Dear friends,

Every new year finds many of us making “New Year’s Resolutions”—promising that we will take a certain action to become a better person or to change something about the way we live so as to be healthier and holier. Even though our intentions are good in making these resolutions, we know how powerful the temptation is to break those resolutions! Our world has a way of discouraging us from honoring our commitments and promises.

Such is the case with the pro-life movement. There are many people of good faith who want to be more active when it comes to their involvement in the pro-life movement. Their intentions are good. They know they should embrace a pro-life stance in every way. But, temptation is strong in this regard and they may find themselves backing off of their commitment—choosing to “go with the flow” or to “live and let live.” Often times, people of faith feel pressured to be politically correct by not being more vocal in their support of the dignity of life and the many issues it encompasses.

The first thing we should remember is that good intentions are not enough. Our New Year’s Resolutions and promises are empty gestures without any real commitment to follow through. The lives of many people hang in the balance and we need tangible actions to push back the tide of abortion, euthanasia, and other affronts to human dignity. This means being courageous enough to express your faith on such matters and not being afraid of offending popular sentiments. It means standing shoulder-to-shoulder with those who are offering a visible sign of their support for human life.

In this New Year, you are invited (actually, challenged) to follow through in some way for your support of human life. Imagine how different our own society would be if every person of good faith stepped forward in a real way to defend life. May this be our goal in the new year!

A blessed 2016 to all!

Msgr. Perry Kavookjian
— St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish

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**OneLife LA event set to mark second year**

Witness to Life will be among the local life advocates who will demonstrate at the second annual OneLifeLA, which is set for Saturday, Jan. 23, 2016, beginning at noon in downtown Los Angeles.

Featured speakers include Nick Vujicic and Patricia Heaton. You are invited to join thousands in declaring a commitment to valuing and protecting all human life, particularly the most vulnerable in our community.

For more information, visit onelifela.org.

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**Upcoming Events**

**Jan. 23 — OneLife LA and Walk for Life West Coast** (see article above for details about OneLife LA or visit walkforlifewc.com for more information about the Walk for Life West Coast event in San Francisco).

**Jan. 28 — Candlelight Vigil**,
7-8 p.m., 2633 16th St. (more details on page 2).

**Feb. 2 — Bakersfield Pregnancy Center Bene-
fit Banquet**, Olive Knolls Church of the Nazarene (see article on page 2 for more info).

**Feb. 5 — “Faustina” production**, 7 p.m., St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish (details on back).

**Feb. 10-March 20 — 40 Days for Life**, 25th and H streets (see page 2 for details).

**Feb. 12 — Fish Fry for Life**, 4-8 p.m. at St. Francis of Assisi Parish (details on page 2). Receive periodic emails about pro-life events by joining our ministry at witnesstolife.org.
Bakersfield parish opens Year of Mercy door at shrine

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish inaugurated the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which was proclaimed by Pope Francis as a dedication to the Divine Mercy, with a Mass on Dec. 13 at its Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Co-patroness of the Unborn, at 4600 E. Brundage Lane.

The Mass was followed by the Divine Mercy Chaplet and 24 hours of confessions. The event also marked the opening of the Privileged Mercy Door, which some cathedrals and designated shrines have, at the front of the shrine's pavilion.

A brochure printed by the parish explains the Door of Mercy’s purpose: “[I]t reflects the mystery of God, rich in compassion. As we walk through the door, we recognize that Christ is the only way to salvation. Through the sacrament of reconciliation, we turn to our Lord with a sincere heart knowing that our Father will pardon our sins. Throughout the ages, God has always shown us His mercy. His grace overflows with the richness of His love for us. God has given us a great gift, the ability of transformation of the heart, which allows us to confess our sins.

When our sins are forgiven, we are able to feel the Lord’s hand upon us, comforting us, and allowing us the strength needed to go out and live our life proclaiming the goodness of the Lord. In this “Year of Mercy,” we are called as disciples of the Lord to go out and gather all of the lost sheep. ... We must proclaim the love of God and the mercy of His heart.”

The shrine grounds will be open from 2 to 7 p.m. daily through Dec. 11, 2016, while a bilingual Mass will be celebrated at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays through Nov. 15, 2016.

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus: Defender of the unborn

Editor’s note: Witness to Life has chosen St. Gianna Beretta Molla, who was featured in its fall newsletter, and the Rev. Richard John Neuhaus as its co-patrons.

Fr. Richard, who died in January 2009, was a noted Lutheran pastor prior to his entry into the Catholic faith in 1990. The Catholic Church was, he said simply, “the Word of God properly ordered through time.”

Pastors preach. So did he — compellingly through his writings. He was the founder and editor-in-chief of First Things, a monthly journal of Religion and Public Life that attracts the best minds from the worlds of Catholicism, Protestantism and Judaism. Together with Chuck Colson, he founded Catholics and Evangelicals Together, the most widespread inter-faith conversation of our time.

A confidant of two presidents and two popes, he was a passionate advocate of human dignity — from civil rights to the pro-life movement, whose objective was, as he phrased it, to have “every child welcomed in life and protected in law.”

We beg his intercession and pray for his eventual canonization.

Witness to Life to host ‘Faustina’

St. Luke Productions will present “Faustina: Messenger of Divine Mercy” on Friday evening, Feb. 5, at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish. Tickets at $10 per person or $20 per family will go on sale Jan. 9-10 and continue to be sold during the remaining weekends in January. More information about the production is available online at stlukeproductions.com/drama/faustina. Money raised from the event will benefit Witness to Life’s ministry.

Announcements

40 Days for Life: Bakersfield prayer warriors are invited to join the 40 Days for Life fall campaign, which starts on Feb. 10 and continues through March 20.

The Family Planning Associates abortion clinic at 25th and H Streets will be the focus of the round-the-clock effort to save babies through prayer, vigils and outreach. To sign up for one-hour vigil shifts, please call 323-2229 or visit 40days.glorifyJesus.com.

Candlelight vigil and Fish Fry for Life: To pray for and honor the millions of lives lost to abortion, RTLKC will host its fourth annual Remembering Roe Candlelight Prayer Vigil from 7 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 28 at 2633 16th St., on the street adjacent to Planned Parenthood.

This year, the vigil will be held primarily in Spanish, but all are welcome and encouraged to attend this faith-filled hour of ecumenical prayer. There is no cost to attend. Question? Call 864-7508.

Another event to be hosted by the RTLKC is the Fish Fry for Life, set for Friday, Feb. 12, 2016, from 4 to 8 p.m. in the Parish Hall of St. Francis Church, 900 H St.

Tickets are $15 and go on sale Jan. 15. For information on purchasing the tickets or to sponsor the event, visit rtlkc.org or call 864-7508.

Benefit banquet: Mark your calendars now for the Bakersfield Pregnancy Center’s annual Benefit Banquet, Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2016, at Olive Knolls Church of the Nazarene.

Tickets are free and will be available in January.

Guest speaker will be Angie Wood, Fleet Development Director of ICU Mobile. The BPC’s new mobile ultrasound unit, dubbed “Esther” by BPC staff, will be on hand for guided tours.

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