

# Make Your Opposition Known on Proposed Abortion Law

My dear People of God,

At what age may the State claim the legal right to take life? Pontius Pilate fixed the age at thirty-three when he crucified Innocence saying, "Knew you not that I have the power to condemn you?"

King Herod reduced the age of the legal right to kill to two years and under.

Now it is proposed in the new law of abortion to lower the age for destroying the sacredness of life to the time in the womb.

This fits into the spirit of our times. Our age has witnessed the greatest destruction of human life in history, and all for the sake of therapy. The Nazi furnaces did it for the sake of the therapy of the Race; and Communist concentration camps did it for the therapy of the Party.

Now it is proposed to substitute for the Big Brothers of the Sword, the Big Brothers of the Scalpel, each legally armed with the right to destroy life for reasons of therapy.

It would seem that we are opposing the extension of the law of abortion, because we are Catholics. Actually, we are opposing it because humanity has always regarded it as inhuman and unnatural, beginning with the legislation of the Hittites 3500 years before Christ.

It is only when a civilization begins to degenerate that law and custom permit infanticide and abortion. When Rome became corrupt, a writer of Nero's court justified abortion saying, "Mad dogs are knocked on the head; the fierce and savage ox we slay; sickly sheep we put to the knife; unnatural children we destroy; we even drown children at birth when they are weakly and abnormal."

Our opposition to the new law, therefore, is not just because we are Catholics, it is because we believe in the sacredness of life. The Latin poet Ovid, who lived a few decades before Christ, wrote again of abortion: "Women, why will you thrust and pierce with an instrument and kill your children, yet unborn? This neither the tigress has done in the jungles of Armenia, nor did the lioness ever have it in her heart to destroy her unborn young."

A bird in the nest or out of the nest is still a bird; a child in the womb of the mother or at the breast of the mother is still a child. While resolving to do all we can to alleviate anguish and pain, we beg you to join with us in making your opposition known to the proposed new abortion law of New York State. As we shrink from giving to a few men today the right to annihilate human life in the flash of the nuclear bomb, so we shrink from giving the right to other Big Brothers to destroy the sacredness of life, even though it is done in the cover and the darkness of the human nest.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Bishop of Rochester

## A Hearing-aid To be Eloquent

One of the anomalies of contemporary life is that an estimated million Americans voluntarily chose to fast for three days precisely within a few months of a Catholic Church decision to de-emphasize public penitential practices.

And the Americans who chose to fast did so with a regimen far more rigorous than Catholics had ever been expected to, even in the pre-Council days.

The million fasting Americans limited themselves to fruit juice or tea and rice to end the war in Vietnam. Could you imagine the comments of a penitent ever given a penance like that in the confessional?

Another anomaly of our time is the incessant drum-beating against Pope Pius XII because of his alleged silence when Nazis were gassing Jews and gunning down Italian hostages — but now the Catholic bishops of New York State are criticized for using political pressure against a proposed easier abortion law, a law which would legalize the killing of unlimited numbers of pre-born babies.

Albany-watchers admit that the proposal stands little chance of being enacted into law this year, probably even next year... but by 1969 or 1970, why not? Just by rolling around the Legislature a year or two, it will get stronger — like the proverbial snowball rolling down the hill.

Which raises the question: are we witnessing the beginning of what in a few years will become a "consensus" and then termed "a sign of the times" requiring our assent lest we be accused of being laggards, obsolete, old-hat?

When reputable religious spokesmen such as Episcopal Bishop George W. Barrett promptly differ from Bishop Sheen's pastoral warning about easing present abortion restrictions, we are forcibly made to realize that the discussion can lapse into a debate predicated on denominational affiliation and thereby the actual issue may be clouded by the emotions that invariably arise when debates become ecclesiastical.

Adlai Stevenson remarked at Harvard University in 1955 wittily but also perhaps wistfully, "I sometimes think that what America needs more than anything else is a hearing-aid."

Just as democracy and political freedom cannot survive without discussion, criticism and deliberation, so also theology and religious practice need dialogue too in order to advance.

What ultimately happens will, it would seem, depend less on whether the spokesmen for or against the easier abortion law voice their opinions "under God" rather than much more on whether or not our actions follow the teachings most of us claim God gave us — and that, as the Gospels overwhelmingly indicate, is compassion for those so anguished by their condition that they turn to abortion as their only solution.

Until we hear their cry for mercy and provide a better solution are we not among those whom Jesus once said "have ears but hear not."

The bishops of the State point up this aspect of the problem in their joint pastoral letter on the subject. We are by no means blind to the sufferings of mothers and to the problems confronting some families. We shall always support every effort to alleviate human suffering and to solve personal and family problems but we insist that any solution must respect the life of the innocent, defenseless, unborn child."

Our eloquence about the latter will be the more convincing in proportion as we are more effective in the former.

And as this debate continues, we have no right to require our bishops to carry the burden of all the responsibility just by themselves.

—Father Henry A. Atwell

## To Provide Spiritually for Changing Moods of Youth

It has been customary to administer Confirmation shortly after First Communion or at the age of ten or twelve. The liturgical constitution of Vatican Council II suggests a revision: "The intimate connection which this Sacrament has with the whole process of Christian initiation is to be more clearly set forth." (Decree on Liturgy, #71)

Youth passes through three stages: Birth, Puberty, and Maturity. Sacraments exist for two of these periods: Birth and Maturity. Baptism gives supernatural birth to the Divine Life, as natural birth gives entry into human life. Confirmation corresponds to the moment when youth is prepared to accept his responsibilities in human society, except that it commits him to the apostolic mission of the Church — to be a witness to Christ in the world.

Presently, Confirmation is often administered even before the second stage of youth is reached. It is now proposed:

1. Gradually to defer Confirmation to a later age.
2. To develop a liturgical service for the second stage of youth which would prepare them for the serious reception of the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit.

Confirmation should not be administered generally before the candidate is biologically, psychologically and spiritually ready to exercise his priesthood in the world. If given before the age of Puberty, or before one knows his responsibilities to the economic and social tasks before him, it is like asking a child to do the work of a man. Since this Sacrament is not merely a perfection of the Christian in his vertical relationship to the Head of the Mystical Body, but in a special way, of his horizontal relations as a member of the Mystical Body to the secular order, it should, it seems, be deferred until a later age.

Puberty with all its biological and psychological ferment is hardly the age of spiritual maturity in which one "receives the power of confessing his faith publicly and by words as it were, ex officio" (St. Thomas, Summa Theologica III, q. 72, art. 5). Neither does it fulfill the significance attached to it by Pius XI who called it "the Sacrament of the Full grown man, membership in the universal priesthood apostolate." Pius XII also affirmed that no extra mandate is needed to be an apostle, other than the Sacrament. "The laity need no delegation from the hierarchy to participate in this mission. It is merely their response to duties imposed on them by Baptism and Confirmation."

This brings up the other problem of what kind of religious training should be given to the in-between period after First Communion and before Confirmation. The answer revolves around the nature of Puberty with its profound psychological and physiological changes:

- A. The ego is discovered, and with it comes a desire to emancipate itself from former collective ties, such as the home, and sometimes the Church. This discovery of the inner world leads often to an irresponsible

over-estimation of self. If the ego acts too quickly, the youth may become a critic or a rebel.

B. Along with physical changes, there may come a brief period of religious uncertainty. Overjoyed with the discovery of his own authority, the youth may place too high a value on it, and freedom may turn to license, unless properly directed.

C. There comes also a tension, between realism and idealism, between preadolescent tradition and radicalism; with it there develops a sense of shame, expressing itself at times as exhibitionism on one hand, and shyness on the other.

We have no liturgical ceremony for this important period of life. Perhaps it could be built around the renewal of baptismal vows. But this, in turn, should be preceded by special religious training oriented to the psychic, physical and religious turmoil associated with puberty. May we ask educators, pastors, teachers, priests and religious, to seriously think out courses of studies along these lines:

- A. A reverent and prudent sex education, as Vatican II requests, (Decree on Christian Education, #1) Fidelity should be taught as reverence for the mystery of life and its creativeness, and as respect for personality, so that no person is ever "used" for pleasure as a torch might be thrown into a city to give the thrill of flames and ashes.

As much sympathy, care and attention are necessary on the part of the parents during puberty as during the first two years of life. The gradual alienation of adolescents from their parents and the Church is often due to an unsympathetic attitude on the part of both toward these new born enthusiasms. The presentation of distant and complex ideals will not be effective unless a series of intermediate targets are set up to lead them to the still distant end.

The breaking away from a sense of dependence, the desire to be self-governing, the recognition of a limited power of restraint, the bewildering fluctuations of emotional life, the deep-sensed, mysterious or gurgling changes, the aroused sensitivity to color and sound, the drive to form "clubs" and "gangs", the curiosity about the nature of love — these are just some of the factors which must be liturgically and educationally woven into the orderly unfolding of life.

B. Along with a reverent and prudent sex education to assist youth "in the harmonious development of their physical, moral, and intellectual endowments as they advance in years" (Vatican II, Decree on Christian Education #1), there should also be taught a concrete love of the neighbor and the poor. There is a tendency to give the theory of Christian life without demonstrating its practical application, the accepting of social responsibility and bearing the burdens of others, making conversions, showing leadership in love of the missions. Our youth will be taught to see every mortal in the manner in which Our Lord saw them: as bearing the image of God beneath any failure or disfigurement. No one truly loves God unless he loves his neighbor, and in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the neighbor is defined as one in need. Since God has loved us so much, we too should love one another. (1 John, 4/11)

C. The training during puberty which is to be climaxed by the liturgical renewal of baptismal vows will also embrace an explanation of the Spirit of Christ in contrast to the spirit of the world.

The Scriptures give at least three meanings to the word "world":

1. The cosmos, or material creation, which science and technology study and which manifest the glory of God.
2. The world as a "spirit", which is at enmity with God — pride, sensuality, deceit, dishonesty, etc.
3. Humanity, or the world into which God sent His Divine Son because He so loved it, the world in which we are citizens, but pilgrim citizens, to the Heavenly City.

This is the world in which Christians earn their living, marry, enjoy leisure, work, help the neighbor, shoulder responsibility for the economic and social problems of our Times.

As the Decree on Christian Education puts it, we must "promote the Christian transformation of the world by which natural virtues, viewed in the full perspective of humanity redeemed by Christ, may contribute to the good of society as a whole." (Vatican Council, Decree on Christian Education, #2)

Insufficient attention has been paid by educators to these different meanings of the "world". Those who are trained in the Spirit of Christ, will love the world as humanity, but will avoid its "spirit", for as St. James wrote: "Anyone who chooses the world for his friend

turns himself into God's enemy." (James 4/4)

"The love of the Father cannot be in any man who loves the world, because nothing the world has to offer — the sensual body, the lustful eye, pride in possessions — could ever come from the Father, but only from the world." (1 John, 2/15, 16) Youth trained in the Spirit of Christ will not so much build their spiritual life on negative commandments, but Love which shrinks from ever wounding this Love as revealed in Christ Our Lord.

Several years will be required to implement this program of training youth according to their physical and psychological levels.

When it is completed: Confirmation will be conferred at a later age than at present. Possibly it may become the ceremony for graduation from high school; for those not in school a comparable age will become the practice.

Eventually too, when ever possible and without too great an inconvenience, Confirmation will be administered in the Cathedral in keeping with the Decree on the Liturgy that "the liturgical life of the diocese should center around the Bishop, especially in his Cathedral Church." (Chapter IV, /41)

In the meantime, Confirmation schedules will proceed as usual with a progressive deferment in age, as the liturgical and spiritual training for puberty is developed.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we prayerfully hope that the proposed program will prove the deep concern of the Church for youth in its changing moods of life, so that those who receive Confirmation will not be spiritual "babes" or "infants" (1 Corinthians, 3/1; 14/20), but spiritually "mature" (1 Corinthians 2/8), ready to be drafted in the royal priesthood and equipped to have the discovery of their own ego perfected by the Divine "Thou" as the answer to the meaning of life.

—FULTON J. SHEEN, Ph.D., D.D. Bishop of Rochester

## Not All Habits Are Religious

Chicago — (RNS) — Changes in the garb of Roman Catholic nuns are taking place at such a pace that even members of the Church have a bit of trouble keeping up with the times.

This was apparent here at the national convention of the Religious Education Association, an interreligious body which this year drew large numbers of Catholics to its sessions — especially members of the various sisterhoods.

Riding in one of the elevators of the Palmer House, where the convention was held, a Catholic delegate turned to a group of women wearing habits which he did not immediately recognize.

"Pardon me," he asked them, "but I don't recognize your Order. What is it?"

The young women smiled and looked perplexed. The delegate then repeated his question, this time specifically the religious order to which the young women belonged.

"Oh," replied one of them, "we're airline stewardesses."

## Europe's Catholics Seek to Restore Prophetic Role

By GARY MacEON

Rome — All over Europe Catholics are searching for a new equilibrium between freedom and authority. The same search is, of course, going on in the United States, but cultural and structural factors in many European countries are creating far more acute emotional tensions on this side of the Atlantic.

In Italy, Spain and France, in particular, Catholic Action grew up under strict direct control of the bishops. The freedom of initiative projected by the Vatican Council is the right and duty of each member of the people of God runs head-on against the existing attitudes and structures.

In France, the tension was observable even before the Council and came to the surface in open conflict more than once while the Council was sitting. The basic issue in that country was the speed at which change should occur. The young intellectuals frequently wanted to take positions on moral questions concerning which the bishops were unable to find a consensus among themselves or within the Catholic community.

Typical examples were the opposition to the Algerian war both in itself and because of the means of waging it, and the pressures to identify the Church more fully with the Left in sympathy with the working classes.

In Spain and Italy, the issues were slower in surfacing though perhaps more acute because of the absence of the safety valve of free expression of opinion. I think this is certainly true of Spain. In Italy, the situation varies considerably from place to place. Parts of the industrialized North have long felt the winds of change blowing from the other side of the Alps and have found expression for their emotions in ways we more readily associate with France or Germany.

A recent example is the creation of joint clerical-lay responsibility for the editorial policy of Il Regno, organ of the Center of Priests of the Sacred Heart of Bologna, by naming a professional lay journalist as co-editor with the priest who formerly ran the magazine. The stated reason for the change is not merely practical or defensive. The intention is to make effective the Council proclamation of the organic unity of the people of

God, so that clergy and laity may serve each other in common witness.

A first fruit of the new editorship is a major article discussing the relationship of the individual conscience to Church law. Its thesis is that the Church needs a formula to reconcile the prophetic role of its members with its institutional authority. It recommends the drafting of a constitutional Charter of the Rights of Catholics.

"The person is a primary value in the Church as in civil society," it argues. "For the Church is not only a community of grace, but also a social group whose members have the rights and duties appropriate to every human group."

Asserting that the authority of God exercised by the Church is immediately concerned with the doctrinal and sacramental, the article claims that the primacy of freedom and of the individual conscience "as demands of the fundamental rights of the human person" must be recognized when we enter into social and human areas.

"The frontiers will not always be strictly defined. It is nevertheless neces-

sary that the law should recognize and expressly delimit the area of these rights of freedom, in order to exclude the danger of abuse of authority."

Cardinal Gracias of Bombay, India, the article notes, has already urged that the revised code or bill of canon law should incorporate as a basic element a "constitutional charter or bill of rights guaranteeing the inalienable rights of every Christian. A major defect of the present Code, it says, is the retention of procedures developed in an era of absolutism. A constitutional charter would protect both the respect due to the Church as a society and the primacy of the spirit and of the charisms flowing from the spirit of the gospel.

"While protecting the principle of the duty to obey as a continuing reality, the way to exercise authority can change... Adaptation must continue until we reach a technique of exercise of authority which recognizes and accepts the values of democracy, that is to say, which respects the primacy of the person."



Luke Air Force Base, Ariz. — (RNS) — Bishop Fulton J. Sheen of Rochester, former national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, presented gold medals to 29 airmen — two of them Protestants — at a Mass at Luke Air Force Base. The servicemen are members of the Airmen Tithers and Tollers Military Mission Society. For the last eight months they have given one per cent of their base pay, as well as voluntary services to Catholic missions. Bishop Sheen is shown presenting the medal to one airman donor.

## Liturgy For Ec...

Corning — The children will be the center of St. Patrick's School, at 3:45 p.m.

Sister Florian, S.S.J., the featured speaker, topic will be "The Liturgical Influences and Affinities of Our School Children."

The meeting will of Sister Florian's talk school hall. She will the teachers in attendance participate in the singing of the Mass which will follow.

The Mass will be celebrated, and the liturgy Mass will incorporate Sister Florian's suggestions. After the Mass the teachers will a dinner at the school hall for supper.

Sister Norine, principal of St. Patrick's School, stated "We have selected this as the topic for the second session of the Second Council's statement of liturgy is the outcome by which the faith express in their lives; a feast to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the Church."

"We feel that the schools afford the education a unique opportunity to instill in our young people a Christian spirit of the liturgy — a spirituality which we cannot afford to neglect."

Sister Florian has 10 active in liturgical work diocese. She is currently director of liturgy and vocations for the Sisters of St. Ann in the diocese, and is teaching in liturgy at St. Ann's College. Sister recently returned from an extended liturgical centers of Europe which she attended.

## Festival Concert Listed Feb. 1

The combined Aquinas Institute and Academy will present "Festival Concert" directed by Sebastian Calabro on Feb. 18, at 8:30 p.m. in the Aquinas Auditorium.

The upcoming concert the first for Calabro appointed new director of the Aquinas Band this past year.

The evening will be lighted by a military band entitled "Cereus Flourishes," among its styles of music including folk, hootenanny, jazz, classical and modern.

The public is invited to the concert which may be purchased at...

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MOST REV. FULTON J. SHEEN, Ph.D., D.D., President

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