A bishop goes to jail

By Cardinal John J. O'Connor
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Our Bishop Vaughan is going to jail. For trying to rescue babies from death and their mothers from tragic memories. No gold medal. No ticker tape parade. Jail. For two days.

The technical charge, of course, is not that he tried to rescue babies. That wouldn't look very civilized on a court docket. The charge is much more genteel. He has refused to pay a $10 fine and $50.50 in court costs for the crime of trespassing.

It is difficult to block the entrance to an abortion clinic—however non-violently one tries to do so—without being charged with trespassing. Bishop Vaughan does not deny the charge. Neither did St. Thomas More deny that he refused to take an oath which would have effectively expressed support for Henry VIII's invalid marriage to Ann Boleyn and Henry's claim to supreme spiritual authority in England. Neither did Cardinal John Fisher deny the same. Both went to the Tower of London. Both lost their heads.

Bishop Vaughan happens to believe there is a Divine Law which takes priority over every civil law. It's the law which forbids the direct taking of innocent human life. When the life belongs to an unborn baby we call it abortion. The Second Vatican Council called it an abomination. Bishop Vaughan is faithful to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

Bishop Vaughan is not the first to go to jail, nor will he go alone. Many participants in Operation Rescue have already been in jail, many will go to jail. Usually they are not given the brutal treatment given in Atlanta, Georgia. Ask Adelle Nathanson about that. She was held in an Atlanta jail from Friday through Monday, despite the bond posted on Friday evening by her husband, Dr. Bernard Nathanson, one-time leading abortionist, now leading anti-abortionist. The treatment Mrs. Nathanson describes is horrifying.

Or ask Father Norman Welin, placed in solitary confinement for the "crime" of offering Mass while in an Atlanta prison—even being dragged away in the middle of Mass, according to reports.

The people who risk jail in Operation Rescue believe that preborn babies are precisely that—babies, real, live human persons. They also believe that a great number of mothers who have their preborn babies destroyed will suffer shattering guilt and soul-wrenching memories for years to come. They don't hate the young girls or women who go to abortion clinics. They love them and want to protect them from their own foolishness and from the propaganda that has lured them to have an abortion.

So they trespass, as do many in Operation Rescue. They trespass non-violently. And they pray. And they go to jail. Bishop Vaughan is one of them.

Bishop Vaughan does not like being called a hero. Nor would he like my saying that he is one of the most brilliant theologians in the United States and as holy a bishop as I have ever known. I have to tell the truth.

As my auxiliary, Bishop Vaughan sees to it meticulously that Operation Rescue does not prevent his carrying out his duties here in the Archdiocese of New York. He needn't worry. If he has to miss a Sunday Mass or a Confirmation ceremony because he's in jail, I'll be proud to fill in. Who knows? One day he may have to do the same for me. For the same reason.

Why civil disobedience?

By Michael Patrick
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The Rutherford Institute

Local newspapers called it the "Siege of Atlanta." Protesters slipped through metal barricades at a mid-town abortion mill, and crawled on their hands and knees like a herd of turtles into a dark blue sea of waiting police officers.

Many people, including some church leaders, wonder if these mostly Christian "rescuers" are misguided. Doesn't the Bible say that Christians must obey the law? What drives otherwise law-abiding men and women, many of whom are church and community leaders, to risk civil and criminal charges?

The answer springs from our national and spiritual roots. The revivals of the mid-1700s produced fruit in the American culture. Community and religious leaders realized that they were, as the Declaration of Independence puts it, "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," including "Life."

The notion that man has God-given rights which can't be abrogated by a civil government is also grounded in biblical history. Men such as Moses, Daniel and Jesus regularly disobeyed civil authorities, or rather, obeyed a higher law, when laws and governments stood in obstinate rebellion to God.

But such actions are rarely popular. Leaders who are in active obedience to God's higher law usually pay a crucifying price in a rebellious culture. For example, we now consider Holland's Ten Boom family and others throughout Europe as heroes for breaking the law by trafficking in illegal ration cards and for providing safe houses for escaping Jews. But, at the time, the church-at-large didn't support them. In Germany, most churches placed their faith in conflict resolution efforts with the popular government while Jews and sympathizers were gassed and burned in the ovens.

Today, abortion thrives with a vengeance. Tyranny is always ready to rule a nation when men and women of virtue will not. Yet, we have a stewardship responsibility to secure liberty, from generation to generation. Civil disobedience does not necessarily destroy liberty. It is sometimes necessary to preserve it. This was true for black Americans in the civil rights movement.

The God-given, inalienable rights of man, authored in Scripture and penned in the Declaration of Independence, are newly forged for each generation in the crucible of the gospel; they are secured only when we show ourselves willing to demonstrate a clear obedience to God's law above all else. These nonviolent rescuers believe they are utilizing the most discreet level of resistance necessary to halt abortion and rescue liberty for parents and children.

Civil disobedience does not necessarily destroy liberty. It is sometimes necessary to preserve it.

Meanwhile, if history is any witness, the American Church will not likely get off the hook so easily as to witness a convenient reversal of **Roe v. Wade** by the Supreme Court. Those who would stop the slaughter of the innocent must take a page from biblical history and realize the cost of obedience and the price of liberty. We will have to choose Whom we will serve.

Operation Rescue makes impact, gains momentum

Rescue those who are unjustly sentenced to death; don't stand back and let them die. -- Proverbs 24:11 (TLB)

"I consider Operation Rescue a legitimate front-line force in the pro-life movement," says Dr. D. James Kennedy, senior minister of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. "Something is happening in the pro-life movement and I believe it is a direct answer to prayer. I encourage the body of Christ to join Operation Rescue as salt and light to our communities. We must live our faith, prayerfully and in a Christ-like manner, putting action behind our words."

What is Operation Rescue (OR), and what does it hope to accomplish? Simply put, OR is people committed to physically rescuing as many pre-born children as they can until it is no longer legal to kill the children. Randall Terry, OR national director, says, "If we really believe that abortion is killing innocent children then we should act like it."

OR held a December 8 meeting in Atlanta to inform religious leaders and answer questions about OR. More than 600 people attended the meeting which drew measured national attention. American Family Association had two representatives at the conference.

Terry rightly points out that for all the legislative work that has been done for the pro-life position over the years, the fact remains that 1 1/2 million children are still murdered every year. Something must be done about it, he says.

In addition to Dr. Kennedy, Christian leaders who have endorsed the efforts of OR include broadcaster Marlin Maddoux of International Christian Media, Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family, Dr. Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ, Liberty Federation leader Dr. Jerry Falwell and Cardinal John O'Conner, Catholic archbishop of New York.

Randall Terry, a native of New York state and a graduate of Elim Bible Institute, has been involved extensively in pro-life work for several years. Since getting involved in pro-life work he has started a crisis pregnancy center and a home for unwed mothers. Terry's study of the Scriptures and history led to his participation in rescue missions to save children from death and mothers from exploitation.

The following answers to two common questions are taken from the book *Operation Rescue* written by Terry with forewords by Dr. Pat Robertson and Dr. Kennedy.

Q. How did Operation Rescue begin?

A. By the end of my jail term (for participating in a rescue) in the summer of 1986, I had a more definite idea of what it was going to take to secure justice again for the children.

First of all, I felt we needed a repentance in the church that would result in a national uprising against abortion. As Christians, I knew we needed to beg God's forgiveness for allowing the holocaust to continue unchallenged for fifteen years. We had allowed man's laws to dictate that we would turn our backs on those who were being killed instead of loving our neighbors as ourselves.

We as Christians had to repent because we were so concerned about our image and our appearance before the community that we were not willing to stop an atrocity, an injustice, a holocaust of such major proportions that it's now five times greater than the Nazi slaughter of the Jews.

Secondly, I saw that if we believed abortion was murder, then we needed to act like it was murder. **The logical response when you or I see someone being killed is to do what we can to physically intervene and save them.**

I also realized that the pro-life movement was not creating the tension and upheaval necessary to produce political and social change. We were being too nice. Our actions and our rhetoric were so far removed from one another that we did not deserve a fair hearing.

Once we repented and started rescuing, I knew that besides saving babies and mothers, our actions would have the secondary benefit of creating positive social tension.

Support needed for January rescues

The next national rescues are scheduled for January 12-14, 1989. Operation Rescue needs as many people as can to make the trip to New York City during that time and participate in some way. For more information please write Operation Rescue, P.O. Box 1180, Binghamton, New York 13902. Also, the paperback book ***Operation Rescue*** *is published by Whitaker House, 580 Pittsburgh Street, Springdale, PA 15144. It answers all the questions that one might have about OR and is recommended by AFA. Check with your local Christian bookstore.*

Pro-lifers were saying that abortion was murder, and yet all we were doing about it was writing a letter now and then. **If my little girl was about to be murdered, I certainly would not write a letter to the editor!** I would dive in with both hands and feet and do whatever was necessary to save her life.

We were all clamoring about abortion being murder, but we had not even peacefully tried to blockade abortion mills. As these ideas took shape in my mind and the truths of God's Word grabbed my heart, the foundation for Operation Rescue was laid.

Q. Even though a rescue mission is peaceful, how do you justify breaking the law? Aren't we as Christians supposed to obey the law?

A. Some Christians have told me that we should only disobey man's law when we are commanded to participate in evil. Under careful scrutiny, however, this argument is not valid. Yes, when we are told to do something evil, we not only have the liberty, but an **obligation** to disobey man's law.

When the Hebrew midwives or Moses' parents were told to kill children, they said "No!" When the three Hebrew children were told to worship an idol, they refused. Christians tell me, "When the authorities tell me **I** have to get an abortion, I won't obey."

But how should God's people respond when they are told **not** to do something good? Daniel was commanded, "Don't pray!" Rahab was told, "Don't hide the spies!" The apostles were ordered, "Don't preach in the name of Jesus!" If they had obeyed those commands, they would have sinned.

Sin can take two forms: sins of **commission** and sins of **omission.** If Daniel, Rahab, and the apostles had failed to do their respective deeds, they would have been guilty of the sin of omission. James made this truth quite clear when he said, "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Should a man or woman ever break the law? If that law requires they disobey God, yes. The question, however, should really be framed, "When man's law and God's law conflict, whom should we obey?"

Who deserves our ultimate allegiance? I again quote Peter for the most clear and concise answer to the question: **We must obey God rather than men!**