



Human Life International's
Mission Report
Mission Report No. 325 January 2012

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS FOR TRUTH AND LIFE



Pictured left to right at the HLI-sponsored *International Congress for Truth and Life*: HLI President, Fr. Shenan Boquet; HLI Regional Coordinator for Portuguese-Speaking Nations, Raymond de Souza; and Director of HLI's Spanish language outreach to priests and seminarians, Fr. Juan Carlos Chavez.

Dear HLI friends and supporters,

May the peace of Christ be with you and your family. I pray that you enjoyed a blessed Christmas season and that this New Year will be filled with blessings for you and all you love.

Recently, I embarked on my first international trip as HLI's president to São Paulo, Brazil, for the second *International Congress for Truth and Life*, sponsored by Human Life International. I was very blessed to be able to visit Latin America to promote the dignity of the human person and traditional marriage. Latin America's predominantly pro-life culture has come under great attack in the past months. Many anti-life organizations such as Amnesty International, Center for Reproductive Rights and UN Women have made it a high priority to legalize abortion in this region.

With God's grace, the fruits of the Congress will help to protect the Latin American people.

The *International Congress for Truth and Life* was a time for the pro-life leaders of Latin America to come together and work to protect the dignity of human life, which is constantly threatened in this area of the world. Please let me tell you about our Congress and my first overseas experience representing HLI.

FIRST INTERNATIONAL TRIP WITH HLI

I was very excited to go to Brazil, although the days leading up to the conference were very busy. I arrived to my new home at HLI headquarters in Front Royal, VA on October 31 and left again on November 2 for Brazil. The Lord did not give me much time to unpack, but it was such a blessing to be able to walk right into the work that I would be doing with Human Life International. In addition to some important Latin American pro-life leaders, I met several key international HLI personnel for the first time: Mario Rojas, HLI Regional Coordinator for Latin America; Raymond de Souza, HLI Regional Coordinator for Portuguese-Speaking Nations; and Father Juan Carlos Chavez, director of HLI's Spanish language outreach to priests and seminarians, REDESSIVIDA.

The Congress was held at the Benedictine Monastery of São Bento, where Pope Benedict stayed during his visit in 2007. **The goal of this conference was to educate and inform all of those present not only about what the Culture of Life has to offer, but also explain the deceptions so prevalent in the Culture of Death.** I saw many examples of how the anti-life agenda has crept into the city of São Paulo, especially in the promotion of homosexuality in the media.

This conference explored ways to promote Truth, especially as it concerns God’s teachings on human dignity as a whole and the Gospel of Life. While many of the attendees were already pro-life, the conference was designed to educate leaders on how to confront the challenges they face from outside organizations that influence their governments on life-issues.

THE BULK OF THE CONFERENCE

Conferences like these are a key component in the work of HLI, as they are designed to have a positive “domino effect.” The leaders who participate in them are then able to return home and educate more people in their countries, and those people then go on to educate even more people. **These conferences are a tremendous tool for educating the world on the Culture of Life, and their effect spreads far beyond the initial attendees.**

This particular conference ran four days long: the first two days were for clergy, and the second two days were for laity. Both clergy and laity heard the same topics, but they were presented in different ways to help each group overcome the unique and different challenges they face. Each talk ended with a question and answer session. Mario Rojas, Father Juan Chavez, Raymond de Souza and I represented HLI. Each of us gave talks



HLI representatives take the stage for the *International Congress for Truth and Life*.



on different topics, and I had the honor of both opening and closing the conference.

I opened with the global challenges faced by all regions of the world. It was a unique experience to present first to the clergy and then to the laity. When I addressed our priests, bishops and seminarians, I touched on the great responsibility they have being shepherds of their parishes to guide their people in the protection of life. I encouraged them to not only proclaim the Gospel of Life but also to teach the laity how to live out this love. **It is not just about preaching the Truth of Christ to the congregation, but also sharing with them how they can proclaim God’s Gospel of Life to others and to live it out in their own lives.** We discussed the common trials priests face in parishes - such as young couples wanting to use contraception,

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and end-of-life issues with sick family members. I also touched upon the challenges that our clergy will face from governments or even some members of the Church. I shared with them the importance of respectfully and lovingly intervening, even when it is extremely difficult or challenging.

For the laity, I took a different approach when presenting the challenges facing pro-lifers on the global front. I talked about what they could do in their everyday lives to promote a Culture of Life, especially in politics. I gave them practical advice on how to start pro-life groups and participate in sidewalk counseling. It was wonderful telling them about HLI and all of the educational materials we can provide them to use in their daily work.

At the end of the session I was asked what to do if the parish priest does not believe in the Church's teachings on life. This tricky but important question is one I am sure many in the laity have faced at some point. I answered that it is extremely important to talk to the priest first, to really understand what he believes and teaches. From there, if the priest is in error, he should be given resources that explain the true teaching of the Church. Many priests today were never properly taught what the Gospel of Life entails and need to be lovingly informed. Educating the clergy should always be done with the upmost respect and love.

Later in the conference, Mario gave a startling presentation on population control and its deadly effects on demographics. Many people do not see the ramifications that birth control and abortion have had on society. Today, many Western countries have fertility rates below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. If the trends are not reversed, these once rich and vibrant cultures will literally die out. Already, Japan and countries across Europe are experiencing "aging populations." As fewer and fewer children are born, the average age of a population increases. Then fewer working-age people are available to sustain a nation's economy and to provide for a growing number of elderly. Eventually the society will die out entirely, but generally it will first be crushed by insurmountable economic woes. Does it come as any surprise that Italy, Greece and Spain – the countries at the heart of the economic crisis in Europe – have fertility rates among the lowest in the world?

Mario did an excellent job of giving these leaders the facts so Latin America can avoid the errors that Europe is currently making. His presentation showed that there are dramatic, often-overlooked consequences to embracing the anti-life mentality imposed by wealthy Western states.

Latin American culture still embraces life – abortion is illegal

Anti-life advocates cannot afford to leave the Lord's respect and love for the dignity of human life intact anywhere. . . . That is why its proponents are not content having set their own countries on a path of self-destruction, and why they must impose their views on other cultures around the world.



Fr. Boquet and His Excellency, Msgr. Loao Carlos Petrini, listen as HLI's Regional Coordinator to Portuguese-Speaking Countries, Raymond de Souza delivers his talk.

in most countries under most circumstances and fertility rates remain above the 2.1 child replacement rate. **Unfortunately, the enemies of life are heavily targeting Latin America.** Many Western countries, the United Nations and deep-pocketed groups like International Planned Parenthood Federation and Amnesty International are doing everything they can to produce a dramatic cultural shift in Latin America. Under the guise of campaigning for “human rights” (how dangerous are our times when the greatest possible *violation* of human rights – the destruction of innocent life – is considered to be a “human right”?) these groups are issuing threats, making demands and spending billions of dollars to try to force these countries to legalize abortion.

You see, these anti-life advocates cannot afford to leave the Lord's respect and love for the dignity of human life intact anywhere.

Those who reject their ploys and propaganda will provide a stark contrast and a testimony for Life when the fruits of the Culture of Death become more visible (as is already beginning in Europe, as mentioned above). That is why its proponents are not content having set their own countries on a path of self-destruction, and why they must impose their views on other cultures around the world. And that is also why it is so important that we do whatever we can to sustain a Culture of Life where it still exists.

Father Juan Chavez spoke about the need to reach out to our sisters in Christ who are thinking of having an abortion. He did a beautiful job explaining how it is a corporal work of mercy to support them in a life-affirming manner during their time of need. He then discussed different methods that could be used to educate women about their decision, such as side walk counseling and crisis pregnancy centers.

During the conference, I was amazed at how thankful the attendees were that HLI was there in Brazil and reaching out to help. One of my favorite parts of the conference was getting to speak to those present during our breaks. It was such a blessing to see their passion and zeal for life and their great desire to learn more.

At the end of the conference, attendees committed to protect and preserve the dignity of human life in their own regions, and I know they will go on to make a difference in their countries. This would not have been possible without HLI, and HLI could not have done this without you and your generous contributions to our work. It is people like you, here in the United States, that allow HLI to have conferences in Brazil and around the world to educate our brothers and sisters about the Gospel of Life. I am grateful for all of you that have made sacrifices to support this work. I ask you to



Msgr. Joao Carlos Petrini, President of the Life and Family Episcopal Commission of the Brazilian Conference of Bishops.

Please note:

HLI's NEW MAILING SCHEDULE

HLI is changing its publications mailing schedule in order to save costs and provide more of your gift to the missions.

From now on, in whatever month we mail an issue of *Frontlines*, we will not mail an issue of *Mission Report*. This will begin in February 2012.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO KNOW?

Because *Mission Report* is one of our largest sources of donations, and we can't afford to lose that! So please include your monthly donation to HLI in our *Frontlines* publication envelope, knowing that you will not get an opportunity to do so through *Mission Report*.

THANK YOU!





His Excellency, Luiz Gonzaga Bergonzini, recipient of HLI's Cardinal von Galen award.



HLI President, Fr. Shenan Boquet (left) with Mario Rojas, HLI Regional Coordinator for Latin America.

remember the people who attended these conferences in your prayers, that they may make a difference in the lives of those around them.

It was beautiful to experience the Brazilian culture first hand, and it is so critical that we continue to help these life-embracing cultures defend themselves against the aggressive, relentless anti-life advocates who are working against them.

VON GALEN AWARD PRESENTATION

One highlight of the Congress was the presentation of the **Cardinal von Galen Award**. Human Life International's Cardinal von Galen Award is given to a Catholic prelate who has been a voice of conscience for his society. **HLI believes that good bishops, who act like true shepherds in protecting their sheep from the assaults of the modern age, need our encouragement, and their example needs to be spread far and wide.**

The award is named for Blessed Cardinal August Clemens von Galen, of the Diocese of Muenster, Germany. He was a Catholic prelate who stood up to Hitler's Nazi euthanasia campaign in the 1930s and '40s. His example of unwavering loyalty to the teaching of the Church and his public defense of handicapped Germans being targeted by euthanasia earned him the title, "The Lion of Muenster." An outspoken

advocate of life, Cardinal von Galen was beatified on October 9, 2005.

I had the privilege of presenting the *Cardinal von Galen Award* to His Excellency, Luiz Gonzaga Bergonzini, Diocesan Bishop of Guarulhos in the State of São Paulo. I was immediately struck by Bishop Bergonzini's joy and peace. He is a positive example for all that he comes in contact with, and truly lives a joyful life in the midst of trials and tribulations. He is a priest who passionately lives the Gospel of Christ.

I found it quite moving to see how Bishop Bergonzini responded to being giving the award. He is one of the most humble and joyful people I have met. He has suffered greatly in his life, standing up for the Culture of Life, but always does his work with a smile. It was clear that his joyful spirit in receiving the award was not for himself, but for all of the work being done by the pro-life movement.

Bishop Bergonzini has not only been persecuted by ordinary people throughout his work for life, but sadly even by clergy within the Church. He persevered through all these challenges and never gave up. I will never forget the moment I presented him that award on stage. It was truly humbling.

Human Life International picked Bishop Bergonzini to receive this prestigious award

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based on his courageous and faithful work on behalf of the unborn. The bishop made his history when he publically stood up against the Workers’ Party in his government as they tried to legalize abortion. Even Pope Benedict XVI has taken notice of this bishop, and affirmed his stance for life.

During Brazil’s 2010 elections, His Excellency strongly urged voters not to support the candidate that was committed to legalizing abortion. He reached out through the website of the Bishops’ Conference of Brazil, and also had over two million flyers printed titled “An Appeal to the Brazilian People.” This was the first time that abortion entered the public square for debate.

In an interview for the *Folha de São Paulo* (a newspaper) Bishop Bergonzini strongly affirmed, “Each one of us knows our duties and omissions, and will be accountable not to me, but to God. I point to the road, but I do not take anyone’s

liberty away. My certitude is the truth of the Gospel. My candidate is Christ Himself. And my party is the Gospel!” **Because of the Bishop’s pro-life stance, the credibility of the Church rose from 34% to 54%; only the Brazilian army has higher credibility in the country.**

In 2010, *Época* magazine named Bishop Bergonzini as one of the most influential people in Brazil. He earned the nickname “Lion of Guarulhos” for his unwavering courage speaking for the rights of the unborn. He never accepts neutrality, and reminds me of the famous saying of Dante Alighieri: “In times of crisis, the hottest places in hell are reserved for those who chose neutrality”.

After I presented Bishop Bergonzini with the award, he gave me his blessing and a kiss on the cheek. He is a true role model for priests. I thanked him for the witness he is to all those around him. He was very pleased that I had come from the United States to Brazil, and he

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recognized the pro-life work that HLI is doing around the world. Although he talks of retirement, I believe the bishop will never stop his pro-life work until he is called to the kingdom of God.

THE FUTURE OF HLI IN SÃO PAULO

It was a great honor to attend the second *International Congress for Truth and Life*. I met many wonderful people who were incredibly inspirational. Based on the positive reception of the Congress, HLI hopes to establish a greater presence in Brazil. I have a great desire to build strong HLI affiliates in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. With God all things are possible.

I want to thank all of you for your generous support of Human Life International both spiritually and financially. It is your prayers that keep our organization focused on Christ and nourished to do His work. At the same time, your financial support is what allows us to send a box of fetal models to Africa and to print up our Pro-Life Talking Points. For your generous contributions that allow HLI to continue its life saving work I will be forever grateful.

God bless you always!



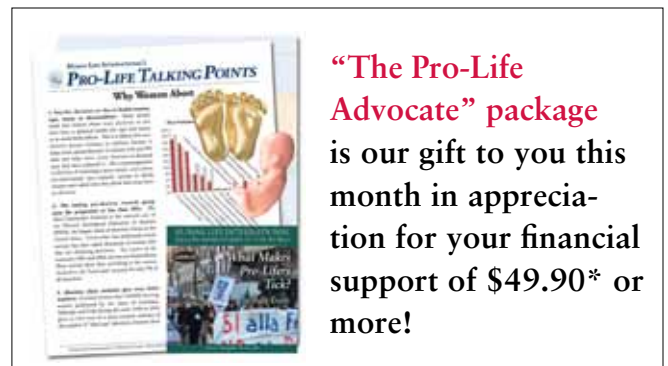
Fr. Shenan J. Boquet
President

P.S. As you are most likely aware, January is the month of the **March for Life** in Washington, D.C. This march is a great opportunity for pro-lifers to come together, be re-energized and learn more ways we can overcome the Culture of Death.

While not everyone can make it to the March for Life in Washington, D.C., we can all stand for life in our own special ways. To help equip you to be a missionary in your own home town, **I would like to offer you “The Pro-Life Advocate” package for your gift of \$49.90* or more.**

This “pro-life package” is a unique gift that includes a variety of HLI’s very own educational Pro-Life Talking Points on different life-related topics, an inspirational talk from Peter Kreefe, a fetal model, a precious feet pin, HLI’s unique publication “State of Abortion Laws Around the World” and a pro-life bumper sticker.

All of these different elements can help lead others to know Jesus’s Gospel of Life – as well as give you a glimpse of some of the many materials we provide to our affiliates around the world. Whether you put the bumper sticker on your car, wear the precious feet pin or use these unique educational resources to talk to others about Life, you are being a pro-life missionary. The educational materials are especially recommended for crisis pregnancy centers, youth ministers, religious education teachers or any apologist! **Don’t miss out on the opportunity to become a pro-life missionary right in your own home!**



* Due to IRS increases, the minimum gift eligible for our monthly premium has changed from \$49 to \$49.90.