

Family Life Group Issues Statement

Children: Their Value and Destiny

Washington — Roman Catholic family life directors in dioceses throughout the U.S. have called on society to "reaffirm its belief in the worth and significance of children."

In a statement issued to mark Holy Family Sunday, Dec. 26, they sharply criticized anti-child attitudes reflected in government backed population control programs and easy abortion laws.

The statement, entitled "Children: Their Value and Destiny," was released on behalf of the 150 diocesan family life directors throughout the U.S. by the Family Life Division of the United States Catholic Conference. Msgr. James T. McHugh is director of the division.

Declaring that the "prime motivation" of all social policy concerning children must be the child's good and his chance to develop as a unique and autonomous human being, the statement called for "a careful look at our whole fabric of law" to remove "inequities" and guarantee the basic rights of the child.

Following is the text of the statement:

Parenthood is one of the most challenging and rewarding of all human relationships. Christian parents are called to a prophetic mission, to witness by their love and generosity to the primacy of life. The sacrifices parents make in bearing and raising children are a powerful testimony to their fidelity and their hopefulness.

The generosity of parents is even more pronounced today because the rewards of parenthood are often obscured. The future always holds its share of problems, but these seem more threatening to today's parents. For instance, there is no easy answer to the drug problem, or to the loss of mutual confidence between the generations.

But even in the face of an uncertain future, most young couples still look positively and hopefully toward parenthood. They see each child as an individual person, capable of bringing new hope and happiness to the entire human family.

Part of the explanation may be that the child is mankind in miniature. He reminds us of our weaknesses and our failures yet he holds out the promise of the future. Those who are parents invest love, commitment and interest in the child. During adolescence they gradually relax control and encourage greater independence and individuality. Their goal is to enable the child to become a free and responsible adult, a contributing member of the wider human community. Society itself benefits most when the child successfully attains maturity. That is why society must support the child and protect his rights and interests.

Some years ago, the United Nations issued a Declaration on the Rights of the Child which emphasized that the child is entitled to legal protection from the moment of conception onward. "The child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth."

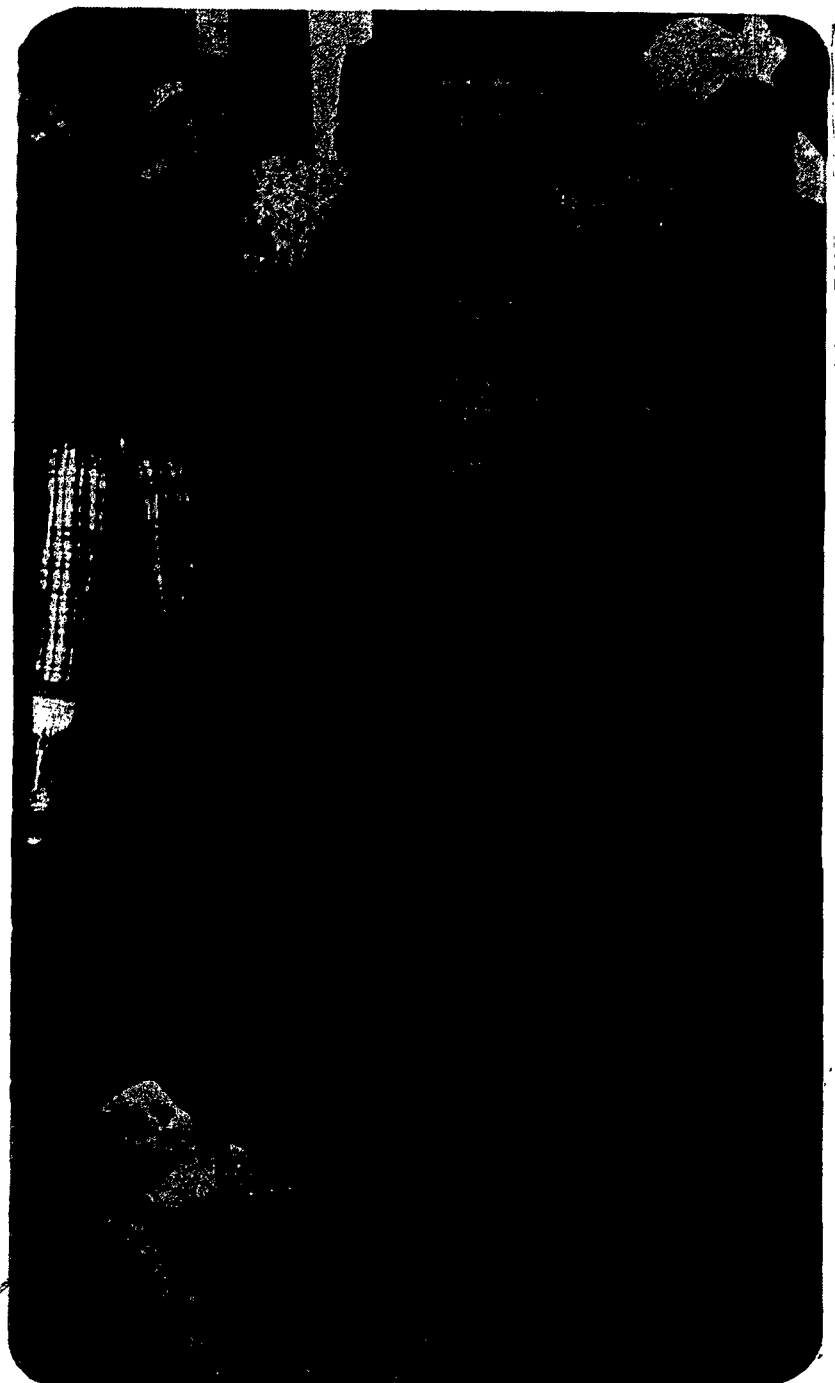
Society accomplishes this through laws, social policy, government-supported programs, which help parents provide their children with food, clothing, shelter, medical care and education. The prime motivation for all social policy affecting children must be the child's good and his chance to develop as a unique and autonomous human being.

A serious danger today is the growing attitude that children contribute to certain social problems—overpopulation, pollution, poverty, etc. At the present time, the United States Congress is considering legislation that would establish the two-child family as the American ideal. There is a genuine threat that the responsible decision-making of parents will be overridden. Attempts are also underway to withdraw legal protection from the unborn child prior to the 20th week of pregnancy. The child's right to life is being traded away for reasons of convenience or political expediency.

Medicine confirms the human status of the child in the womb. Law has traditionally protected him. Human experience proves that when we attempt to assign relative value to human life, we move easily toward loss of respect for all life and an unjust violation of individual human rights.

This is the moment in history when all of society must reaffirm its belief in the worth and significance of children, and the contribution they make to the human family. In God's providence, a child is able to love, to relate personally with others, and to pursue his destiny, both temporal and eternal.

It is to the good of society and of the family that the rights of children be respected and protected by law. Moreover, it is a matter of justice toward the child. Accordingly, we urge a careful look at our whole fabric of law to redress the inequities that deprive children of their rights, and to establish a legal system that gives every child his basic human rights and the opportunities to fulfill those rights in dignity and freedom.



Christmas in Appalachia

The rush is on to greet Santa at an early Christmas party in Helenwood, Tenn. But one little girl seems to want to be alone with her new doll, one of the toys distributed to Appalachia area children at the party given by the Save the Children Federation. Some 250 children attended the party and were given presents (RNS)

Code Adopted On Alcoholic Drivers

Washington, D.C. — (RNS) — A new approach to the problem of alcoholic drivers has been taken in major changes in the Uniform Vehicle Code approved here by the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances.

All state motor vehicle laws are based on the code, and changes made in it normally are adopted as soon afterward as possible by most state legislatures. The code was established in the 1920s by the late President Herbert Hoover when he was secretary of com-

merce. The 133-member committee amended the code to:

- Require that physicians report the names of patients having diseases or disabilities limiting driving ability to state health departments, which in turn would report them to motor vehicle departments which issue drivers' licenses.

- Require that drivers whose blood tests show more than one tenth of 1 per cent of alcohol be presumed to be intoxicated and therefore guilty

Anti-Abortionists Lose 2 Cases

Baltimore — (RNS) — Abortion counselors in Maryland may refer women to abortion clinics in the District of Columbia or any state provided the clinics operate according to laws in their area.

This formal opinion by Atty. Gen. Francis B. Burch contradicts claims by some anti-abortion groups that a 1968 state law forbidding abortion referrals to other than doctors and hospitals licensed by the State of Maryland prevents counselors from advising women to get abortions in the District or another state.

Abortions are permitted in Maryland in some cases, if performed by licensed doctors and in hospitals certified by the state and the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Hospitals.

Burch, in his opinion, said limiting abortion referrals only to those doctors and hospitals would violate the free speech guarantees in the Maryland and U.S. constitutions and the due process clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Meanwhile in Gainesville, Fla., two sections of the Florida abortion law were ruled unconstitutional by Judge Benjamin M. Tench of the Alachua County Felony Court of Record.

He said Section 797.01 which prohibits abortion and Section 797.02 which bans publication of abortion information violate the U.S. and Florida constitutions.

The section prohibiting abortion was struck down mainly on the ground of invasion of privacy. The section barring publication of abortion information was voided on the principle of freedom of speech.

of driving while drunk.

- Enable judges to send alcoholic drivers to treatment centers rather than to jail.

- Enable states to take away alcoholics' vehicle registrations as well as drivers' licenses.

Spokesmen here say there are about a million alcoholics in the United States. Alcohol is considered the single most significant factor in the country's annual traffic death toll, which last year reached 55,350 deaths on U.S. highways.

Our Parish COUNCIL

by Bernard Lyons

No one can give what he hasn't got, so a parish council leader, like anyone else who wishes to be of service to others, must constantly "feed" himself, to develop the resources that he can pass on to others.

In this day and age of mass communication and, indeed, of an information explosion, it is fairly easy to prepare yourself with resources — and many of them are available at little or no cost.

With the 1972 national election approaching, many councils will wish to prepare a program on good citizenship and participation. A free voter's manual, "Primer For Patriotism," is available from the National Association of Manufacturers. The kit, containing two talks and information material, may be had by writing Women's Department, NAM, 277 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

The Christopher News Notes recently developed a folder on "Leadership & You." Like their other excellent materials, it is brief, clearly written, and filled with concrete examples. You can get a single copy free, or send \$1 for 100 copies, to Father Richard Armstrong, MM, The Christophers, 12 E. 48th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.

With the revived interest in the election of bishops, there should be a study and discussion of our return to this tradition in the Church. An excellent background book, "The Choosing of Bishops," has been edited by William W. Bassett, and published by the Canon Law Society of America, 134 Farmington Ave., Hartford, Conn. 06105. The book is \$2.50 and bulk rates are available.

A new and meaty, mimeographed monthly is being published by St. Mary's in Colorado Springs, which calls itself a Stewardship Parish. Well written and illustrated, it reflects the very active involvement of the parishioners in a Christ-centered community. If you would like a copy, send two 8-cent stamps to John Stanton, St. Mary's Church, 22 W. Kiowa St., Colorado Springs, Colo. 80902.

Two models for high school draft information courses have been prepared by the Rev. David C. Myler, Jr., The Indian Hill Church, 6000 Drake Rd., Cincinnati, Ohio 45243. The models are based upon courses conducted in a wealthy suburb of Cincinnati. Appendices show actual program schedules and there is an excellent questionnaire, "How Much Do You Know About The Draft?" done by the Presbyterian Youth Committee. If you would like a copy of the two models, send a large (business-size) envelope, with two 8-cent stamps to Rev. Myler.

"Cross Cultural Impact" is the title of a booklet describing one-day and three-day models for workshops designed to bridge cultural barriers. Though written and tested for young adults, the material, with its extensive resources listings, can be adapted for adults. You can get a copy by sending \$4 to Division of Youth Activities, U.S. Catholic Conference, 1312 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Foreign Study Program Changed

Nazareth College of Rochester is initiating its own junior-year-in-France program based in Rochester's Sister City, Rennes, the capital of Brittany. Until now foreign study programs at Nazareth have been conducted in collaboration with other American colleges and universities.

Dr. Virginia Otto, chairman of the foreign languages department said students would live with French families during their year abroad. The program will include a five-week intensive orientation in French language and culture in Paris and Rennes, followed by a two-semester program at the Université de Haut Bretagne in Rennes, Dr. Otto said.

Cost of the program, including transportation, will be \$3,000, roughly the equivalent of tuition, board and room at Nazareth for one year.