



**STATEMENT OF  
ARCHBISHOP WILTON D. GREGORY  
REGARDING THE DEATH OF TERRI SCHIAVO**

In his 1995 encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, “On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life,” Pope John Paul II wrote that it is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and develop.” He said: “A society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or fragile.”

One of the most fundamental and inherent human rights is the right to life, a right that must be protected above all others. Because it is an inherent right, it is not granted by and does not belong to society; or the courts, or the legislature. To deny a handicapped individual, who is unable to speak for herself, food and water, the very necessities of life, and allow her to starve to death, shows the moral confusion and tragedy of the culture of death of which our Holy Father speaks.

The removal of her feeding tube resulted in Terri’s death. This has ramifications for all Americans, especially those who are the most vulnerable among us, and puts our entire society further along the slippery slope of relativism.

Ms. Schiavo’s case is not simply an issue of one person’s life or death. It is symptomatic of a broader culture of death, rather than culture of life, that has crept into our society, evidenced by the evil of abortion and so-called “right to die” legislation.

Christ’s way is that of love, service, trust and hope in the Lord. It is based on the belief that there is a God, a God who loves us and who forms the basis for all moral values. Once that absolute is lost, all values become relative. Once values become relative they are at the mercy of the individual, or societal, whim. Ms. Schiavo’s death was not in vain if it serves to re-awaken Americans to this basic truth. May her soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in the peace and mercy of God, who loves all His children.

**-30-**

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