

Euthanasia in Florida, Sanctity in Rome (abbreviated version)

Everybody knows about Terri Schiavo, the severely brain-damaged 41-year-old Florida woman who has been kept alive, following a heart failure 15 years ago, through a feeding tube. The feeding tube was recently disconnected at the insistence of her husband Michael who had maintained that Terri would not want to be kept alive artificially any longer, since she is in a persistent vegetative state. The courts agreed.

Yet, how is it that someone in a supposedly vegetative state, would still be able to communicate as Terri has so many times done to the amazement and delight of people around here? How is it that others do not see Terri's gestures and sounds as direct responses to her family's love and affection? How is it that her cries and groaning were ignored when she was told that her feeding tube would be disconnected?

There are two means of survival; ordinary and extraordinary. Ordinary means of survival include food, water, air, shelter etc. Extraordinary means of survival include any treatment, medication, procedure and operation that are gravely burdensome for the patient to bear or otherwise require heroic virtue. It is morally wrong to deny anyone food and water, if it can be administered. By withholding ordinary means of survival, that is food, Terri is not being treated as the living, breathing human person she is. Rather, her basic civil rights are being tragically trampled upon.

Life is sacred from the moment of conception until natural death. All life! Not only lives which are young and healthy. No matter what the condition of life, depriving someone of the chance to continue to live is immoral. Yet, right in the midst of this painful drama in Florida, Pope John Paul II, an ever loving example of strength, courage and faith, is fighting a very similar battle. Just today news has reached us that he, too, needs a feeding tube. As a witness to suffering, Pope John Paul II has shown the world that every human life has immeasurable value. Only the One who gave us life has the power to take that life away, and as Catholics we must do all we can to ensure that people like Terri can keep their dignity and their life until He decides that our earthly life should end.

Cristy Ironside

(For full article see website www.veyopeterboro.org and next issue of Catholic Herald)

¹<http://www.all.org/issues/eol01.htm>

² <http://forums.catholic.com/showthread.php?t=43448>

³ http://www.michnews.com/artman/publish/article_7078.shtml

⁴ http://wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=43383

⁵ <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/showarchive.php?date=2005-03-03>