ALASKA RIGHT TO LIFE BECOMES INTRUSIVE

For the past two years, a non-Catholic pro-life group, Alaska Right to Life, has become increasingly critical of Providence Alaska Medical Center, a Catholic hospital that is under the tutelage of Anchorage Archbishop Roger Schwietz; it has also become quite critical of the archbishop. Alaska Right to Life contends that Providence permits abortions, something the hospital and the archbishop deny.

In 2003, when Archbishop Schwietz was told by Alaska Right to Life that a procedure called early induction of labor was being performed at Providence, and that it was a form of abortion, he immediately declared a halt to it. After he concluded that Catholic ethical principles were not being compromised, he lifted the moratorium. He then asked officials at Providence to work with the National Catholic Bioethics Center to make sure that its guidelines were air tight. The Catholic community was satisfied, but it did nothing to satisfy Alaska Right to Life.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"It is patently untrue, and grossly unfair, to say that Providence Alaska Medical Center performs abortions and that Archbishop Roger Schwietz approves of them. To his credit, Archbishop Schwietz sought the counsel of Dr. John Haas, one of the nation's leading Catholic bioethicists; he is a person I know and trust. Dr. Haas helped the hospital revise its guidelines, which are constantly being updated, so that there would never be any loopholes.

"Alaska Right to Life stands for a noble cause, but its intrusive manner—lecturing the Catholic community on what the

Catholic Catechism says—has turned off the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Daughters of America. Add the Catholic League to this list. The final straw for us was the April edition of its newsletter wherein it asked its members to appeal to the Vatican to intervene in this issue. This crosses the line—a secular group like Alaska Right to Life ought to learn to mind its own business. Its reputation as a meddler does not help its cause."