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INSIDE...

<i>Respect Life Prayer</i>	2
<i>Prof. Rice Lecture</i>	3
<i>Cemetery of Innocents</i>	4
<i>Dawn Parkot</i>	5
<i>Prof. Reimers Lecture</i>	6
<i>Commissioner Feature</i>	7
<i>Pictures</i>	8

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Footprints

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF NOTRE DAME RIGHT TO LIFE

Respect Life Week a Success!

The Notre Dame school year is full of awareness days, weeks, and months. Nary a day or a weekend goes by that a student-run club does not try to promote some sort of cause or idea. But one of the campus' most powerful awareness weeks was held October 1st – 7th by Notre Dame Right to Life.

Known as "Respect Life Week", the week featured guest lectures, prayer, symbolic visualizations, round-table discussions, and, yes, even a little Notre Dame football.

On Monday, October 1st, Right to Life "came to table" in South Quad's Coleman-Morse Building with members from Human Rights ND and the Peace Alliance to open a discussion about life issues on campus and throughout America today.

On Tuesday, Right to Life joined in solemn prayer: group members took part in three Rosaries, a Divine Mercy Chaplet, and Eucharistic Adoration.

Professor Charles E. Rice, of the Law School, lectured at the Right to Life Club meeting on Wednesday evening. A proponent of the natural

law philosophy, Professor Rice expanded on most students' limited understanding of just why it is that they are pro-life. Club Mass at the Log Chapel followed the lecture and was well attended, as usual.



Respect Life Week Logo

More than forty Right to Life helped construct the Cemetery of the Innocents monument Thursday morning – a display which visualizes the daily loss of

life effected by abortions. Dawn Parkot also delivered an excellent lecture on Thursday evening.

Professor Adrian Reimers, a leading scholar on Pope John Paul II, lectured on the "Theology of the Body" Friday afternoon before more than fifty students at the Center for Social Concerns Building.

Respect Life Week concluded Saturday with the Club Game-watch – as club members watched the Irish rally to their first victory of the season. Respect Life Sunday was commemorated with pro-life homilies at Masses across campus, in each dorm and in the Basilica.

Read more about each of these events throughout this edition of *Footprints!*



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Respect Life Week Prayer

The newly created Respect Life Week Prayer served as the foundation of the entire week for Notre Dame Right to Life. It was printed on the back of a prayer card and distributed throughout campus. For members, it served as a reminder that activism is nothing if it is without prayer.

Eternal God, Source of all life, you have created us in your own divine image. By the power of the Holy Spirit, your Son became flesh and revealed to us the sanctity of all human life. Grant, we implore you:
Protect all unborn children;
Guide and support all expectant parents;
Comfort the aged, the sick, and the dying;
Strengthen prisoners, especially those awaiting execution, and their victims;
And bring peace to our world, torn apart by war, terrorism, and countless other acts of violence against life.
May our Notre Dame community bear witness to a seamless culture of life and so value the dignity and worth of every human being, from conception until natural death.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Club Meeting: RTL packs Montgomery Auditorium for Professor Rice lecture

► Law Professor helps Right to Life members articulate “Why pro-life?”

By Adam Hansmann
Club Secretary

For most members of Notre Dame Right to Life, answering the question “Are you pro-life?” is easy. Articulating why can sometimes be difficult. Although the truth about most life issues seems almost intrinsic, being able to say “why” is just as important to the pro-life movement.

Professor Emeritus Charles Rice, of the Notre Dame Law School, addressed this issue on Wednesday, October 3rd, at the monthly Right to Life meeting.

After a few introductory remarks from Club President **Mary Liz Walter '08**, Professor Rice took the microphone to address a packed Montgomery Auditorium. He began his lecture by posing the question to several members of the audience: “Why are you pro-life?” The bevy of answers was expected: because everyone *should* have a right to life, because abortion is murder, because it’s in the Constitution.

As Professor Rice expected,

most people struggled to truly articulate their reasoning. He first addressed the Constitutional issue. To one student who derived his pro-life stance from the Constitution, Professor Rice replied: “OK – well, let’s amend the Constitution. We’ll amend the Constitution to permit it. Problem solved. Do you still have a



Professor Emeritus Charles E. Rice lectures on the question: “Why pro-life?”

right to life?” He also wondered about other countries that do not explicitly or implicitly guarantee life in their governing documents – is the right to life there nonexistent as well?

His point, of course, was that a person’s “right” to life was not a right in the public sense of the word

at all. Instead, a person’s “right” to life is rooted in his inherent dignity as a human being created by God. Interestingly enough, Professor Rice took it a step further. “How do you know there’s a God?” he wondered.

The answers became even more varied than before. Some cited St. Thomas Aquinas. Others referred to personal experience; still others offered theological insights. But Professor Rice’s explanation was rather simple: “Nothing can exist,” he said, “that does not have a prior cause.” God, he concluded, is that which, through divine infinitude, brought the universe into effect. And with the universe comes the natural rights with which we are all endowed.

For Right to Life members, Professor Rice’s lecture was both challenging and insightful. He challenged the notion that beliefs can be held without sufficient reasoning to articulate them and give them credibility. But he also offered very useful insights for the dozens in attendance. And affirmed what many of them knew intrinsically to be true: that the cause for which Right to Life stands is rooted in more than a policy preference.

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‘Cemetery’ Visualizes Abortion’s Effects

► Right to Life members raise crosses, memorial on Notre Dame’s South Quad

By Adam Hansmann
Club Secretary

For most Notre Dame students, Thursday morning is a time to catch up on some much-needed sleep. Classes begin at 9:30 AM at the earliest, so moving under the covers before 9:00 AM is almost unheard of. But for more than forty Right to Life members, Thursday, October 4th was not a morning to sleep in.

Shunning their shut-eye needs, they arose before the crack of dawn to help construct one of Respect Life Week’s most visual traditions: the Cemetery of the Innocents. The concept is to raise a number of white crosses to memorialize the number of abortions that take place in a

particular amount of time. The idea is to show that abortion cannot be understood in purely “statistical” ways; every abortion represents one child that will never receive the gift of life for which he or she was intended. This year, 600 crosses were aligned across the campus’ South Quad – each representing the approximately 600 children that are aborted during the span of the average Notre Dame football game.

“Getting up at 6:00 AM wasn’t fun at the time,” said Right to Life member Joe

Scolaro ’10, “but seeing the finished product – and knowing what it stood for – certainly was.” Other club members reiterated Joe’s sentiments.

While for the most Notre Dame or St. Mary’s students life issues are a “no-brainer,” not everyone agrees with the pro-life stance. Two years ago the display was vandalized by a group of students, who tore down or uprooted most of the crosses. To deal with this sad problem, the Knights of

Columbus, Notre Dame Council 1477, stationed a guard to watch over the Cemetery during the overnight hours on Thursday and Friday.



Notre Dame Right to Life’s Cemetery of the Innocents

Though it is perhaps disappointing that it came to that, the support of the Knights reinforced the idea that Right to Life is not an independent, exclusive group: pro-life issues are important to many campus members, especially the Catholic men of the Knights.

At Notre Dame, students are motivated, driven, and success-oriented. It is easy to sometimes forget that there are more important issues than grades or social activities. But no one who traversed the campus’ busiest walkways on South Quad could ignore the Cemetery. And that is exactly the point: to remember those who are so easily forgotten.



Right to Life Member
Brendan Kiley ’10

Lecture Review: Dawn Parkot Uplifting

► First Notre Dame graduate with multiple disabilities delivers talk

By Emily Toates
Vice President

Respect Life Week was highlighted by keynote speaker Dawn Parkot, the first person to graduate from Notre Dame with multiple disabilities - literally a living piece of Notre Dame history.

Afflicted with cerebral palsy at birth, Dawn overcame all odds to graduate from Notre Dame with an undergraduate degree in Math in 1995 and with a Master's in Computer Science in 2000.

Dawn spoke about being disabled and the shocking way our society regards people who are "different". Looking through the eyes of someone whose mother had been told her daughter was nothing more than a "mindless vegetable" who would die before age 5, Dawn provided a new perspective to the Terri Schiavo case. Sometimes, it is obvious, a medical prognosis is little more than a medical conjecture.

Fortunately, Dawn's mother did not listen to the doctors, providing her with the education and therapy that allowed her to reach the place she is today. Had it not been for her mother's hard work and

encouragement, Dawn might have ended up very much like Terri.

Instead Dawn became a double-Domer - someone with an undergraduate and graduate degree from Notre Dame. Dawn also

enduring support of her family. But she pointed out that not all people with disabilities are lucky enough to have the opportunities she did.

All too often, Dawn said, they



**Dawn Parkot '95 at the 2007 March for Life in Washington D.C.
Right to Life Guest Lecturer**

became the first person with a speech impairment to win the Miss Wheelchair USA pageant. She was even an alternate on the US

Paralympic team in horseback riding, and has been successful in the business world.

Dawn was able to succeed because of her enormous determination and the

are sent to institutions or special schools which do not provide the opportunity for them to work so that they can reach their full potential.

Dawn's talk reminded us of the importance of respecting life in all its stages and that pro-life work does not end once the baby is born. The pro-life movement is about affirming the worth and dignity of all human life in all its stages, born and unborn, from birth until natural death.

“Fortunately...Dawn's mother did not listen to the doctors...”



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Pope John Paul II scholar Professor Reimers Delivers “Theology of the Body” Lecture

► Theology professor gives Friday afternoon lecture to more than forty students

By Will Erickson
Spiritual Commissioner

The evening of Friday October 5, just before the weekend of Respect Life Week, was devoted to an outstanding lecture on Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body.

About fifty RTL members gathered to listen to Philosophy Professor Adrian Reimers, along with his wife Marie, explain the late Pontiff’s teachings on the subject and its implications for the Pro-life movement.

Professor Reimers, an expert on the writings of Pope John Paul, began the informal discussion by deploring the ever-present hedonism of our time, specifically in the cinema.

The impurity that stars in so many films is of course harmful

enough, but Professor Reimers pointed out a subtler thread of error fed to us by the entertainment industry. Citing

specific movies, Professor Reimers exposed their underlying message that man is (and ought to be) able to live in a blissful state of pleasure-seeking, following his passions without consequence. This is the supposed natural, primitive human state, free from the constraints of religion or social norms. That attitude, of course, is bald-headed modernism at its worst. It is a flat denial of original sin, free will, and divine grace; it makes us little more than brute animals; and it maims the truth of human love, thereby reinforcing the

“We are not mere bodies but instead enfleshed *souls*, created for genuine sacrificial love, not pleasure.”

instead enfleshed *souls*, created for genuine sacrificial love, not pleasure. Most of all, we are made with the dignity to be free from

slavery to our passions, not to cave in to their every whim.



Professor Adrian Reimers lectures, joined by his wife Marie and Right to Life President Mary Liz Walter

In addition to addressing the grave falsehoods we face today, Professor and Mrs. Reimers also offered their insights and wisdom (and exchanged a couple of jabs!) about the married life, the roles of husband/father and wife/mother, the demands of raising a family, and the joys in the midst of these demands. Incidentally, the abovementioned films all try to render the phrase “joy amid

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Professor Reimers lecture

demands” an oxymoron—either you are free from responsibilities, they suggest, or else you are not really happy—but all of us at the lecture surely agreed that Adrian and Marie Reimers are walking disproofs of this claim. The couple also answered several questions in



detail regarding topics such as the failure of today’s young men as fathers, the fallacy of handicapped children’s “inability to lead a full life,” and the example of the Holy Family for today’s parents.

and personal explanation of the Theology of the Body, and a most fitting conclusion to the pro-life lectures of Respect Life Week 2007.

Professor and Mrs. Reimers treated us to an engaging talk, a thoughtful

COMMISSIONER FEATURE:

Hometown: Long Island, New York

Dorm: Morrissey Manor

Major: Biology & Philosophy

Interests: Theology, Poetry, Piano, Music



JOE SCOLARO
CONCESSION STAND
COMMISSIONER

Favorite Thing about Notre Dame: “I love the geographic diversity of Notre Dame. It’s stereotyped as very homogenous population, but there are really people from everywhere. I also like that students are well-informed and that faith is important to them.”

Why pro-life?: “Abortion is one of the most important issues facing our country. I believe with strong conviction that we must spread the pro-life message – or risk facing the consequences.”

Fun Fact: Enjoys ice sculpting and also plays the bagpipes. Joe is also interested in entering the seminary upon graduation from Notre Dame.

Proudest Moment: “Acceptance letter – definitely!”

**Our Mission Statement:**

The Notre Dame Right to Life's mission is to promote and uphold the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death through education, service, and prayer, according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Education: *We are primarily called to instruct and communicate the pro-life message on the campus of Notre Dame. Our secondary mission is to proclaim the Gospel of Life beyond the campus of Notre Dame, by means of outreach, sponsoring educational events, and by example.*

Service: *Charity calls us to reach out and support our peers, especially those women who find themselves in crisis pregnancies. We will work to service the needs of ND students in this manner.*

Prayer: *We will hold steadfast to prayer, the most powerful means of bringing about change.*