachel’s Vineyard,

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criticism of Catholics’ historical support for Democrats. PFL acknowledged in September 2004 that it aimed to “influence the elections,”<sup>16</sup> and in October, Pavone in a “personal capacity” endorsed Bush.<sup>17</sup>

The 2004-2005 period also saw Pavone attract significant media attention by inserting himself personally into the melee around whether irreversibly vegetative Florida woman Terri Schiavo’s feeding tube could be removed; aligning himself against Schiavo’s husband and with her parents and the president’s brother, Florida governor Jeb Bush, Pavone opposed removing the tube.

With the new millennium, the activities of California-born, New York-bred PFL had begun to shift back out West, with PFL as of March 2005 “in the

which PFL lists as a related organization. PFL's second highest-paid employee was chief operational officer Janet Morana, at \$95,000. Its priests were unpaid, with the exception of priest associate Peter West, who earned \$22,000. Its best-paid contractors were Virginia media and advertising firm Strategic Communications Corporation, at \$321,000, and California fundraiser Frank Norris, at \$96,000.

PFL provides almost no information about its membership but according to tax forms receives no money in membership dues. PFL has in the past claimed as many as 20 percent of US priests were members, and it maintains a Web page indicating annual membership dues are \$15.<sup>21</sup>

PFL said in 2004 tax forms that it “provided” its newsletter to “210,000 individuals”—nearly five copies for every priest in the United States.<sup>22</sup> Each year, PFL increases this reported number by 10,000 to 20,000. In 2002, PFL priest associate West said there were more than 100,000 subscribers<sup>23</sup>; the number was only half what PFL would claim only two years later, but still dwarfed the figure—20,000—cited only three years earlier by the Institute for Democracy Studies.<sup>24</sup> West also said in 2002 that 40,000 priests were receiving the newsletter<sup>25</sup>—roughly 92 percent of US priests, according to US Conference of Catholic Bishops figures published in 2003.<sup>26</sup>

PFL reports an unusual practice of paying “grants and allocations” to organizations larger and richer than itself, rather than receiving grants from such entities, as is more common. In 2004, the most prominent of these was the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, to which PFL paid \$82,000, up from \$10,000 a year earlier. The council’s president, Renato Martino, sits on PFL’s Episcopal Board of Advisors. PFL has also reported payments in this category to other Vatican bodies, as well as archdioceses and other US antichoice groups. The latter include Norma McCorvey’s new group, Crossing over

**PFL Grants and Allocations, 2002–2004**

|            |  |          |
|------------|--|----------|
| 2003-04    | Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace | \$92,000 |
| 2002-03    | National Association for Abortion Reform | \$49,700 |
| 2002-04    | St. Roch’s Parish                        | \$43,654 |
| 2004       | Center for Bio-Ethical Reform            | \$20,000 |
| 2002       | National Pro-Life Religious Council      | \$13,900 |
| 2003-04    | Pontifical Academy for Life              | \$13,000 |
| 2002-04    | Crossroads Foundation                    | \$10,350 |
| 2004       | King of America                          | \$9,000  |
| 2002       | Christian Defense Coalition              | \$5,000  |
| 2002-04    | <i>Crisis</i> magazine                   | \$4,000  |
| 2002       | Newman House                             | \$3,679  |
| 2002, 2004 | Diocese of Simdega, India                | \$3,000  |
| 2004       | Stand True                               | \$2,500  |
| 2003       | Crisis Pregnancy Centers of Kansas City  | \$1,500  |
| 2002       | Holy Apostles Seminary                   | \$1,500  |
| 2002       | Problem Pregnancy Help Centers           | \$1,200  |
| 2004       | Life Center of Long Island               | \$1,000  |
| 2002       | Miss Staten Island pageant               | \$1,000  |
| 2004       | Alpha Omega Life                         | \$500    |
| 2004       | Crossing Over Ministry                   | \$500    |
| 2002       | Lambs of Christ                          | \$500    |
| 2003       | Women and Children First                 | \$314    |
| 2003       | Augustinian Community Immaculate         | \$150    |
| 2004       | Passionist Ministry                      | \$10     |

Ministry, and a new outlet for former Rock for Life founder Bryan Kemper, as well as a group that is widely seen as being on the extremist fringe of the antichoice movement in the US, the Lambs of Christ. A more surprising inclusion on the list is the Miss Staten Island pageant, which received \$1,000 in 2002.

No. 3 on the list of PFL grantees is St. Roch's Parish, which like PFL is in New York City's Staten Island borough. Proximity does not appear to be the motivation for PFL's granting more than \$40,000 to the parish over the period 2002-04, though: St. Roch's pastor Leo Prince was a classmate of Pavone's at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, New York, and has criticized US priests for "pervasive" resistance to proclaiming Vatican abortion teaching.<sup>27</sup> In 2004 at St. Roch's, Prince and Pavone together received Paul Schenck into the Catholic church.<sup>28</sup>

## AFFILIATES

PFL is deeply entangled in a small web of Washington, DC, advocacy groups whose staff and agendas overlap considerably. The organizational ties reflect personal ties between Pavone and the twin brothers Rob and Paul Schenck, Jewish converts to a zealous and political Christianity who run several antichoice organizations.

All the Schenck twins' projects trace their roots to a Pentecostal church that Rob Schenck founded in Washington in 1995 with the intent of reaching fundamentalist Christians in the federal government. Paul Schenck previously was executive vice president of the antichoice legal group the American Center for Law and Justice, a project of the televangelist and political commentator Pat Robertson, the most recent of whose frequent outrage-provoking statements, as of this writing, was his call for the assassination of the president of Venezuela.<sup>29</sup> Rob Schenck participated in the founding of

Randall Terry's Operation Rescue and has a long history of arrests for aggressive antichoice protest.<sup>30</sup>

Pavone is pastoral director of the **National Pro-Life Action Center**,<sup>31</sup> located across the street from the US Supreme Court and sponsored by PFL, the Kentucky-based **Catholics United for Life** and **Faith and Action**, a 501 (c) (3) "Christian missionary outreach" headquartered in the action center. The center says it conducts "activities designed to reach government officials" with its conservative Christian message,<sup>32</sup> while Faith and Action is an antichoice lobby group that seeks "to reintroduce the Word of God into the public debate surrounding legislation and policy matters" in venues ranging "from the White House to the U.S. Capitol and the U.S. Supreme Court."<sup>33</sup> Faith and Action and the National Pro-Life Action Center were founded by the Schenck twins. Paul and Rob Schenck are now respectively chairman and president of Faith and Action, and Paul Schenck is director of the center.<sup>34</sup>

Paul Schenck is also executive director of the related **Gospel of Life Ministries**, of which PFL and Faith and Action are sponsors.<sup>35</sup> Pavone is national director of Gospel of Life Ministries.<sup>36</sup> Gospel of Life has produced a television series that aired in the middle of the night on the obscure Sky Angel satellite service<sup>37</sup> and a radio program on the Sky Angel-affiliated Bott Radio Network.<sup>38</sup> Another sponsor of Gospel of Life Ministries is the **National Clergy Council**, of which Paul Schenck is chairman and Rob Schenck has been identified as president. Pavone is on the council's executive committee.<sup>39</sup> The council describes itself as an "informal network" of antichoice clergy,<sup>40</sup> and donations to it are routed through a Faith and Action-identified Web page.<sup>41</sup>

Despite producing a steady stream of verbiage and maintaining a labyrinth of cross-referenced Web sites, the Washington-based collaborations between Pavone and the Schenck twins



may amount to not much more than three men seeking to increase their influence by presenting themselves as a larger, more diverse movement—or serially trying to repackage themselves through fresh new affiliates in the hope of bolstering interest. Whatever the reason for such a complicated network, it seems clear that the three are either unable or unwilling to bring on colleagues to help them run the organizations.

PFL has tried sporadically and without much success to start initiatives reaching out to women who have had abortions. Pavone is board chair and pastoral director of **Rachel’s Vineyard**, which administers “retreats” for such women,<sup>46</sup> and PFL is involved in an interdenominational bid to mobilize such women for antichoice purposes, the **Silent No More Awareness Campaign**.<sup>47</sup> In 2001, PFL launched what it called a “radically innovative” advertising campaign—featuring, for example, a billboard with an enormous photograph of Pavone—aimed at women who had had abortions.<sup>48</sup> The US bishops quashed the campaign. CFFC president Frances Kissling wrote that the campaign sought to politicize help for women, unlike diocesan programs, which tended “to treat women who have had abortions with some respect and compassion.” The Religion News Service reported that PFL’s campaign was scuppered “in part because the nation’s Catholic bishops were concerned it lacked the sophistication of existing abortion-related ministries.”<sup>49</sup>

It appears possible that **Deacons for Life** may exist only as a Web site featuring essays by Pavone and by ultraorthodox deacon and lawyer Keith Fournier, who has called for a “Catholic restoration”—a rollback of the church’s move toward modernity at the Second Vatican Council. Fournier was the first executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice and served as an electoral adviser to conservative publisher Steve Forbes, who ran for the

| <b>Washington-based Collaborations between Pavone and the Schenck Twins</b> |  |                                 |   |
|---|--|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Organization</b>   | <b>Frank Pavone</b>  | <b>Paul Schenck</b>             | <b>Rob Schenck</b>  |
| Priests for Life  | National director  | Pastoral associate              | On PFL: “Billy Graham move over. Fr. Frank Pavone has arrived.” <sup>42</sup> |
| National Pro-Life Action Center   | Pastoral director  | Director and founder            | Founder   |
| Faith and Action  | Ties include 2004 sermon at Faith and Action “National Memorial for the Pre-Born Service,” held in a US Senate office building <sup>43</sup> | Chairman                        | President   |
| National Clergy Council member  | Executive committee  | Chairman and founder            | President and founder   |
| Gospel of Life Ministries   | National director of sponsoring organization Priests for Life  | Executive director              |   |
| American Center for Law and Justice   | Supported ACLJ bid to eliminate legal obstacles to electioneering by religious nonprofits <sup>44</sup>                                      | Former executive vice president | Former consultant <sup>45</sup>   |

Republican US presidential nomination in 1996 and 2000.<sup>50</sup>

PFL also features a group it calls Seminararians for Life but which appears to call itself **Seminarian Life Link**, whose founder is Eric Bowman.<sup>51</sup> This group's short-term survival is uncertain: The most recent media hit touted on the group's Web site is from 2002<sup>52</sup>; a campaign of "e-letters" to supporters, to "supplement what Seminarian Life Link (SLL) has already been able to accomplish in its short existence," was started in late 2003 and ended in early 2004<sup>53</sup>; the group had annual conferences for a few years but appears to have had none since 2004<sup>54</sup>; a new conference is planned for August 2006 with Pavone as keynote speaker and a registration fee of \$350.<sup>55</sup> In a similar vein, **Students Turning Around a Nation of Death** is nominally "the youth outreach of Priests for Life,"<sup>56</sup> but the group's Web site—almost entirely links to other student groups—suggests it may have no particular activity or staff and may exist less as an organization than as an invitation by PFL for young people to start an organization, which they do not appear to have done. Much of the Web site's content consists of PFL instructions to an ostensible youth constituency about how to conduct their lives and how to be antichoice activists.

Significantly, Pavone has had almost no success in his efforts to establish PFL internationally. As of this writing, PFL's Web site refers to its Canadian affiliate as "the first" PFL branch outside the US and gives no indication of a PFL presence in any other country. "Our priests travel to many other countries...and we send materials throughout the world," PFL says on the Web page.<sup>57</sup> Pavone has made extensive independent efforts to expand PFL to other countries and even worked to that end for two years in Rome in the late 1990s with the Pontifical Council for the Family.

Perhaps Pavone's grandest expansion plan to date is his latest one, a church-

approved new order of priests called the **Missionaries of the Gospel of Life**, which formally began activity in 2005 at its base in the isolated Diocese of Amarillo in Texas, where John Yanta is bishop. Pavone initially sought to base the society in New York and referred in a 2000 article to any decision about the order being "up to the archbishop" of New York, Cardinal Edward Egan<sup>58</sup>; a year later, the cardinal ordered Pavone to leave his full-time post at the head of PFL and return to parish ministry.

The new "society of apostolic life," which is designed to produce priests who are specialists in abortion protest, could at the same time provide a more fully religious counterpoint to PFL's electoral campaign-style selling of Pavone as antichoice personality.<sup>59</sup> In announcing the new group's mission, Pavone compares himself, favorably if indirectly, to a list of major saints: "God has intervened in times of great moral crisis," he writes, to raise up Saint Benedict "as pagans overran the Christian world" and, in later crises, Saints Francis, Dominic and Ignatius of Loyola. As the third millennium begins, Pavone writes, the church is faced with a new "great moral crisis" in the "plague" of abortion—and "there has never been a single force more insidious, more deadly, and more dangerous in the history of the Church of Christ." To combat this greatest evil in history, he continues, it "make[s] sense" for God to "call forth a community of men willing to dedicate their lives to" the antichoice cause. Inescapably, although Pavone stops short of calling himself a saint, that "community" is his Missionaries of the Gospel of Life, and he is the successor—although presumably greater, since the evil he has to fight is the greatest in history—to the litany of saints he has provided above.<sup>60</sup>

The society's home base is a remote, poor missionary diocese covering about 26,000 square miles of the Texas panhandle and serving about 50,000 Catholics.<sup>61</sup> It is safe to say Yanta, who was installed in Amarillo in 1997 after



nearly four decades as a priest in the San Antonio Archdiocese, would be a virtual unknown were it not for Pavone. Nevertheless Yanta has, like most PFL figures, been a frequent participant in electoral politics. During the 2004 US presidential campaign, as controversy raged over whether prochoice politicians should receive communion, Yanta said, “These politicians are making a mockery of the Catholic faith.”<sup>62</sup> The following year, he supported a state constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, and a recorded message featuring Yanta speaking in support of the ban was sent out to some 800,000 telephone numbers.<sup>63</sup>

Signs of activity by the new PFL order have been sparse as of this writing. In June 2005, it held its first “discernment retreat,” at which potential members gathered to consider whether they wanted to begin a multistage process leading to membership in the order<sup>64</sup>; there is a subsequent reference on the group’s Web site to an inaugural class of three aspirants. In January 2006, Pavone said 15 priests were “talking to their bishops about joining” and that the group’s membership ultimately “could be 40 priests, or it could be 400.”<sup>65</sup> In a letter to the *Wisconsin State Journal* editor in February 2006, apparent Missionaries aspirant Pat Hardyman said he planned to begin training for the order “later in the year.”<sup>66</sup>

## ELECTORAL INTERVENTION

PFL founder Kaylor began the organization as the result of a letter-writing campaign around a California ballot measure, and PFL has only become bolder over the years in its election-oriented work. At every national election, in apparent violation of its 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt charity status, the group campaigns unambiguously for Republican candidates but takes care not to mention them by name.

PFL promotes a narrowly technical interpretation of the relevant tax law that fundamentally contradicts IRS advice. The tax agency’s materials specifically rule out the possibility that 501 (c) (3) groups can engage in electoral campaigning by using code words to

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stand in for candidates’ names. Pavone clearly and defiantly stated precisely that view in 2001: When asked what “tangible result” PFL had obtained for the “impressive sums of money” it spent “on the [2000] election,” he replied, “The tangible result is now sitting in the White House. While we mentioned no candidate’s name, our message was understood by many.”<sup>67</sup>

The 2002 *IRS Continuing Professional Education Manual* warns that a 501 (c) (3) may not “avail itself of the opportunity to intervene in a political campaign in a rather surreptitious manner,” such as through the use of “code words”—specifically including the code word PFL most often uses, “pro-life.”

The concern is that an [Internal Revenue Code] 501 (c) (3) organization may support or oppose a particular candidate in a political campaign without specifically naming the candidate by using code words to substitute for the candidate’s name in its messages, such as “conservative,” “liberal,” “pro-life,” “pro-choice,” “anti-choice,” “Republican,” “Democrat,” etc., coupled with a discussion of the candidacy or the election. When this occurs, it is quite evident what is happening—an intervention is taking place.<sup>68</sup>

It is difficult to imagine that PFL is unaware of such instructions. That it flouts them so openly must be

interpreted in the context of PFL's stated position that its first allegiance is to God's law, such as PFL views it, and that Catholic teaching should ultimately be enshrined in US law. "Caesar must obey God," Pavone has said. "The well-being of the entire nation depends on the obedience which both the king and his people give to the King of heaven.... The separation of Church and state does not mean separation of God and state. If you separate the state from God, the State disintegrates.... [Catholic] moral truths are basic.... Because they are truths, they must shape public policy."<sup>69</sup>

The claim of devotion to these "moral truths," not to specific parties or candidates, is at the heart of PFL's attempts to justify its electoral activity. "If focusing on abortion in effect favors one or another candidate or party," Pavone

that position, Pavone said in 2005 that Catholics should vote for "pro-life" parties, not just individual "pro-life" candidates. "The positions of the party to which the candidate belongs...matter.... By putting that candidate into office, you also help to put his/her party into power," he said.<sup>73</sup>

Pavone in 2006 showed what he meant in those remarks: Faced with a Pennsylvania US Senate campaign in which both the Republican and Democratic candidates were antichoice, Pavone joined other conservative clergy in a "training session" that provided a forum for Republican Rick Santorum's taped views but no such platform for Democrat Bob Casey. In a speech at the session, Pavone—without naming names—called for continued Republican control of the Senate in support of Republican president Bush: "This particular president needs the kind of support that he has today but might not necessarily have after 2006," Pavone said.<sup>74</sup> The incident once again made clear that PFL's support is reserved specifically for Republicans and not, as Pavone claims frequently, apolitically for "life."

As a result of PFL's electioneering, Catholics for a Free Choice has repeatedly taken the rare step of formally challenging PFL's status with the IRS, on the bases of its prohibited campaigning for "pro-life" candidates and its violation of the IRS' ban on material that "invites its audience to compare a candidate's positions with the organization's own views." One such challenge is pending at this writing; an earlier one, in 2004, was followed by a general IRS warning of a growing amount of inappropriate electoral activity by 501 (c) (3) organizations. The agency does not release information about action taken with respect to specific tax-exempt organizations.

While this report was being written, Pavone provided a fresh example of PFL's approach to these questions, scoffing via his blog at "unfounded allegations" that when PFL leaders "take part in the election process," they

**“The tangible result is now sitting in the White House. While we mentioned no candidate’s name, our message was understood by many.”—Frank Pavone on PFL’s 2000 electioneering**

said in 2006, "that's because of the position that the candidate or party takes, not because of us."<sup>70</sup> Undercutting such high-minded statements of principle, though, are other PFL communications that seem designed to eliminate ambiguity about what party PFL wants Catholics to support.

PFL has instructed supporters to vote for the most antichoice candidate from one of the two major parties—in practice, nearly always a Republican—even when a minor-party candidate is more antichoice than either of the two. Electoral realities, PFL told supporters in 2002, mean that "you are not free...to really choose the candidate you want."<sup>71</sup> During the 2004 campaign, Pavone's view on the subject was indistinguishable from those of major-party politicians: "A vote for the 'best' candidate who won't win takes a vote away from the better of the others, and hence favors the worst."<sup>72</sup> Expanding

“violate” PFL’s “IRS tax-exemption.” Pavone claimed that “these objections are based on ignorance of the law” and that PFL’s calls to “elect pro-life candidates” are “absolutely not” out of bounds. He wrote, “If the candidates in any race switched their positions tomorrow...our message would remain exactly the same.”<sup>75</sup> Such statements are of dubious significance in light of Pavone’s obvious support of Republicans even in races featuring antichoice Democrats. Pavone’s position also implies he believes charities such as PFL may electioneer unambiguously as long as their support of candidates is based on some policy position—a view that not only directly contradicts IRS guidance but also leads to the absurd conclusion that only candidates chosen at random are off limits for electioneering.

No information was available at this writing about the consequences of CFFC’s IRS complaint about PFL, but a CFFC complaint against the ultraorthodox apologetics group Catholic Answers—filed during the same period and on substantially similar grounds as the complaint against PFL—resulted in Catholic Answers’ deciding to incorporate a new offshoot under a separate section of the Internal Revenue Code. Catholic Answers said the IRS had been hounding it in an investigation initiated by the CFFC complaint; the apologetics group expressed in essence the view that the new offshoot, Catholic Answers Action, could conduct electioneering activities with greater freedom.

PFL’s donations and those of its leaders reflect the organization’s Republican orientation and extend its political reach. The organization has funded such politically active groups as the National Association for Abortion Reform, the National Pro-Life Religious Council and the Christian Defense Coalition. PFL executive director Anthony DeStefano gave \$1,000 to George W. Bush’s 2000 presidential campaign and gave \$500 in 1998 and

\$1,000 in 2000 to unsuccessful House of Representatives bids by Republican Gregory Becker, whose campaign in 1998 touted a blessing the candidate had received from Pope John Paul II.<sup>113</sup> Pavone in 2000 contributed \$300 to Republican Rick Lazio’s US Senate campaign against Democrat Hillary Clinton, and Rob Schenck contributed \$2,000 in 2002 to Republican Constance Morella’s campaign for the US House of Representatives. Lazio had relatively weak antichoice credentials and Morella was prochoice; both faced staunchly prochoice opponents.

## ISSUES

As befits its name, PFL’s work is mainly focused on abortion, but the group’s leaders have been known to weigh in on other topics in response to events in politics and society. In particular, these include contraception and questions around the end of life; the latter subject provided Pavone with a period of intense exposure when in 2004 he became deeply involved in the Terri Schiavo case. PFL figures have also been willing to venture far afield from their abortion focus—to military matters, for example—to promote conservative, nearly always Republican policy positions.

Priests for Life says **abortion** is “the most *radical break with civilization* [emphasis in original] that history has ever seen.”<sup>114</sup> The priests’ group’s antichoice position understandably rests

**Pavone has promoted antichoice psychologist Philip Ney’s notion, dismissed in the conservative *Weekly Standard* as “crankery,” of a “post-abortion survivor syndrome” in which people whose mothers had abortions are filled with angst.**

primarily on obedience to the Vatican, but PFL also tries to demonstrate that abortion is murder through a mix of scientific language and faulty logic. Pavone has claimed, for example, that

| Date              | PFL Electoral and Political Campaigns<br>[Direct electioneering is in boldface]   | Beneficiary   |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 1990              | PFL founder Kaylor organizes campaign urging priests in the pulpit to oppose “a piece of anti-life legislation on the ballot in Sacramento, California.” <sup>76</sup>  | Antichoice candidates   |
| March 1996        | Pavone meets with US House speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA), addresses House prolife caucus at invitation of Michael Forbes (R-NY). Pavone: “We have heard enough of what churches cannot do in the political arena.” <sup>77</sup>   | Antichoice House members  |
| May 1996          | PFL <i>Catholic New York</i> ad denounces Democratic US president Clinton over veto of “partial-birth” abortion ban. <sup>78</sup>  | Republican legislators  |
| September 1996    | Pavone: US law should ban abortion because “the Declaration of Independence says that the right to life is endowed by the Creator—not by the government.” <sup>79</sup>   | Antichoice legislators  |
| <b>1998</b>       | <b>Date of first of antichoice statements by then Texas governor, later US president George W. Bush that PFL catalogs approvingly on Web site.</b> <sup>80</sup>  | <b>Bush</b>   |
| <b>2000</b>       | <b>PFL provides model antichoice letters to the editor: “The candidates running for office have starkly different positions on the most fundamental issue: abortion. Babies will live and die based on how you vote.”</b> <sup>81</sup>   | <b>Antichoice candidates, overwhelmingly Republican and including GW Bush</b>   |
| March 2000        | Pavone defends antichoice prayer in Florida legislature, says the Declaration of Independence “states that governments are instituted precisely to secure” a “right to life.” <sup>82</sup>   | Antichoice legislators  |
| <b>May 2000</b>   | <b>Pavone: candidate Bush “a breath of fresh air for all of us who have suffered through the Clinton/Gore era.”</b> <sup>83</sup>   | <b>Bush candidacy</b>   |
| <b>June 2000</b>  | <b>Pavone calls Bush “pro-life,” Democratic opponent Al Gore “an apostle for abortion.”</b> <sup>84</sup>   | <b>Bush candidacy</b>   |
| <b>July 2000</b>  | <b>PFL Campaign for Life targets “lawmakers, voters, and those running for public office.” \$1M campaign includes <i>New York Times</i>, <i>USA Today</i> ads.</b> <sup>85</sup>  | <b>Bush and other antichoice candidates</b>   |
| <b>April 2001</b> | <b>After Bush win, Pavone refers to “what we have accomplished.” Recounts and challenges had culminated in Supreme Court declaration of Bush win; Pavone says God “reached down from heaven and pressed a big pause button” to prolong election and associated antichoice fervor; says IRS limits on PFL electioneering seek “the silence of the Church.”</b> <sup>86</sup>   | <b>Bush</b>   |
| <b>May 2001</b>   | <b>Asked what “tangible result” came of “impressive sums of money” PFL spent “on the election,” Pavone says, “The tangible result is now sitting in the White House. While we mentioned no candidate’s name, our message was understood by many.”</b> <sup>87</sup>   | <b>Bush</b>   |
| November 2002     | PFL sees “major Church-State conflicts unfolding in this decade.” Pavone: Government “must wrestle” with Catholic “definitive and unchanging positions”; “It is not the duty of the Church to compromise its beliefs for the sake of left-wing zealots in government.” <sup>88</sup><br><b>Pavone sends supporters “message of gratitude” after election sees Republicans gain control of US Senate: “We’ve only just begun.”</b> <sup>89</sup>   | Antichoice candidates<br><br><b>Republican candidates</b>   |
| <b>2003</b>       | <b>PFL mounts “Christian voter registration” drive, asserts “legal and moral right.”</b> <sup>90</sup>  | <b>“Christian”-favored candidates</b>   |
| November 2003     | PFL chief operational officer Morana attends Bush signing of “partial-birth” abortion ban. <sup>91</sup>  | Bush, Republicans in Congress   |
| <b>2004</b>       | <b>PFL priest associate Wilde delivers homily in church attended by prochoice Catholic candidate for office: “If you know any pro-abortion politician, vote him out.”</b> <sup>92</sup><br><b>In letter seeking “help to prepare for Election Day,” Pavone notes PFL Web posting of Bush speeches “for life and family.”</b> <sup>93</sup><br>Pavone slams Catholics’ “loyalty to the Democratic party”: “There is nothing wrong with belonging to a political party...but when that party promotes the widespread, daily, legal killing of children, the voice of protest must be heard.” <sup>94</sup><br><b>PFL election Web site seeks votes for “pro-life” candidates, features link to outside page with slogan, “Pro-Life Advocates: Vote for President Bush.”</b> <sup>96</sup> | <b>Antichoice candidate</b><br><br><b>Bush</b><br><br>Republican candidates<br><br><b>Bush, other antichoice candidates</b> |

| Date           | PFL Electoral and Political Campaigns<br>[Direct electioneering is in boldface]  | Beneficiary  |
|----------------|--|--|
| April 2004     | <p>Morana attends Bush signing of Unborn Victims of Violence Act. PFL stressed Republican support, Democratic opposition to bill.<sup>97</sup></p> <p><b>Pavone issues “challenge” to Democratic presidential candidate Kerry to “renounce his support of legal abortion, or to publicly admit...that abortion dismembers and crushes the heads of babies.”<sup>98</sup></b></p> <p><b>Pavone asks supporters who “know anyone in Pennsylvania” to “urge them to vote pro-life” in primary between well-known prochoice senator Specter and antichoice opponent Toomey.<sup>99</sup></b></p> | <p>Bush, Republicans in Congress</p> <p><b>Bush</b></p> <p><b>Toomey candidacy</b></p> |
| May 2004       | <p><b>Pavone: “Being in favor of abortion disqualifies a candidate, morally, from public office.... The Republican platform says that the unborn have a right to life that cannot be infringed and that should ultimately be protected by Constitutional amendment. Meanwhile, the Democratic platform upholds the ‘right to choose’ abortion.”<sup>100</sup></b></p>  | <p><b>Republican candidates</b></p>  |
| August 2004    | <p><b>PFL Web poll asks whether respondents think “the Democratic Party...can no longer be morally supported by Christians.” Pavone: “People are answering ‘Yes’ by a ten-to-one margin.... If you are one of those who have left the Democratic Party... and you want to share your story....”<sup>101</sup></b></p>  | <p><b>Republican candidates</b></p>  |
| September 2004 | <p><b>PFL announces bid to “influence the elections,” “aimed at church-goers, who have been shown in polls to vote in favor of pro-life candidates.”<sup>102</sup></b></p> <p><b>PFL publishes criticism of Kerry campaign by Florida head of PFL Silent No More Campaign.<sup>103</sup></b></p>   | <p><b>Antichoice candidates</b></p> <p><b>Bush</b></p>                                 |
| October 2004   | <p><b>Pavone endorses Bush for president: “I’m proud of the Pope, I’m proud of the President....” E-mail sent in “personal capacity” resembles PFL mailings.<sup>104</sup></b></p>   | <p><b>Bush</b></p>   |
| November 2004  | <p><b>Pavone in personal capacity issues election-eve e-mail: “Call and email people you know in [battleground] states. Make sure they are going to vote for President Bush....I support the war fully and am fully pro-life. ... The Pope never told us we had to hold any particular position about ‘the war in Iraq.’”<sup>105</sup></b></p>  | <p><b>Bush</b></p>   |
| January 2005   | <p><b>Pavone blasts “Democratic obstructionism” on Bush nominees: “We intend to monitor closely the behavior of Senate Democrats in this regard, and will make it an election issue in 2006.”<sup>106</sup></b></p> <p><b>Pavone on 2006 election: “Everything we did in the 2004 cycle will be repeated, intensified and multiplied, without compromise and without apology.... Let us all begin now to recruit, train and activate even more pro-life voters for the 2006 cycle.”<sup>107</sup></b></p>  | <p><b>Republican Senate candidates</b></p> <p><b>Antichoice candidates</b></p>         |
| June 2005      | <p><b>Pavone: With 2004 Republican election wins, “We avoided going into an abyss.... The Democrats have come to see that being pro-abortion loses elections.”<sup>108</sup></b></p>   | <p><b>Republican candidates</b></p>  |
| August 2005    | <p>Pavone says PFL “pro-life” advocacy extends to parties as well as candidates: “The positions of the party to which the candidate belongs...matter.... By putting that candidate into office, you also help to put his/her party into power.”<sup>109</sup></p>  | <p>Republican candidates</p>   |
| October 2005   | <p>Pavone urges “yes” votes in California for measure stipulating parental notification and waiting periods for abortion.<sup>110</sup></p>  | <p>Antichoice supporters of ballot measure</p>   |
| 2006           | <p><b>PFL without explanation posts election materials on outside Web site, that of Catholic Music Network; invites support for antichoice candidates in 2006.<sup>111</sup></b></p>   | <p><b>Antichoice candidates</b></p>  |
| January 2006   | <p><b>Pavone: “As the year 2006 begins, it is time to fire up the engines for another election, and focus on electing leaders who will provide the maximum possible protection to innocent human life. In the last several major elections, voters have increased pro-life majorities both on the state and federal levels of government.”<sup>112</sup></b></p>   | <p><b>Antichoice candidates</b></p>  |

“common biology” holds that fetuses “should be protected from abortion.” Fetuses, he added, “are human from the moment of conception. That is not an opinion, that’s a fact.”<sup>115</sup> Pavone in 1999 said it is up to the prochoice camp to “prove” abortion is not “the killing of a human being.”<sup>116</sup> PFL echoes other antichoice groups in stressing the fertilized egg’s genetic uniqueness, which the argument presumes signifies moral personhood. PFL does not often delve into the biological or philosophical complexities of fetal status.<sup>117</sup>

Pavone also promotes various dubious and inaccurate claims that relate indirectly to abortion without addressing the central issue. Pavone has promoted antichoice psychologist Philip Ney’s notion, dismissed in the conservative *Weekly Standard* as “crankery,”<sup>118</sup> of a “post-abortion survivor syndrome” in which people whose mothers had abortions are filled with angst.<sup>119</sup> The PFL head has claimed to know ex-abortion practitioners who “posed as doctors without having spent a day in medical school” and others who “never sterilized the instruments,” and he has said “stories of sexual abuse in abortion clinics abound.”<sup>120</sup> He warned in 2000 that the use of the RU-486 abortion pill would result in a wave of “children who are born deformed.”<sup>121</sup> On the concept of

Republicans, gun-control opponents and the right wing in general. He said in 2001, “The Constitution is not an *evolving* [emphasis in original] document with a new meaning for every generation.”<sup>124</sup> Because strict constructionists generally reject extralegal sources as a basis for judicial action, though, Pavone would appear to be excluded from their camp by his Catholic commitment to natural law—the bedrock of the church’s opposition to abortion. It can be argued persuasively that Pavone’s natural law-rooted support for banning abortion is in fact antithetical to strict constructionist principle, since he promotes the imported concept of a fetal right to life.

Pavone rejects the idea of a “right to die.”<sup>125</sup> He nominally supports the church-approved right at the **end of life** to forgo extraordinary life-prolonging measures, but his explanation of his position raises questions about what if any real-life situations might accommodate the exercise of such a right. He opposes living wills, in which people can decide in advance to forgo certain measures in case they become unable to make decisions. He wrote in 1991 that any decision to forgo intervention must be made—he did not say by whom—only after the “medical facts of the case” were known and “examined in the light of the moral principles involved.”<sup>126</sup>

The priest in 2004 became a personal participant and public antagonist in the case of Terri Schiavo, a Florida woman in a persistent vegetative state and fed via tube for 14 years. Schiavo’s husband sought, citing his wife’s wishes about being kept alive in such circumstances, to have her tube removed. Pavone and Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry joined forces in support of Terri Schiavo’s parents, who opposed her husband’s ultimately successful petitions.

Massive public opposition to government intervention in the situation drove away the many politicians who had become involved early on, but Pavone continued to appear on news

**PFL leaders’ support for the Iraq war was a rare departure from the group’s professed devotion to the pope, who never designated the Iraq war as a just one.**

legal exceptions to abortion bans in cases of rape, Pavone has said, “The abortion does not UNRAPE [emphasis in original] the woman.”<sup>122</sup>

In Pavone’s oft-repeated view, “The so-called ‘right to abortion’ is nowhere in the Constitution, and unless a judge wants to rewrite that document, he will not invent such a right.”<sup>123</sup> Accordingly, Pavone has been known to ape the strict constructionist language of prominent



programs to promote an approach rejected by virtually all Americans. “When you get 82 percent saying they think Congress did the wrong thing, that’s everyone,” said Pew Research Center for the People and the Press director Andrew Kohut, referring to a poll conducted after the US Congress passed legislation allowing federal courts to review the Schiavo case. Pavone’s ally, Terry, claimed inexplicably that there would be electoral “hell to pay” for officials who did not buck the overwhelming public consensus.<sup>127</sup>

Pavone consistently made assertions that flagrantly contradicted medical opinion, including the eventual autopsy, in seeking to de-emphasize and even deny the patient’s vegetative condition. He stressed initially that she was unable to “communicate normally”<sup>128</sup> but as the moment of truth drew nearer began to claim he had seen her laugh, smile and look around.<sup>129</sup> Interviewed by conservative firebrand Bill O’Reilly after the affair concluded, Pavone detailed how she had “responded to [Pavone’s] prayers”: “I prayed over her. She responded. I put my hands on her head and she closed her eyes. I finished the prayer, she opened them again. She smiled. She laughed.”<sup>130</sup>

Priests for Life says there is a “close link between **contraception** and abortion.”<sup>131</sup> Pavone opposes all contraception and use of normally contraceptive devices to prevent disease transmission. A Pavone-led Pro-Life America campaign in 2002 alleged that birth control leads to “abortion or cancer!” The campaign blamed Planned Parenthood and “the government” for “shovel[ing] contraceptives into teens’ pockets” even though “condoms are a *joke* [emphasis in original] when it comes to stopping VD or AIDS.” According to the campaign, abortion is “far worse” than cervical cancer and other deadly diseases—but “Thank God, there *is* [emphasis in original] a solution!”: Pro-Life America’s publication and Web site telling young people not to have sex.<sup>132,133</sup>

PFL has less often but just as stridently voiced opposition to **cloning**, embryonic **stem cell research** and **homosexuality**. On the latter, intimate PFL associate Rob Schenck<sup>134</sup> told the BBC in 2004 that the US Constitution should be amended to prevent gay people from marrying. Dismissing the entire history and current reality of homosexual life, Schenck said, “Billions of billions of human beings over millennia of time and in virtually every culture couldn’t be all wrong.” In the same article, he said government support for poor, single mothers has “catastrophic” results and equated homosexual partnerships with polygamy.<sup>135</sup>

PFL leaders have consistently and actively voiced support for the waging of **war** by the United States. Although priests and other Catholics hold a diversity of opinions on war and wars, it is surprising that PFL, specifically devoted to defending “life,” should so

### **“We have heard enough of what churches cannot do in the political arena.” –Frank Pavone**

invariably and enthusiastically promote an enterprise that, whether justified or not, entails mass killing.

“I support the war fully,” Pavone said during the 2004 presidential campaign. “The Pope never told us we had to hold any particular position about ‘the war in Iraq.’ As an American citizen I am proud to trust the decisions of those who have the awesome responsibility to make them.”<sup>136</sup> Pavone’s characterization of the papal position was accurate in only a limited sense. Before the United States invaded Iraq, Pope John Paul II had said war was “always a defeat for humanity,” specifically mentioning “the threat of a war which could strike the people of Iraq, the land of the prophets, a people already sorely tried by more than 12 years of embargo.”<sup>137</sup> PFL leaders’ support for the Iraq war was a rare departure from the group’s professed devotion to the pope, who never designated the Iraq war as a just one.

PFL is associated with a number of well-known adherents to especially aggressive and sometimes criminal forms of antichoice activity:

- Pavone has solicited donations for NOW gadfly and clinic-disruption pioneer **Joseph Scheidler**,<sup>154</sup> whose photograph is said to hang in the PFL lobby.<sup>155</sup>
- Operation Rescue founder **Randall Terry**, who in 1995 said he wanted to “execute” abortion practitioners,<sup>156</sup> spoke frequently alongside Pavone during the Terri Schiavo case. Terry converted to Catholicism in 2006.
- Pavone in 2005 described Operation Save America leader **Flip Benham**, a frequent clinic arrestee who espouses particularly confrontational protest methods, as “my friend.”<sup>157</sup> The two campaigned together in 1994 in Vermont against testing of the RU-486 abortion pill.<sup>158</sup>
- Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute head **Austin Ruse** is a “long-time friend and ally” to Pavone, the latter has said. Pavone has also solicited donations for Ruse, who among other activities has sought to physically disrupt the work of the United Nations.<sup>159</sup>
- New York state senator Eric Schneiderman in 2001 linked **Thomas Carleton** to PFL after Carleton signed a statement to the effect that “use of lethal force” by David Gunn, who murdered a doctor, “was justifiable provided it was carried out for the purpose of defending the lives of unborn children.”<sup>160</sup>
- **Mark Crutcher**, the author of *Firestorm: A Guerrilla Strategy for a Pro-Life America*,<sup>161</sup> appeared on Pavone’s television show to discuss the use of malpractice suits to put abortion doctors out of business.<sup>162</sup>

Other PFL figures have been as vocal as Pavone in support of US war policy. In a 2001 letter, PFL priest associate Peter West implied Iraq had threatened the United States and was linked to al-Qaeda and to Afghanistan’s ruling Taliban: “It is not immoral to kill an unjust aggressor or persons belonging to organizations like Al-Queda that carry out terroristic acts or the Taliban who help them,” West wrote to a correspondent who had urged that PFL oppose the coming war against Iraq.<sup>138</sup>

A late 2001 interview that Pavone conducted and PFL published on the Web provided a platform for Lambs of Christ founder Norman Weslin’s views on terrorism, war and opposing abortion. Doubling the accepted number, Weslin claimed 6,000 people had died in the September 11 al-Qaeda attack on the United States. Speaking a week after US bombing began in Afghanistan in response to September 11, Weslin said antichoice activists should use “precisely” the same “means” as those the US government employed in “selectively destroying” its adversaries. “President Bush is now responding to the terrorist attack by precisely those means...selectively destroying those things that support terrorism,” Weslin said. Likewise, he said, “We need to come in and resist those areas that support Planned Parenthood which...is destroying our children.”<sup>139</sup>

## TACTICS

PFL officially rejects murder and other violence as antichoice tactics, but Pavone’s condemnations of abortion-clinic attacks have always been ambiguous and insensitive. He argues that practitioners’ killers are by definition “prochoice”—intending thereby to criticize the murderers with a term he sees as negative, but by the same token implying slain doctors have reaped what they sowed.

“When someone kills an abortion provider,” Pavone wrote in 1999, “he/she

is practicing what pro-choicers have preached for decades: that sometimes it is OK to choose to end a life to solve a problem.”<sup>140</sup> In his protest manual, *Our Media is the Streets*, he writes that a slain provider was “pro-choice” and that “when someone comes along and ends a life to ‘solve a problem,’ he is living out the pro-choice philosophy.”<sup>141</sup>

Some PFL condemnations of violence have appeared mostly tactical in intent. In 2001, PFL announced an offer of \$50,000 for information leading to the capture of clinic shooters. Pavone said in announcing the reward that PFL had set up the fund several years before, but there is no evidence of any PFL effort to publicize any such reward before 2001.<sup>142</sup>

PFL’s own efforts to combat abortion are usually limited to electoral campaigning, standard clinic protest and media productions, but the group opposes restraints on clinic protest and associates with the more aggressive elements of the antichoice movement.

“Perhaps the most important principle...for the pro-life movement to adopt,” wrote Pavone in 2001, “is that *pro-life activity which relies on the voluntary consent of the audience is insufficient...* Effective social reform requires *forcing the message on an unwilling audience* [emphasis in original].”<sup>143</sup>

When the 1995 murder of two Massachusetts clinic receptionists led Cardinal Bernard Law to call for a moratorium on sidewalk protest, Pavone opposed Law’s proposal.<sup>144</sup> “If America wants to reject violence, let it reject abortion without further delay,” he said.<sup>145</sup> During the same era, a buffer zone was created following three murders at a Pensacola, Florida, clinic; Pavone later recommended as a resource the group Legal Action for Women, whose leaders challenged the Florida buffer zone and were among those who exposed the identity of abortion provider John Britton shortly before he was murdered.<sup>146</sup> Pavone also attended a 1994 Chicago meeting of antichoice leaders at which discussion centered on whether

killing practitioners was justified and the “presence” of Paul Hill, later convicted of murder, reportedly “dominated the meeting.” Interviewed about the meeting, Pavone sought to play down the controversy by calling the discussion “abstract, almost theological.”<sup>147</sup>

Raising still more questions about PFL’s attitude toward clinic violence is the presence of the group’s public relations director, Jerry Horn. Horn was convicted of trespassing during a 1983-84 disruption campaign at a Wisconsin clinic; during the same period, shots were fired at the clinic and chemicals were introduced into the building through holes drilled in walls. In 1985, amid a period of frequent violence at clinics, Horn organized a conference of Joseph Scheidler’s Pro-Life Action League at which a sign read “Have a blast!” and firecrackers were attached to some attendees’ name tags.<sup>148</sup>

Pavone steadfastly supported antichoice extremist Joseph Scheidler in his two-decade legal battle with the National Organization for Women, which sought in the case to defend women’s right of access to abortion clinics. In 1998, for example, Pavone called for “sustained, public resistance” to a jury ruling in NOW’s favor.<sup>149,150</sup> Pavone has also expressed admiration for Lambs of Christ founder Norman Weslin, a priest who has been repeatedly arrested for illegal activities at clinics. PFL in 2001 published a long interview Pavone conducted with Weslin, who was about to go to prison and acknowledged violating buffer zones 12 times at clinics in the New York cities of Rochester and Buffalo.<sup>151</sup>

PFL has enthusiastically embraced gruesomely sensational forms of protest. Pavone in July 2006 traveled to Jackson, Mississippi, to brandish a fetus in a jar of formaldehyde, and ultimately bury it, in conjunction with Operation Save America protests of Mississippi’s only abortion clinic. Jackson police commander Lee Vance described Pavone’s possession of the fetus as “a

legal issue.”<sup>152</sup> Pavone in the end opted not to bury the fetus, which he said he had shown in protests in several other locations around the country, but vowed to bury it later in the year in Alabama.<sup>153</sup>

Pavone’s *Our Media is the Streets* calls on antichoice protesters to break laws he says “unfairly discriminate against pro-life free speech” and contains numerous

## **Pavone’s relationship with the church hierarchy has at times been rocky, as when in 2001 New York archbishop Egan ordered PFL’s head priest to return to parish work.**

other inflammatory passages. Protesters “win,” Pavone writes, when they have “brought abortion to [people’s] attention whether they like it or not.” Pavone writes of hoping to turn away even clients “coming for legitimate reasons” to a clinic, so that eventually the facility might “lose its lease.” He endorses approaching every passerby within several blocks of a clinic.

Pavone’s manual recommends the “Chicago method” of misleading and redirecting pregnant women as they approach clinics. The method as outlined by Pavone entails warning a woman about supposed malpractice lawsuits against the abortion clinic and recommending an “alternative center” with a “neutral-sounding name”—“You might even offer to escort her there.” Pavone plainly instructs those practicing the method not to “disclose that you are an anti-abortionist or that the agency you are taking your clients to will not give them an abortion or a referral,” and even recommends—“if a woman asks whether the alternative center does abortions”—saying “something like... They give abortion information.”<sup>163</sup> Pavone has also endorsed telling clinic staff “they could be in legal trouble for continuing to work there.... I can guarantee you they are breaking the law left and right.”<sup>164</sup>

In the 2000s, PFL has also sought to disrupt abortion services through a bid to “block Planned Parenthood’s access to

schools, and therefore to a large portion of their funding.” The basis of the Life Dynamics International-PFL campaign is the claim that Planned Parenthood breaks the law by extending confidentiality to minors who report having sex, a practice PFL claims could create “liability” for any school that refers students to Planned Parenthood.<sup>165</sup> Center for Reproductive Rights lawyer

## Pavone’s self-promotion has sometimes been literally hagiographic.

Bebe Anderson has called PFL’s claims “an oversimplification and a distortion” of the law, noting that in most states, “considerable discretion is given to physicians to judge what is in the best interest of the child.” The campaign has involved 800 phony phone calls to the reproductive health group by callers posing as 13-year-old girls; a push for parents to hijack school board meetings to “demand answers” about Planned Parenthood<sup>166</sup>; and a mass mailing to schools urging that girls seeking contraception be turned in to government authorities and raising the specter of girls’ being “injured, killed, or sexually assaulted” at abortion clinics.<sup>167</sup>

PFL has also broadcast various media productions promoting the antichoice message. The most prominent of these is Pavone’s *Defending Life*, which continued to air on Catholic cable channel EWTN as of 2006.<sup>168</sup> The opening episode of the program’s eleventh season was summarized thusly: “*Elections 2006*—If a candidate supported terrorism, you wouldn’t even ask his position on other issues. So it is also with abortion.”<sup>169</sup> Pavone has also spoken of talks with television producers about the possibility of broadcasting footage of an abortion procedure, a possibility he compared with 1960s images of police in the United States turning dogs and fire hoses on black people.<sup>170</sup> PFL also occasionally places advertisements in major media, such as a 2001 *Wall Street Journal*

placement calling abortion “one of the most UNREGULATED [emphasis in original] surgical procedures in the nation.”

Catholics for a Free Choice’s criticism of Pavone’s inflammatory remarks earned CFFC a warning letter from PFL lawyers, who wrote that they would “be monitoring [CFFC’s] future remarks carefully” for legally “actionable” statements. The attorneys mixed religious, emotional and legal arguments in the letter. They called CFFC president Frances Kissling “insensitive” and cited “Catholic teaching,” not US law, in calling Pavone’s provocations “valid.” Where one might have expected the conventional point that illegal acts can be just if law is unjust, the attorneys instead implied that Pavone’s approval rendered illegal acts legal: “There is a vast difference between ‘encouraging lawlessness,’” they wrote, “and defending what Father Pavone and his Church consider to be a morally justifiable act of civil disobedience.”<sup>171</sup>

## LINKS WITH THE CHURCH HIERARCHY

PFL has made a political weapon of the priesthood and of its air of authority as a church-approved group but has attracted few US priests to its membership.

Of about 40,000 priests in the US, PFL appears never to have claimed a membership of more than 5,000—one-eighth of today’s priesthood—and eventually stopped publishing membership figures. A 12 percent success rate in attracting members would be remarkable in the general population, but must be considered weak given PFL’s approval by the hierarchy and its obvious expectation of strict orthodoxy in its clerical constituency.

Pavone is clearly frustrated by the US priesthood, whose members he constantly badgers with suggestions they should be more orthodox. Pavone regularly questions the antichoice

commitment of the average US priest. In *Our Media is the Streets*, he urges parishioners to keep their priests in line: “Pro-lifers should approach their pastors regularly to encourage them to speak and take action against abortion. They should praise their pastor when he does speak out, and gently but firmly remind him if he doesn’t.”<sup>172</sup>

Pavone has certain longstanding ties at the Vatican, but his relationship with the church hierarchy has at times been rocky, as when in 2001 New York archbishop Egan ordered PFL’s head priest to return to parish work. Pavone has cited support in advertisements and other fora from “Catholic leaders,” but most of those have been politically active members of the laity.

Pavone’s devotion to the overall institution is steady, however. In a letter to supporters apparently sent in 1999 or 2000, Pavone defended the Catholic church’s status as the only religion the United Nations considers a nonmember state, rather than a nongovernmental organization. Amid challenges to the Vatican’s special status by CFFC and others, Pavone said the Holy See should retain its status and continue “blocking” UN family planning programs. “In My 12 Years as a Priest & My 25 Years As a Pro-Life Activist, I’ve *Never* Seen Such a Vicious Anti-Catholic Attack!” he wrote, adding inaccurately that CFFC was campaigning “to get the Vatican kicked out of the U.N.”<sup>173</sup>

Despite such support, the Vatican’s UN representative, archbishop Renato Martino, appeared in 2001 to chastise PFL—with its support of war, its violent associates and its emphasis on abortion as dwarfing other issues—during a speech at the dedication of PFL’s Staten Island headquarters: “Our voice must be heard not only in the fight against abortion, but in the fight against euthanasia and capital punishment as well. We can never condone the deliberate taking of a human life created in love by God and redeemed in Jesus Christ. Our striving for consistency in this regard is critical

| <b>PFL’s Episcopal Board of Advisors</b> |   |
|--|---|
| Alfonso Lopez Trujillo                   | Cardinal is president of the Pontifical Council for the Family and of the PFL board. Longtime conservative voice at the Vatican, frequent participant at extremist antichoice meetings, Opus Dei supporter as early as 1974.... Pope John Paul II said to appreciate his work to combat liberation theology in Latin America <sup>178</sup> .... Author of inaccurate statements about condoms and HIV.   |
| Renato Martino                           | Cardinal is president of Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, ex-Vatican envoy at UN and elsewhere. Joined Pavone, Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry and leading Republican politicians in voicing support for Terri Schiavo’s parents, with whom Martino met.  |
| John Yanta                               | Amarillo, Texas, bishop providing home diocese for PFL Missionaries of the Gospel of Life. At installation, stressed opposition to abortion <sup>179</sup> .... Said in 2004 that prochoice “politicians are making a mockery of the Catholic faith” <sup>180</sup> .... Backed a 2005 state constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage <sup>181</sup> .... Rails against “secularism.” <sup>182</sup>  |
| Charles Chaput                           | Denver archbishop in 2004 indicated Catholics would sin by voting for prochoice presidential candidate Kerry. To <i>New York Times</i> , raised question of whether “John Kerry should receive communion,” said people are “not...Catholic” if they vote for prochoice candidates, decried Catholics’ tradition of being “overwhelmingly Democrat.” Said of Republicans, “It’s that <i>they’re with us</i> [emphasis in original].” <sup>183</sup>  |
| John Francis Donoghue                    | Retired ex-Atlanta archbishop of whom Call to Action’s Elaine LaLonde said in 2001, “He is really going by the party line, so to speak, 100 percent.... Anything that looks like it smacks of reform or questioning is simply not allowed” <sup>184</sup> .... In 2004, said prochoice politicians could not receive communion in archdiocese.... Called Iraq a just war <sup>185</sup> .... Banned women from foot-washing ceremonies. <sup>186</sup>  |
| Edwin O’Brien                            | Archbishop for US military oversaw Vatican-imposed review of US seminaries over sex abuse scandals, acknowledged targeting gay seminarians. <sup>187</sup> In 2005, said celibate gays should not be priests. <sup>188</sup> In 2003-04, withdrew ecclesiastical endorsements of two military chaplains who had spoken out about clergy sex abuse. <sup>189</sup>   |
| John J. Myers                            | Newark archbishop named as member of Opus Dei-sponsored Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. <sup>190</sup> At 2002 Rome mass celebrating Opus Dei founder St. Josemaria Escriva, said, “Among so many worthy institutions, old and new, God wanted Opus Dei...and the Church made Opus Dei a personal prelature” <sup>191</sup> .... In 2004, said prochoice politicians should not take communion <sup>192</sup> .... Reportedly told by president Bush that conservative bishops’ influence decided 2004 election <sup>193</sup> .... Leader in 2006 campaign for constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. <sup>194</sup> |



| <b>PFL’s Episcopal Board of Advisors (continued)</b> |   |
|--|---|
| Sam Jacobs   | Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux Diocese in Louisiana, active in Catholic charismatic movement, describes speaking in tongues.... Priest he returned to service after 1998 sex abuse charge by 2001 faced new molestation allegation, <sup>195</sup> in 2003 pleaded guilty, sentenced to two years in prison. <sup>196</sup> His former Alexandria diocese in 2004 one of two in Louisiana found lacking in handling of abuse cases <sup>197</sup> .... In 1999, questioned whether mosque construction in Nazareth, Israel, near Christian site meant “Jews have a right to go build a temple at the Dome of the Rock” in Jerusalem, <sup>198</sup> where a year later Israeli leader Ariel Sharon was blamed for sparking intifada.   |
| Thomas Olmsted                                       | In 2006, one of three US bishops to require full family planning courses for couples planning weddings, called on contraception users to “seek forgiveness” <sup>199</sup> .... In 2004 banned church speech by politicians differing with church abortion, gay marriage positions <sup>200</sup> .... Accused of purging priests who signed declaration supporting gay rights. <sup>201,202,203</sup>  |
| Robert Carlson                                       | Saginaw, Michigan, bishop and head of bishops’ charismatic committee, reportedly wrote prochoice former US senator Tom Daschle (D-SD) in 2003 that he should stop identifying himself as Catholic <sup>204</sup> .... <i>Tablet</i> (UK) correspondent in 2006 wrote of possible “insurrection among the priests” in Saginaw over Carlson’s ultraorthodoxy. <sup>205</sup>  |
| Emilio Allue   | Spaniard is Boston auxiliary bishop for Merrimack region. In 2002 told pastor to stop church meetings of branch of 25,000-member Voice of the Faithful, lay group on clergy sex abuse. <sup>206</sup> Targeted group alleged “smear campaign,” <sup>207</sup> National Review Board head Keating criticized Allue, <sup>208</sup> archbishop Law within two weeks issued policy contradicting Allue’s ban <sup>209</sup> .... 30 years earlier, Allue as head of New York state school said to expel student who alleged assault by Salesian brother working at school. <sup>210</sup>  |
| Rene Gracida   | Retired Corpus Christi, Texas, bishop sued by state in 1996 for allegedly funneling \$100 million to diocese in misuse of foundation funds. <sup>211</sup> Texas bishops had spurred suit, papal commission convened to mediate, 1997 settlement stipulated new makeup of foundation board <sup>212</sup> .... Said in 2004 that prochoice politicians should be denied communion, <sup>213</sup> criticized bishops’ presidential-candidate questionnaire for including questions on “the minimum wage, immigration, farm subsidies, etc.” in addition to on abortion and select other topics. <sup>214</sup> Openly sought votes for Bush: “The Catholic can vote for candidate (C, Peroutka) but that will probably only help ensure the election of candidate (A, Kerry). Therefore the Catholic voter has a proportionate reason to vote for candidate (B, Bush) since his vote may help to ensure the defeat of candidate (A, Kerry).” <sup>215</sup> |

for the integrity of your message and the effectiveness of your mission.”<sup>174</sup>

No matter what the reality of the PFL-hierarchy relationship, the mere name of Priests for Life can, with its clear church affiliation, be of some value to the antichoice cause, as a 2001 *Catholic Eye* column pointed out: “Will Senator Hillary Clinton, having won New York’s Catholic vote, publicly dis a group called *Priests* [emphasis in original] for Life?”<sup>175</sup>

PFL has also sought to use church infrastructure as a platform for its campaigns. In 2003, Pavone announced a “special initiative” in which “the nation’s 19,000+ Catholic parishes [had] been ‘matched’ to the nation’s remaining 700+ freestanding abortion mills.” Parishioners were to “pray and work for the conversion and closing of a specific killing center,” and Pavone claimed among other things that “witchcraft is sometimes carried out inside abortion clinics.”<sup>176</sup> PFL maintains information online about the project, including a directory of parishes and “matched” clinics,<sup>177</sup> but offers no information on whether parishes have actually participated. Research suggests the campaign may be largely theoretical.

PFL’s ties to the church also pass through its Episcopal Board of Advisors. PFL lists 21 members of the board. Eight are retired, with several in their 90s or late 80s. Several other board members lead major archdioceses or hold senior Vatican positions and, as such, cannot have much time for working with PFL. In any case, the board is a veritable directory of ultraconservative bishops, as the table indicates.

**LEADERS**

**Frank Pavone, national director**

Pavone is a New Yorker who attended St. Joseph’s Seminary in Yonkers and was ordained a priest by Cardinal John O’Connor in 1988. He has taught in the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program and at the Institute for Religious Studies in



New York. He appears to have begun running PFL full-time as of September 1993,<sup>216</sup> soon moving PFL from California first to Port Chester, New York, and then to the New York City borough of Staten Island.<sup>217</sup> As of this writing, he is in the process of moving his priestly affiliation and much of PFL's operation to the remote mission diocese of Amarillo, Texas.

Pavone has been single-mindedly focused on banning abortion since well before he joined PFL, which must be viewed as the ideal forum for his stridency. He sidestepped a major obstacle in this regard in 2001, when New York archbishop Cardinal Edward Egan instructed him to return to full-time pastoral work.<sup>218</sup> PFL executive director Anthony DeStefano said the organization's leaders were "shocked at what has happened and frankly can't make heads or tails of it... Father Frank... is continuing to negotiate with the Cardinal."<sup>219</sup>

Archdiocesan spokesman Joseph Zwilling said the assignment was "not an unexpected development" and that Pavone had learned of it "about nine months ago."<sup>220</sup> Pavone did work at the parochial level briefly but soon returned as full-time PFL national director.

Pavone constantly plays on his own image and personality to promote his cause, using large photographs of himself in a wide variety of materials, especially advertising. He has described himself in terms that suggest a touring performer or campaigning candidate for office. In a May 2006 letter to supporters, he basked in the "commitment and enthusiastic response" of his fans. He added that the "dynamic" of his interaction with supporters—not commitment to the cause, therefore—was "what drew me into full-time pro-life ministry."<sup>221</sup>

The priest avidly courts media attention, for example by administering the widely publicized 1998 confirmation, with no bishop participating despite a clear church teaching that bishops should perform confirmations, of Norma "Jane Roe" McCorvey.<sup>222</sup> Perhaps his most

intense moment in the spotlight came when in 2004 he became deeply involved in the case of Terri Schiavo, the Florida woman who was in a persistent vegetative state for more than a decade and whose parents, supported by Pavone, opposed her husband's ultimately successful bid to have her feeding tube removed. Pavone lent the veneer of the priesthood to the parents' camp in the controversy and, according to the brother of Terri Schiavo's husband, Michael Schiavo, led the way in making the latter "out to be a demon, vilified as a murderer."<sup>223</sup> As Michael Schiavo sought police protection amid threats on his life, Pavone delivered a memorial homily for Terri Schiavo and said she had simply been "unable to communicate," "an innocent woman who was not dying."<sup>224</sup>

In keeping with PFL's promotion of a cult of personality around Pavone, PFL officials and associates frequently portray the priest in ecstatic terms. PFL

**"Everything we did in the 2004 cycle will be repeated, intensified and multiplied, without compromise and without apology.... Let us all begin now to recruit, train and activate even more pro-life voters for the 2006 cycle."**

**—Frank Pavone**

executive director Anthony DeStefano has called Pavone a "great man," "both a leader of leaders, and a leader of the masses." Lambs of Christ founder Norman Weslin, a convicted clinic obstructionist whom PFL features on its Web site, told Pavone, "It's all up to you now Frank," since Mother Teresa and Cardinal John O'Connor had died.<sup>225</sup>

**Anthony DeStefano, executive director**

PFL's executive director since 1996 and its best-compensated employee by far, DeStefano previously worked for antichoice, anti-"homosexual agenda," pro-death penalty Republican Herbert London's 1994 New York state comptroller campaign<sup>226</sup>; wrote a regular column for the *Staten Island Advance*, and

ran the chain Fulton Electronics. The avowed fundamentalist gave himself over to theological flights of fancy in his book *A Travel Guide to Heaven*, refused by religious publishers and ultimately published by Random House. In an interview about the book, DeStefano dismissed “Eastern religions”—presumably including such ancient faiths as Buddhism and Hinduism—as “New Age nonsense.” In the book, he affirms that in Heaven, “there will be colors,” and a person may spend time “hiking through the mountains” or “reading a really good book by the fireside with a hot cup of tea nearby.” Love in Heaven will be “universal,” DeStefano writes—“not communistic,” he hastens to add.<sup>227</sup>

**Jerry Horn**, *senior advisor and director of public relations*

Horn was arrested repeatedly during a 1983-84 protest campaign at Fox Valley Reproductive Center in Wisconsin and was convicted of trespassing. He claimed “marching orders from God.” During the same period, the clinic was shot at, and chemicals were forced in through holes drilled in walls. Horn undertook a cross-country walk for the antichoice cause in 1985, brandishing a dead fetus. The same year, amid a period of frequent violence at clinics, Horn organized a conference of Joseph Scheidler’s Pro-Life Action League at which a sign read “Have a blast!” and firecrackers were attached to attendees’ name tags.<sup>228</sup> Horn is a Texan and former evangelical Protestant who converted to Catholicism in 1996.<sup>229</sup>

**Janet Morana**, *chief operational officer*

Morana is a founder of the Silent No More Awareness Campaign, a project of PFL and the Anglican antichoice group NOEL that involves women speaking at protests and press events about their regret over having abortions. Morana has recounted being caused to “sob uncontrollably” by a video that convinced her that her past use of ordinary birth control pills had “*destroyed an unknown number of children* [emphasis

in original].” Morana said she was “able to come to grips with these feelings of grief and loss” at a Rachel’s Vineyard retreat for women who have had abortions.<sup>230</sup> Morana in 1993 ran for New York City Council as a Right to Life Party candidate and received 2 percent of the vote.<sup>231</sup> In 2004 she led the PFL project Solidarity with Women, seeking “votes for pro-life candidates.”<sup>232</sup>

**Rob Schenck**, *Faith and Action president*

Rob Schenck directs the close PFL ally Faith and Action and, along with Pavone and Rob Schenck’s twin brother, Paul Schenck, leads an intertwined network of Washington, DC, antichoice advocacy groups that seek to influence US policy. Rob Schenck has a long history of arrests for aggressive antiabortion protest: He helped classmate Randall Terry start Operation Rescue and in 1992 made headlines when he brandished a dead fetus at then presidential candidate Bill Clinton.<sup>233</sup>

Rob Schenck, like his twin a convert from Judaism to Christianity, is a minister of the Evangelical Church Alliance and the Methodist Episcopal Church USA.<sup>234</sup> Faith and Action describes Rob Schenck as a “close personal friend” of former Alabama chief justice Roy Moore, a hero to those who advocate more religion in government. Moore, as of this writing a candidate for the governorship of Alabama, was removed from his post as chief justice for refusing a federal order to remove a two-ton Ten Commandments monument from the state judiciary building in Montgomery. Rob Schenck organized pro-Moore rallies daily in Montgomery. He has made a habit of sending Ten Commandments plaques to politicians such as House of Representatives ex-majority leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) and speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) and Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT). He reportedly asks the recipients to work toward a government based on the commandments and in 2003 exulted, “We have the president, both leaders of

Congress, Hastert and DeLay, all of whom share what I would call an orthodox Christian worldview. All of them display the Ten Commandments.”<sup>235</sup>

**Paul Schenck, *pastoral associate***

Rob Schenck’s twin is PFL pastoral associate and director of PFL-sponsored Gospel of Life Ministries, as well as executive director of the National Pro-Life Action Center, of which Pavone is pastoral director. Paul Schenck is a former executive vice president of the antichoice American Center for Law and Justice. Born Jewish, he converted to Anglicanism, became an Anglican pastor and is now Catholic after being received into the church by Pavone.<sup>236</sup> His case against the Pro-Choice Network of Western New York made it in 1997 to the Supreme Court, which ruled that fixed buffer zones to control protests around abortion clinics were constitutional but also, in a partial victory for Schenck, struck down “floating” buffer zones to keep protesters at a distance from individuals entering clinics.

**Denis Wilde, *priest associate***

Augustinian priest Wilde was “sent out” by Pavone during an election campaign to preach in the parish church attended by a prochoice candidate, where Wilde homilized, “If you know any pro-abortion politician, vote him out.”<sup>237</sup> A woman leaving a 2004 Florida mass at which Wilde preached said, “This was not a sermon, it was a political speech.... I have never, ever heard

something like that in a Catholic church and I hope I never do again.... He may as well have had baskets of Bush-Cheney bumper stickers at the exit.” The *Miami Herald* reported the woman was a “lifelong Miami Catholic” who “was one of dozens who left during the eight Masses at which the priest spoke.”<sup>238</sup>

**Giacomo Capoverdi, *priest associate***

Capoverdi is a political professional who before entering the priesthood worked for mayors Buddy Cianci and Joseph Paolino of Providence, Rhode Island.<sup>239</sup> Cianci is as of this writing serving a five-year federal prison term for racketeering; Paolino took over for Cianci in 1984 when the latter resigned his office after pleading no contest to charges he attacked his ex-wife’s lover with a lit cigarette and a fireplace log.<sup>240</sup> Cianci and Capoverdi appear to have remained chums after the latter became a priest: At a 2001 fund-raiser for Cianci’s “political hard core,” the *Providence Journal-Bulletin* reported, Capoverdi “did a terrific send-up of Cianci and offered a solemn prayer asking for blessings upon the mayor.”<sup>241</sup> The Associated Press in 2002 summed up prosecutors’ view of Providence in Capoverdi’s time: “a city for sale, one where even routine dealings with City Hall—applying for jobs, looking for tax breaks and bidding on contracts—meant greasing a few palms.”<sup>242</sup> PFL in announcing its 2005 hiring of Capoverdi said he would “foster political responsibility among God’s people” and “equip his fellow priests...to organize more effectively for pro-life activity.”<sup>243</sup>

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