



# SEMINARIANS FOR LIFE INTERNATIONAL™

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Dear Seminarians,

Since 1998, it has been my very great honor to work with Human Life International. I am responsible for the Seminarians for Life International (SFLI) Program of HLI. Pro-life work has taken me to 75 countries, frequently speaking in seminaries. Thanks to my parents and the places I have lived, I know French, Spanish, and Italian as well as English. I earned my doctorate in bioethics from the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome.

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have a special duty to learn about the Magisterium of the Church and pastoral experiences that will prepare them for their priestly ministry. Priests and religious, whether their ministry is in parishes or elsewhere, will certainly encounter the Culture of Death. Honestly confused persons come with questions about abortion, bioethical issues, contraception, reproductive technologies, euthanasia, etc. inside and outside the confessional. The quality of the answers you give can make the difference when you are trying to save lives and souls.

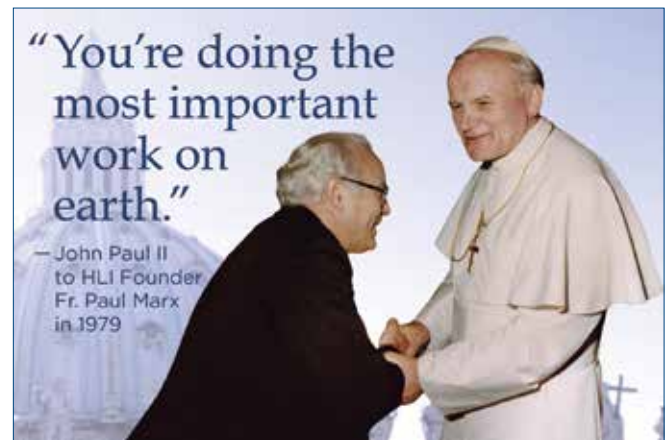
SFLI's newsletter seeks to serve as an instrument to provide seminarians and professors with examples of the pro-life pastoral work of priests and seminarians as well as insights concerning the extensive and growing Magisterium regarding life and family. Our hope for the newsletter is to foster interest in forming seminarians for life groups and help many to deepen their love and understanding of the rich teaching and pastoral practice contained within the Gospel of Life. We welcome your input and feedback.

Saint Pope John Paul II told HLI's founder, Fr. Paul Marx OSB, "You are doing the most important work on

Why does SFLI exist? It is certainly true that *all* Catholics, including priests and religious, should be pro-lifers in the sense that we believe in the inviolable dignity and sacredness of the human person and the resulting right to life of human beings. SFLI exists because, *as pro-lifers* in a critical period of formation, seminarians



Dr. Joseph Meaney,  
Director of International  
Outreach and Expansion



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**Human Life International training seminarians around the world.**



earth!" This holy pope prioritized pro-life ministry for himself and others because nothing takes as many human lives as abortion. Surgical abortion alone is responsible for over 40 million deaths every year. The World Health Organization lists the leading cause of death worldwide as heart disease with 7.4 million annual deaths.<sup>1</sup> Abortion kills many times that number of people every year, while some governments and organizations spread it globally by spending billions annually.

The violence of abortion demands a constant and unequivocal response from the Church. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council articulated this urgency in The Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, when they singled out abortion and infanticide as "abominable crimes." Christ commissioned his followers to go to the ends of the earth to preach the Gospel of Life and to reach those in darkness. If called to serve as a priest, *in persona Christi*, your strong response to the demands of the Gospel of Life is needed, because attacks against innocent human life are the major challenge of our time. Together we can spread the way the truth and the life of our Redeemer who was conceived and carried in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Yours in the Lord of Life,

  
Joseph Meaney PhD

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs310/en/>



# *The Pastoral Experience*

*of Father Benoit Désiré Toum,*

Pro-Life Priest in Cameroon

I was ordained to the priesthood on June 1, 2013 with my twin brother, for the Diocese of Edéa, Cameroon. My interest in defending life and the family goes back to my first years in the seminary in 2007. That year, Human Life International's regional director for Francophone Africa, George Wirnkar, came to speak at our seminary about current threats against human life, including: birth control, homosexuality, abortion, prostitution, AIDS etc. I was struck by the way our society is steeped in a Culture of Death. Even then, I realized that I had to do something to counteract the Culture of Death. Several training sessions for seminarians organized by Human Life International, in which I participated, equipped me with information about methods to help restore the Culture of Life. The first priority was to train myself, through personal research, readings etc. I also saw the importance of associating with other seminarians and created a Seminarians for Life group at the philosophical seminary of Bafoussam and the theological seminary of Douala.

During vacation periods from the seminary and in the parishes where I was sent, I spoke with the young people. To my surprise, I found that many young people displayed Christian and human virtues. Despite the decline in morality that is a common problem in the diocese, I found young persons who still believed in chastity and fidelity. Since these topics were not commonly addressed, I encouraged them to give testimonies at evening sessions in parishes that were popular among young people during school holidays.

Thanks to these activities we were able to establish pro-life groups in two parishes.

Because of my interest in Life and Family issues, my bishop placed me in charge of the diocesan office for the pastoral care of families after my diaconal or-



*Father Benoit Désiré Toum*

dination in 2012. Faced with such a tremendous task I felt insignificantly small, but I was inspired by the experience of Blessed Mother Teresa. She saw the misery in Calcutta. Some people died alone abandoned by the side of the road like animals. Others saw the same terrible situation, but she was the first to do something concrete, first for one person, then for another, and another. Others were inspired by her example and joined her. She explained her actions in this way; if you fixate on the crowd, you will never start. If, however, you look at one person at a time, you can do something.

I started therefore in the parish where I was assigned. First with youth groups that met twice a week, I put programs in place. On Wednesdays I taught catechism classes on Christian, human, and family values. Then I brought together couples, both married and non, in the parish so that they could share with each other the different situations they live in their families. I contributed insights from the Bible and Catholic teaching. Several couples were able to regularize their marital situation. Five couples celebrated marriages by the end of the year. Lastly, I also gave talks and showed films on abortion, the necessity of communication, and the difference between men and women. I realized that people really needed us to create spaces for them to share their life experiences and witness.

“A street is kept clean when everyone sweeps the section in front of their home” is a local proverb. What we did in my parish began to be imitated. My bishop transferred me to an urban parish the next year. There parishes are close to each other and new ideas could be propagated quickly. I visited numerous parishes and wrote letters inviting couples to recollections, weekends for couples, talks, and meetings focused on family life.

Every week I host an hour-long program on Radio Maria Cameroon called “family crossroads.” I pay special attention to situations where people are

“wounded in their affective life.” I invite couples to live in an upright way family and Christian values. Currently, I am setting up a pro-life program and the teaching of natural methods of birth regulation.

Some parishes, seeing my passion for the questions of Life and Family, invite me to speak. It is still a small beginning. I try to take advantage of opportunities, during meetings with adults, pilgrimages, youth camps, etc. to, in conjunction with their chaplains, insert into their programs teaching on family values and avoiding behavior that can destroy life.

Sometimes there are difficulties even from within the Church. Some were displeased when I demanded that condoms no longer be sold in the Catholic hospital in our diocese. I also had to work hard to reverse the decision to expel pregnant girls from Catholic schools. This policy created a tremendous temptation to abort and thus conceal out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

I also tried to impact university students with talks on the threats against life. These led to the creation of a pro-life group at the University of Ngoundéré. We helped spread the message with pro-life t-shirts. I also wrote a publication on cohabitation, an increasingly common practice today.

My thanks go out to all those who helped prepare me for my pastoral work. May God bless them!



*George Wirnkar training an HLI Seminarists for Life International group in Samaya, Mali.*