

# Life, Liberty and Law

It is a cockamamie form of egomania which suggests that we can impart dignity to ourselves. Humanity is dignity. We have dignity because we are dignity. And we cheapen our very existence with such trivia as the fadish and fashionable phrases death-with-dignity, quality-of-life, the right-to-die, dignified-suicide, and active or voluntary or negative or passive or involuntary or positive euthanasia.

When we deliberately destroy human life, we do not engross it. On the contrary, when we deliberately destroy human life we corrupt the high and pure and clear mandate of mankind. And it is a strange master we choose to serve when we accommodate those who would "liberate" us from our sacred duty, our lofty obligation, our very purpose on earth to protect, aid, comfort and listen to those among us who suffer for it would not be only the precious burden we would then pollute, but the sacred trust as well.

And when the anti-life philosophers speak haughtily of changing the laws, they mean the life protection laws; and they mean control, and they mean deliberate killing, and they mean business. They openly insist that medical science abandon its splendid heritage, and treat the

## Baptism Termed Illicit but Valid

**Marlboro, Mass. [RNS]** — The pastor of Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic church here said that a Jesuit priest who baptized a baby on the steps of his church Aug. 20 acted in a "highly illicit" manner and is likely to be strongly censured by Church authorities.

At the same time, Msgr. Francis X. Meehan affirmed that the baptism of three-month-old Nathaniel Morreale "is unquestionably a valid one."

The priest made his comments in a statement following the baptism of the son of Mrs. Carol Morreale, 20, who has been embroiled in a controversy with priests at Immaculate Conception parish. The priests had "delayed" the baptism of her child because she had espoused a proposal to open an abortion clinic in Marlboro.

They claimed that the endorsement by Mrs. Morreale of the clinic and its principal supporter, William Baird of Hempstead, N.Y., made questionable her intention to rear her son in keeping with Catholic teaching.

After Mrs. Morreale refused to reconcile her views with those of the priests, Father Joseph O'Rourke, S.J., of New York offered to baptize the baby in defiance of his own superior and of Cardinal Humberto Medeiros of Boston.

Msgr. Meehan said that Father O'Rourke, "in baptizing without permission, and in fact, in direct violation of a positive prohibition, has acted in a manner that is highly illicit and irregular and it would seem that he is liable to ecclesiastical censure.

desires instead of the diseases of mankind.

There is no law in America today — nor has there ever been — which dictates that a physician must forceably prolong a human life through heroic artificial means; there are no legal writs, no moral obligations, no ethical directives — no mandates of any kind — which demand the senseless extension of a human life, for even one minute with extraordinary or unnatural devices when all hope of benefit is gone.

But there are laws which forbid intentional killing, and they forbid it with or without consent of the victim. Mercy killing has always been an emotional issue, has always been against the law. And the same can be said for suicide. While in certain cases involving mercy killing the courts have not severely punished the perpetrator, in no case has the law sanctioned intentional killing. Except for abortion.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross M.D. is medical director of the Family Service and Mental Health Center in Chicago. She has written two sensitive and thoughtful books, *On Death and Dying*, written in 1969, and the later, *Questions and Answers on Death and Dying*.

Dr. Kubler-Ross rejects euthanasia.

She understands, if not better than the rest of us at least more articulately, what death can mean to an individual. Prefacing the first chapter of her first book, Dr. Kubler-Ross uses the following quotation from Rabindranath Tagore:

Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless in facing them.

Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain but for the heart to conquer it.

Let me not look for allies in life's battlefield but to my own strength.

Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved but hope for the patience to win my freedom.

Grant me that I may not be a coward, feeling your mercy in my success alone; but let me find the grasp of your hand in my failure.

The doctor is right. The poet is right. The dying man is yet human, yet living. Listen to him. Ease his pain. Erase even for a moment his human loneliness. Let him share his dignity and his thoughts. He owes you nothing. You owe him compassion and time. Let him die in peace surrounded by others who like yourself will follow. Finally, Dr. Kubler-Ross' unforgettable lesson — never classify anyone as a vegetable simply because he appears to be unresponsive to your stimuli.

I cannot think, I cannot understand, how killing a man will add lustre to his dignity. Is there honesty in such a deed?

Exodus 23, 7: "Thou shalt keep away from anything dishonest. The innocent and the just thou shalt not put to death; nor shalt thou acquit the guilty."

— Amen

# Cardinal Rejects Women Priests

**St. Louis [RNS]** — Cardinal John J. Wright, the Vatican's top official on the clergy, sharply rejected the idea of women priests in the Roman Catholic Church during a sometimes caustic news conference here.

The American-born prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy, declared emphatically that women in the priesthood is contrary to Church tradition. "And I spell tradition with a capital T."

In St. Louis to address the Catholic Central Union's Congress of the Sacred Heart, a meeting of generally conservative Catholic organizations, the

prelate met for more than an hour with news media representatives.

While stating that his "saucy manner" should not be considered flippant, Cardinal Wright — a former bishop of Pittsburgh — said that his esteem for the entire body of Episcopal bishops grew when they refused recently to recognize the irregular ordination of 11 women to the Episcopal priesthood.

Reacting sharply to a reporter who asked if an American would ever become Pope, the cardinal said "I don't give a hoot who the Pope is — just as long as he's a good Catholic."

The cardinal said that the

reporter's question was prompted by a nationalistic attitude, noting that Americans ask about an American pope, and the French ask about a French pope, and so on.

"I don't know of a single force in the world that has brought about more havoc than nationalism," he added.

## RETREATS SET

**Canisteo** — Teen Seminar dates at St. Joachim's are Sept. 23-25; Oct. 7-9 and 21-23 and the Women's Retreat dates are Sept. 13, 14 and 15 and Oct. 18, 19 and 20. Parishioners may contact Father Otto Vogt at the rectory for further information.

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