

# DOLORES GRIER—CHAMPION OF THE UNBORN

William A. Donohue

On February 22, we lost a good one. Dolores Grier was one of the most committed Catholics I ever met, and one of the nation's strongest defenders of the rights of the unborn. She was especially outraged over the high number of African American abortions, as well as those who peddled the message that abortion was good for blacks.

When I first met her in 1994, Dolores told me why she wanted to be a part of the Catholic League. When she was around 17, she went for a job interview, and, after leaving the room somewhat despondent, she told the secretary that she did not get the job. The woman already knew why. "They didn't want you," the secretary said. Dolores replied, "Because I'm black?" "No," she said, "because you're Catholic."

This was Dolores' first experience with anti-Catholicism, a bigotry she fought as hard as racism. Naturally, when I assembled an all-star board of advisors, she was on it. At that time, she was vice chancellor of the Archdiocese of New York, the first black woman in the nation to hold that job.

Dolores had a commanding presence. She was a big woman with a deep voice. She wore a huge hat and a large blue emblem of Our Blessed Mother on her dress. While she was friendly and loved to joke around, she could be tough when the occasion called for it. I will never forget what happened when I asked her to help me out dealing with a reporter.

A woman reporter for a local TV station showed up at the Catholic League (which at that time was right next door to Cardinal John O'Connor's office) asking if she could interview some woman who could defend the Church's teachings on women. I

asked for the Vicar of Religious to come to my office. The nun, in full habit, said, "Oh, I don't think I can do that."

Stunned, I asked a young staffer to find someone in the building (of the archdiocese) who could do so. Someone referenced Dolores, and in she came, swaying as she often did. She looked at the reporter and said, "I understand you're looking for a woman to defend the Catholic Church's teachings on women." When the interview was over, the reporter came out, looked at me and said, "Wow."

Dolores could wow anyone. She certainly wowed many a Catholic audience, never more than when she talked about abortion.

It was Rev. Jesse Jackson who first inspired her to stand up for the rights of the unborn. That was in the 1970s, before Jackson switched positions. Back then he frequently spoke about abortion as "black genocide," something I remember vividly: I discussed his stance with my elementary students in Spanish Harlem.

It was for personal reasons that Jackson initially took abortion seriously. His 16-year-old mother contemplated aborting him (on the advice of her doctor) after getting pregnant by a man twice her age, but decided against it after her mother intervened.

What made Jackson jump ship and become pro-abortion? His decision to run for president in 1984 on the Democratic ticket. By that time, radical feminists had taken over the Party.

But Dolores never wavered, and indeed was so impassioned about this issue that she founded the Association of Black Catholics Against Abortion. She also served on the board of the African American Society Against Abortion. Importantly, she understood the historic role that Planned Parenthood has played in pushing the abortion agenda on blacks.

It was in 1939 that Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger

launched the "Negro Project." The goal of this initiative was to convince black women to take birth control, the express purpose of which was to limit the black population, or the "weeds," as some called them.

Others at Planned Parenthood used stronger language. Dr. Dorothy Ferebee, a black physician who worked at the racist organization, spoke about the need to rid society of "human waste," calling their efforts a "public health measure to Negroes."

Sanger was just as blunt; she was also coy. She wanted to enlist black ministers to promote the idea that contraception was in the best interest of blacks. But she warned her colleagues to proceed cautiously. "We do not want word to get out that we want to exterminate the Negro population and the minister is the man who can straighten out the idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members."

To this day, abortion is the polite way that elites use to rid our society of the "urban problem." Blacks are roughly 12-13 percent of the population, but they make up almost a third of all abortions. In an excellent column on how the Democratic Party has failed Catholics (he also noted Dolores' yeoman work), Cardinal Timothy Dolan recently noted there were more black babies aborted in New York City in 2013 than were born there.

Dolores Grier was a great role model for whites as well as blacks, for men as well as women, and for non-Catholics as well as Catholics. Her convictions and her courage are what made her special.