

Bishops Lash Court Abortion Ruling

Washington, D.C. (RNS)—The U.S. Roman Catholic bishops, in the strongest possible terms, have rejected the recent Supreme Court decision on abortion, declaring that laws conforming to the Court's opinion are "immoral laws, in opposition to God's plan of creation and to the Divine Law."

"... there can be no moral acceptance of the... decision which professes to legalize abortion," the bishops said in their general statement on the ruling, and they termed the Court's opinion "erroneous, unjust and immoral."

In a "pastoral message" of the Administrative Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops presented here by

Cardinal John Cody of Chicago, Catholics were told to "oppose abortion as an 'immoral act' and that they need not obey any law that requires abortion."

The message also pointed out again that any Catholic who is a party to abortion is automatically excommunicated, urged all physicians to retain an "ethical concern" for the welfare of both mother and unborn child, asked the legal profession to "articulate and safeguard" the rights of the father of the unborn child, and praised efforts of pro-life groups around the nation.

In urging pro-life agencies to "set in motion the machinery needed to assure legal and constitutional conformity to the basic truth that the child is a

"person," the bishops came closest in the pastoral message to asking for a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court ruling.

The message was read recently to a press conference by Msgr. James McHugh, who heads the U.S. Catholic Conference's Family Life Division. With Cardinal Cody and Msgr. McHugh were two bishop-members of the NCCB's Pro-Life Affairs Committee — Bishop Walter Curtis of Bridgeport, Conn., and Auxiliary Bishop Francis Dunn of Dubuque, Iowa.

Cardinal Cody, chairman of the pro-life committee, told newsmen that legal steps to reverse the Supreme Court decision are being studied. But he said it would be "premature" to indicate what course the bishops might favor.

Msgr. McHugh, commenting on the possibility of a constitutional amendment, admitted that it was a significant possibility and is being studied. But he added that the question will be discussed during regional bishops' meetings in April.

In the pastoral message itself, the bishops warned that "bringing about a reversal" of the high Court's decisions in the Texas and Georgia cases—which struck down all restrictive abortion laws in the country — "will require unified and persistent efforts."

"But we must begin now," they said, "in our churches, schools and homes, as well as in the larger community to instill reverence for life at all stages. We take as our mandate the words from the Book of Deuteronomy: 'I set before you life or death... choose life then, that you and your descendants may live...'"

The bishops' message quoted from Vatican II documents and the late Pope John XXIII's famed encyclical, *Peace on Earth*, in developing the concept of the primacy of the right to life.

Citing the encyclical, they quoted: "These rights are, therefore, universal, inviolable and inalienable... Every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are necessary and suitable for the proper development of life."

They said the Supreme Court has claimed that the unborn child is not a person in constitutional terms and that the mother's right to privacy, while not an absolute right nor explicit in the Constitution, supersedes the unborn child's right to life.

"This opinion... fails to protect the most basic human right — the right to life. Therefore, we reject this decision of the Court because, as Pope John says: 'If any government does not acknowledge the rights of man or violates them, its order completely lacks juridical force.'"

The pastoral message added that the Court completely failed to grasp scientific evidence that the fetus is an "individual human being" which is in the "first phase of the long and continuous process of human development that begins at conception and terminates at death."

The bishops charged that the Court, by denying "any compelling value" to the unborn, have placed the fetus in an "inferior class of human beings whose God-given rights will no longer be protected" by the U.S. Constitution.

"We find the majority opinion of the Court is wrong and is entirely contrary to the fundamental principles of morality," the bishops' message declared. It added that no Court, no legislative body, no government leader "can legitimately assign less value to some human-life."

"Thus, the laws that conform to the opinion of the Court are immoral laws, in opposition to God's plan of creation and to the Divine Law which prohibits the destruction of human life at any point in its existence," the bishops stated.

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Pointing out that basic human rights are not man-made but from God, the bishops went on to note that "no right is more fundamental than the right to life itself... Thus, there can be no moral acceptance of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision which professes to legalize abortion."

The bishops urged pro-life groups to work towards offering "positive alternatives" to abortion, to seek protection for institutions and individuals who con-

scientiously refuse to take part in abortions, and to "combat the general permissiveness legislation can engender."

Pro-life organizations were also encouraged to promote the most "restrictive interpretation" of the Court's opinion at the state legislative level and initiate procedures to "assure legal and constitutional conformity to the basic truth that the unborn child is a 'person' in every sense of the term from the time of conception."

NEWS



Photo Courtesy Hornell Evening Tribune

Doing Fine

Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Madau, active parishioners at St. Ignatius Church, Hornell, play with their pet Pomeranian, Antonio, who recently underwent a kidney transplant, was reported last week as "cheerful and doing nicely."

Perkinsville Council Schedules 1973 Goals

By PEGGY PEASE

Perkinsville — Sacred Heart Church has had a very active Parish Council for the past ten months. Chaired by George O'Brien and assisted by eight others and parish administrator, Father Timothy Weider, it has set several clear goals for 1973.

Party for Pastors Planned in Cohocton

Cohocton — Members of the St. Pius V Parish Council and Rosary and Altar Society are planning a farewell party for Father James Baker and a welcoming party for the new pastor, Father Francis Erb, on Sunday, Feb. 25 from 2 to 5 p.m. in the parish hall.

Father Baker has been pastor of St. Pius for the last five years and is being transferred to St. Joseph's Church, Wayland. Father Erb has been associate pastor of St. Anthony's, Rochester, since last September.

Hornell Area Notes

Hornell — St. Ignatius Church will hold a spaghetti dinner, Feb. 26 from 2-6 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus home. Miss Mary Lisi is chairman of the event.

Hornell — St. Ignatius men's retreat has been scheduled for the weekend of April 6. Richard Clancy is coordinating the event.

Canisteo — A Mass for the area Retreat League will be held at St. Joachim's Church, Feb. 25.

Hornell — Pre-Cana instruct-

The first goal is a fund campaign to raise \$10,000 to cover the cost of a new heating system in the church, and panelling and wallboard for the interior walls of the church.

The drive, headed by Robert Didas, started Sunday, Feb. 18, after the 10 a.m. Mass when solicitors gathered for a kick-off meeting. Letters were mailed out earlier to friends and former parishioners of the church asking for their support.

The Family Life Committee, headed by William Recktenwald, has headed many family activities in the past months. The pizza party held in January with Mrs. Tom Huber in charge was attended by many. The next scheduled event is a "Box Social" to be held Saturday, March 17.

One of the goals of the Human Development Committee is to increase the activities among the retirees of the parish. In December, First Friday devotions were held followed by a luncheon, attended by 20.

tions will be held at St. Ann's Church, starting March 18 at 3 p.m.

Hornell — St. Ann's Right to Life Committee will display materials to be used in a proposed CCD course on Sunday Feb. 25 at 3 p.m. in the school hall.

Dansville — The Friends of St. Mary's School (FOSMS) will hold a pizza sale on Feb. 24. FOSMS also announced a public meeting slated for 8 p.m. in the school hall on Feb. 22.

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