

# America at the Crossroads of History

Dear Friends,

I write to you today with contrasting and conflicting emotions. We have just seen the inauguration of the nation's first black President, and many of us, even those who didn't vote for him, are celebrating that historic moment. Given the scourge of slavery and the suffering of African Americans through most of the past 400 years, our ancestors would never have believed that a black man would someday be elected to the most powerful and influential position on earth. That is, indeed, a political achievement that is unprecedented in the history of this great nation. I congratulate President Barack Obama on his victory and his inauguration. Shirley and I are praying for him, the First Lady, and their children.

At the same time, I am deeply saddened and profoundly troubled by many of the policies and positions that the new president has pledged to support. He has taken dead-aim at the institution of the family and the moral principles on which it is based. This is the way Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, described those policies on his Web site the day after the inauguration<sup>1</sup>:

Americans watched on television as President Bush's jumbo jet soared out of sight yesterday—and with him, a long record of protecting the unborn. Although the Obama administration is a little over 24 hours old, the new President has already set to work undoing years of pro-life and pro-family policy.

Minutes after Obama took the oath of office, the transfer of power was made complete on the White House website. The page, once home to a host of family values, now welcomes an extreme collection of anti-life, anti-woman, and anti-family agendas. Under the caption "civil rights," Obama pledges to fight for nationwide civil unions [for homosexual partners], repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act, homosexual adoption, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, expanded "hate crimes," and over 1,100 costly same-sex benefits. He promises to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" [in the military] as well as block a federal amendment to preserve marriage. In exchange for the support of groups like Planned Parenthood, the abortion business is also due for a rich payoff from the 44th president, including his support of abortion-on-demand, more funding for "family planning" programs, embryonic stem cell experiments, and tax-funded abortion.

Then Tony addressed the pro-life rally that occurred in Washington, D.C., on the 36th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*.

The media consider a dozen war protesters newsworthy, but why not 200,000 pro-life witnesses? As those of you who have visited Washington, D.C. on January 22 know, the tradition of the press ignoring America's biggest pro-life event is almost as old as the March itself. Over the years, the scant coverage hasn't deterred us. Instead, we have banded together to find new ways around it.

This city may have changed overnight, but our values are enduring. We will continue to advance faith, family, and freedom in the next four years.

We knew that President-elect Barack Obama would assault the sanctity of human life and the institution of marriage. Indeed, he promised at one point to make passage of the so-called "Freedom of Choice Act" his first priority, which would nullify more than 200 laws designed to regulate and limit abortion.<sup>2</sup> As disturbing as this is, we are shocked by how quickly the anti-family policies are being put into place. Three days after taking office, the new President struck down the Mexico City policy, which prohibited U.S. taxpayers' money from being used to support abortions around the world.<sup>3</sup> Millions more babies will die as a result of this executive order. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) had sought to earmark huge increases in funding for Planned Parenthood and other pro-abortion organizations.<sup>4</sup> She said these taxpayer funded allocations would serve as a "stimulus to the economy." She is actually asserting that one way to grow the economy is to kill more babies in the womb and help prevent more of them from being conceived. Fortunately, that language was stripped from the "economic stimulus" package, but such efforts will continue.

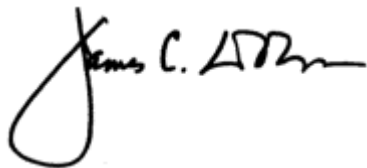
We at Focus on the Family® and Focus on the Family Action™ will do our best to defend the values and principles that have characterized this ministry from the beginning. Though our "army" may be smaller, certainly in Congress and in the state houses of government, we will continue the struggle. One of my favorite historical personalities was British Prime Minister during World War II, Winston Churchill. He said during the darkest hour when his country was facing defeat and enslavement, "Never give in—never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."<sup>5</sup>

I promise you that we will stay true to that charge. We will lose neither heart nor nerve. With your prayers and support, we will fight for righteousness for as long as we have strength to resist. I also urge you not to become discouraged, either. Joshua said four times before invading and conquering the Promised Land, "Be strong and courageous." God is still in control, and if He is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31) Amen!

Before closing, I want to thank those of you who sacrificed at the end of the year to help both organizations financially. This has been a challenging few months for thousands of nonprofit ministries, and your generosity has kept us afloat. As you know, we have pared down our staff by more than 200 people as stewardship required, and it looks like we will stay within our smaller budget. God has been wonderfully gracious to give us loving and caring friends who have stood with us through these past 32 years, in times of plenty and in periods of need. The task of both these organizations, now, is to continue to defend the voiceless little human beings who desperately need passionate advocates. We will also fight for the traditional family, recognizing that the Creator ordained it in the Garden of Eden. How can we now stand on the sidelines as it is thrown on the ash heap of history? We will stay on the front line, with God's help.

We appreciate your partnership and your prayers more than I can express. Blessings to you and your family in the name of Jesus Christ. We'll converse again in March.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James C. Dobson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

James C. Dobson, Ph.D.  
Founder and Chairman

P.S. As you may know, Shirley and The National Day of Prayer Task Force, along with President George W. Bush and two governors, are being sued for praying publicly on the National Day of

Prayer. The litigants represent the Freedom From Religion Foundation, made up of atheists, agnostics and free thinkers. It is apparent that Christians who dare to express their faith in the public square will increasingly pay a price for doing so. How different was the world when President Harry Truman addressed the American people from the lawn of the White House on the occasion of the lighting of the National Community Christmas Tree:

"Through Jesus Christ the world will yet be a better and a fairer place. This faith sustains us today as it has sustained mankind for centuries past. This is why the Christmas story, with the bright stars shining and the angels singing, moves us to wonder and stirs our hearts to praise. Now, my fellow countrymen, I wish for all of you a Christmas filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and many years of future happiness with the peace of God reigning upon this earth."

December 24, 1952

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Now I must share something that I believe you will want to read. It is the text of a powerful speech given at Georgetown University the day after the inauguration by my long-time friend, Professor Robert P. George. Professor George is McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and Director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University. He is a member of the President's Council on Bioethics and previously served on the United States Commission on Civil Rights. He also sits on the editorial board of Public Discourse. This is Professor George's address, speaking on behalf of millions who share our convictions:

### **Our Struggle for the Soul of our Nation**

Thirty-six years ago tomorrow, the Supreme Court of the United States handed down its infamous decision in *Roe v. Wade* and its companion case *Doe v. Bolton*. In the name of a generalized "right to privacy" allegedly implicit in the Due Process Clause of the constitution's Fourteenth Amendment, seven justices created a license to kill the unborn.

These men probably had no idea that they were unleashing a struggle for the soul of the nation. Five had been appointed by Republican presidents—two by Eisenhower, three by Nixon. Four of these five were regarded as "conservative," "law and order" judges: Warren E. Burger, Potter Stewart, Lewis F. Powell, and Harry Blackmun. All no doubt believed that legal abortion was a humane and enlightened policy, one that would ease the burdens of many women and girls and relieve the enormous cost to society of a high birth rate among indigent (often unmarried) women. They seemed blithely to assume that abortion would be easily integrated into the fabric of American social and political life.

They were wrong on all counts.

They were wrong about the Constitution. As William H. Rehnquist and Byron White, the two dissenting justices in the case, pointed out, it is absurd to claim that a right to feticide follows from the constitutional injunction that "no state shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law." If the Constitution can be read to imply anything about abortion, it is that unborn human beings are, like everyone else, entitled to "the equal protection of the laws." At a minimum, *Roe* and *Doe* were

an outrageous usurpation of the constitutional authority of the people of the United States to shape law and policy through the institutions of representative government.

The *Roe* justices were also wrong to imagine that legal abortion would prove to be enlightened or in the slightest respect humane. On the contrary, the policy imposed by the Court has proven to be an unmitigated disaster. In the thirty-six years since *Roe* and *Doe*, abortion has taken the lives of more than fifty million unborn victims—each a distinct, unique, precious human being. It has done immeasurable moral, psychological, and sometimes physical harm to women who are so very often, and in so many respects, truly abortion's "secondary victims." It has corrupted physicians and nurses by turning healers into killers. It has undermined the moral authority of the law by its injustice. It has abetted irresponsible—even predatory—male sexual behavior. Far from reducing the rate of out-of-wedlock births, particularly to poor women, illegitimacy has skyrocketed in the age of abortion. Now the abortion license has metastasized into widespread elite support for deadly embryo experimentation and even, in my home state of New Jersey, to the express legalization of the horrific and grisly practice of fetal farming—the creation of human beings by cloning or other processes for the purpose of harvesting their tissues and organs at any point up to birth for experimentation and transplantation.

The justices were wrong, moreover, to suppose that America, as a nation, would learn to live with the abortion license. A notable effect of the Court's rulings was to energize the grassroots pro-life movement that had come into being a few years earlier to resist legislative efforts to liberalize state abortion laws. In the beginning, the movement and its leadership were largely Catholic. The mainline Protestant churches, if they concerned themselves with the issue at all, positioned themselves on the pro-abortion side. At a decisive moment, however, the Evangelical community became fully activated in the cause. Today, a common commitment to defending the unborn is at the heart of an unprecedented Catholic-Evangelical alliance that extends beyond abortion to issues of sexuality and marriage, education, welfare, crime and prison policy, international human rights, and the place of religion in American public life. Great Evangelical leaders such as James Dobson and Charles Colson stand arm in arm with their Catholic brothers and sisters in defending the right to life of every human being, irrespective not only of race, sex, and ethnicity, but also of age, size, stage of development, and condition of dependency. It is this alliance that stands in the gap today in the fight against cloning and embryo-destructive biomedical research.

Abortion and embryo-destructive research are at the heart of the divide between the nation's major political parties. When *Roe* and *Doe* were decided, many Democratic Party politicians—and even some notable liberals—were outspokenly pro-life. Teddy Kennedy, Jesse Jackson, Dick Gephardt, and Al Gore, for example, publicly proclaimed their commitment to defending the unborn against the violence of abortion. Soon, however, the number of pro-life Democrats began to dwindle and pro-life liberals became an endangered species. Some, including Kennedy, Jackson, Gephardt, and Gore, defected to the pro-abortion camp, evidently for political reasons. People of firmer conviction found themselves in many cases carried by the force of conscience out of the Democratic Party and into the Republican fold.

Although pro-abortion Republicans are today more common than pro-life Democrats, and carry much more influence within their party, the Republican Party has been officially pro-life since Ronald Reagan won the presidential nomination in 1980. "Pro-

choice" Republican presidential aspirants, such as California Governor Pete Wilson in 1992, Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter in 1996, and former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani have failed miserably, and the pro-life majority in the Party has beaten back attempts to nominate individuals who are not clearly pro-life for the Vice Presidency. John McCain clearly wanted to select renegade Democrat Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman as his running mate in 2008, but was prevented from doing so for one reason and one reason only: Lieberman's pro-abortion record made him unacceptable to the base of the Republican Party.

In recent years, pro-abortion Republicans have not even ventured token efforts to remove the strong and unequivocal pro-life plank in the Party's platform.

The Republican Party's support for the unborn has brought into its ranks many disaffected rank-and-file Democrats, including a large number of Catholics and Evangelicals. I am one. Indeed, it overstates the matter only a bit to say that, as a result of the conflict of worldviews that began with abortion, the Republicans have become the party of the religiously engaged, while the Democrats have become the party of liberal secularists. Barack Obama is trying to win over religiously serious Catholics and Evangelicals, without altering in the slightest his support for abortion, including late-term and partial-birth abortions, the funding of abortion and embryo-destructive research with taxpayer dollars, the elimination of informed consent and parental notification laws, and the revocation of conscience and religious liberty protections for pro-life doctors and other healthcare workers and pharmacists. He will ultimately fail. We must see to it that he fails.

In this project, Obama is being served and abetted by a small number of Catholic and Evangelical intellectuals and activists who have been peddling the claim that Obama, despite his pro-abortion extremism, is effectively pro-life because of his allegedly enlightened economic and social policies will reduce the number of abortions. This is delusional. The truth is that Barack Obama is the most extreme pro-abortion candidate ever to serve in the United States Senate or seek the office of President of the United States. The revocation of the Hyde Amendment, the Mexico City Policy, funding limitations on embryo-destructive research, informed consent laws, parental notification statutes—all of which Obama has promised to his pro-abortion base—will dramatically increase the number of abortions, and will do so for reasons that have been articulated by the abortion lobby itself. It is the pro-abortion side that tells us that the Hyde Amendment alone has resulted in 300,000 fewer abortions each year than would otherwise be performed—and that is why they so desperately want it to be repealed. Yet the putatively pro-life Obama apologists claim that the man who pledges to repeal it is going to reduce the number of abortions. Let me say it again: this is delusional.

One great disappointment to the pro-life cause over the first three decades of the era of *Roe v. Wade* was the failure of Republican presidents from Nixon through George H.W. Bush to secure Supreme Court appointments for jurists who would reverse *Roe*. Of the six justices appointed by Republicans between 1973 and the retirement of Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist in 2004, only two—Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas—opposed *Roe*.

However, George W. Bush's two appointees, John Roberts and Samuel Alito, give every indication of being true constitutionalist judges. They have voted to uphold the

federal ban on partial-birth abortions, and I am hopeful that they will in due course vote to send *Roe* to the ash heap of history alongside moral and constitutional travesties such as *Dred Scott v. Sandford* and *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Still, at least one more pro-abortion justice must be replaced if the regime of judicially imposed abortion-on-demand is to be dismantled. At best, the vote on the Supreme Court today is 5 to 4 in the wrong direction. Obviously, no Obama nominee will support overturning *Roe*, and this may be the greatest tragedy of the 2008 election. But let us not forget that three of the four constitutionalists on the Court—Justices Thomas, Roberts, and Alito—are its youngest members; and the fourth, Justice Scalia, at age seventy-two is far from elderly by Supreme Court standards and he remains, thank God, physically vigorous and mentally sharp. I have no doubt that Obama will have one or two vacancies to fill in the next four years, but there is a very good chance that the seats that will be vacated are seats already held by pro-abortion justices. What is likely to happen, then, is that the status quo will hold. So let us even now look forward to the 2012 election which will almost certainly be the decisive one when it comes to the Supreme Court and the future of *Roe v. Wade*.

Of course, from the pro-life vantage point, success on the judicial front is only the prelude to the larger political struggle over abortion. If *Roe* is reversed, the result will be to return the matter to the domain of ordinary democratic deliberation for resolution by the state legislatures or the Congress. The burden will then be on the pro-life movement to win the struggle for the soul of the nation. We must, with God's help, persuade our fellow citizens to fulfill the promise of the Declaration of Independence by bringing the unborn fully within the protection of our laws.

On this score, we have a marvelous model in the great anti-slavery crusader William Wilberforce. When he began his work against the monstrous evil of chattel slavery, the odds appeared to be long against abolition. He was attacked by partisans of the slave power as a zealot, a religious fanatic and, most perversely, an enemy of freedom. He was, they said, imposing his religious values on others. If he didn't like slavery, well, no one was forcing him to own slaves. He should mind his own business and stay out of other people's affairs. Less vitriolic critics said that he was unrealistic. He was a dreamer. He was making impossible demands. Does any of this sound familiar?

Wilberforce refused to be intimidated. He would allow nothing to deter him from his mission of Christian charity to free the slaves and end the practice of slavery. He was undaunted by the ridicule often heaped upon him.

A more recent hero, Mother Teresa of Calcutta reminded us during her final visit to the United States that prayer is the most powerful weapon in the pro-life arsenal. Wilberforce would certainly agree. We must ask God's forgiveness for our great national sin of abandoning the unborn to the crime of abortion and implore His guidance and assistance in recalling the nation to its founding ideals of liberty and justice for all. While not all pro-life citizens are in a position to be activists or exercise leadership in the social and political spheres, all are able to participate in the prayer effort, and no one's prayers are superfluous.

In addition to prayer and our political efforts, there is the obligation to reach out to pregnant women who are in need or who are subject for other reasons to pro-abortion pressures. The partisans of abortion, with the help of an overwhelmingly sympathetic and deeply biased news media, have portrayed people who oppose the killing of the

unborn, whether by abortion or in embryo-destructive research, as heartless moralizers bent on oppressing women and impeding the progress of science. Nothing could be further from the truth. For decades, pro-life people—mostly women—have devoted themselves, often at great personal cost and in the face of many obstacles, to assisting their pregnant sisters in need. They have recognized that a truly just and humane understanding is one that recognizes the common dignity and mutual interests of mother and child. Ordinary pro-life individuals and families have worked and sacrificed to provide for the material, emotional, and spiritual needs of pregnant women in need—many of whom, it must be noted, are driven to contemplate abortion under pressure from boyfriends, husbands, family, and friends. Even women who have succumbed to the temptation to destroy their unborn children are not condemned or abandoned by the pro-life movement. Rather, they are offered forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing—no strings attached. At the same time, it is pro-life Americans who are leading the charge for ethical and therapeutically useful forms of stem cell research—research that does not compromise biomedical science by killing in the cause of healing.

And those of us who are Christians must, in obedience to the command of Christ himself, love our enemies. We must pray for those who have brought the abortion license upon our nation and for those who today protect and sustain it. We must also pray for those who perform and profit from the taking of human life. Our love for them must be godly and ungrudging. We must never give up on its power to transform.

Will we achieve our goal of establishing justice for the unborn? Will abortion finally go the way of slavery? Dare we hope that the killing of the unborn can be made not only unlawful but for most people unthinkable?

Of course, it is not given to us to know just how much we will, in the end, be able to achieve. Despite the triumph of the pro-abortion party in the recent elections, there is no good reason to believe that our efforts in the domain of law and policy are futile or are doomed to fail. Yet we have no guarantee of their success. As the great Fr. Richard John Neuhaus so often said: for us, there is only the trying. The rest is God's business, not ours. Yet we are given to know that in trying, we fulfill God's commands, and build up His kingdom.

And we know this: our prayers, political and educational efforts, and outreach to pregnant women in need have, by God's mercy, already saved countless precious lives. We must not lose sight of this fact in our grief at the loss of so many others due to the injustice of our laws and the coldness of so many hearts toward abortion's tiny victims.

Reflecting on the carnage of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln in his Second Inaugural Address concluded that "the great scourge of war" had been brought upon both North and South as punishment for the national sin of slavery. Perhaps God saw fit to let the nation survive despite that sin because of the sincere, selfless, and prayerful efforts of the enemies of slavery to end that monstrous evil.

Thanks be to God, the conflict over abortion has not produced, and will not produce, a civil war. Still, we must not forget that we are a people under judgment. We are called to account for the national sin of abortion. Like Thomas Jefferson reflecting on the evil of slavery—an evil in which he was personally complicit—we must "tremble for our

country when we consider that God is just." Like Abraham Lincoln, whom President Obama invokes but does not emulate, we must pray that God, in His mercy, will not abandon us, but will rather restore us to the true and lofty moral ideals of our founding. Even at this dark hour for our movement, let us here highly resolve to hasten the day when this nation, under God, will be truly and fully and finally dedicated to the proposition that all are created equal.

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Professor George's powerful message conveys perfectly what I am feeling in response to President Obama's unprecedented assault on the sanctity of life. I know my heaviness of heart is shared by many of you people at this particular time. Let's continue in prayer for our great nation and for the institution of the family and the sanctity of human life.

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> [frc.org/get.cfm?i=WU09A11](http://frc.org/get.cfm?i=WU09A11) [January 28, 2009].

<sup>2</sup> [youtube.com/watch?v=pf0XIRZSt8](http://youtube.com/watch?v=pf0XIRZSt8) [January 28, 2009].

<sup>3</sup> [abcnews.go.com/Politics/International/story?id=6716958&page=1](http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/International/story?id=6716958&page=1) [January 28, 2009].

<sup>4</sup> [usnews.com/blogs/capital-commerce/2009/01/26/pelosi-contraception-is-good-for-the-economy.html](http://usnews.com/blogs/capital-commerce/2009/01/26/pelosi-contraception-is-good-for-the-economy.html) [January 28, 2009].

<sup>5</sup> [winstonchurchill.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=423](http://winstonchurchill.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=423) [January 28, 2009].