



### Black Priest

Bishop Jay Swain, of the Mormon Church's Stake, Utah diocese, congratulates Joseph Freeman, Jr., 26 on his ordination as the first black priest in the history of the Church. Mr. Freeman was ordained an elder, one of six offices in the Mormon priesthood, after an earlier announcement by Spencer W. Kimball president of the Church, which said that black males would no longer be kept from the priesthood.

### Abortion Protests Continue in Italy

Rome (RNS) — The Association of Catholic Doctors in Italy has confirmed that all nuns working in private clinics which perform abortions must resign from their posts.

In addition, religious working in the maternity wards or obstetrics and gynecological departments of public hospitals carrying out abortions will be transferred to other sections of the hospitals.

This action comes in the wake of mounting Church criticism of an abortion law that went into effect on June 6. It permits women over 18 who are within their third month of pregnancy to receive free abortions.

The doctors' organization also threatened to expel any member who directly or indirectly follows the pro-abortion line.

No one can predict as yet the impact of resignations from private non-Catholic hospitals. Catholic institutions have already announced they will not perform abortions. It is known that within Rome there are about 20 private non-religious clinics where monks and nuns work. Religious also hold positions in the city's public hospitals where, under the new law, abortions must be carried out.

Other Church action, however, may diminish the chances of the abortion law taking effect in this overwhelmingly Catholic nation. Dr. Raffaele Bolognesi, president of a local physicians' association, says that up to 90 percent of Rome's doctors may refuse to perform abortions under Article Nine of the new law, which gives the right of "conscientious objection" to taking part in abortions. The church has

urged doctors to take this path.

The Italian Catholic Bishop's Conference has issued a 10-point statement, similar to the 10 "principles of comportment," spelled out by the Vicar of Rome, Cardinal Ugo Poletti, in condemning abortion.

This latest Church comment on the new law echoed earlier declarations by Cardinal Poletti and Pope Paul that those participating in abortion "immediately exclude themselves from communion with the Church and are to be deprived of the Sacraments" — excommunicated.

Feminists have responded angrily to the Church offensive. The Women's Group of the Socialist Party, one of the parties in the ruling government pact, issued the following statement from its regional branch: "One knows that Socialist women will require the complete fulfillment of the law and that they are ready for battle, as they always have been. We are fighting for the defense of a right which women have won through years of sacrifice and struggle. We find the interference of the Church in the affairs of the state intolerable. It is equally intolerable and unthinkable that anyone could have arrived at the point of re-instituting the Medieval practice of excommunication."

Corriere Della Sera, the respected Milan newspaper, carried a front page editorial — not an unusual practice in Italian newspapers — warning that Church actions should not interfere with the state's obligation to carry out the law. While the abortion law remains on the books, the editorial said, "the duty of the state to guarantee its application remains indisputable."

## Guatemalan Church Leaders Charge Government with 'Genocidal Violence'

By GARY MACEOIN  
Guatemala City (RNS) — Church groups here and in other Central American countries have accused large landowners backed by government sanction of stepping up "genocidal violence" against the Indians.

The latest incident — in a pattern of repression that, by Amnesty International count, has in the last 20 years caused more than 20,000 deaths in Guatemala — occurred May 29 in Panzosa, a small town in the interior, 25 miles west of Lake Izabal.

Government spokesmen claimed that to quell a public demonstration army troops accompanied by landowners fired "in self-defense," killing 34 campesinos and critically wounding 17. Eyewitness accounts collected by independent investigators, however, assert that the soldiers opened fire on a large group of peacefully assembled, unarmed Indians, killing more than 100 men, women and children.

Guatemalan Roman Catholic Church leaders have sided with the Indians and peasants against what they call "officially inspired violence."

The provincial of the Dominican Order, which staffs the parish in Panzosa, made a strong protest against the massacre. Twenty-four religious organizations, including the Conference of Religious and the Church-related Justice and Peace Commission, joined in critical statement.

Stung by the charges, Defense Minister Otto Spiegeler retorted that priests and sisters have joined with "subversives" in stirring up the people. They have used tape-recorded messages in the Kekchi Indian language, he charged, to arouse the people to demand title to the land, telling them that "the land

belongs to God and those who work it."

Similar charges have been hurled at Archbishop Oscar Romero of neighboring El Salvador who predicted, "If social and political conditions are not created so that the

poorest of our people, the campesinos, have a way to explain their needs and present their just demands, violence will get worse."

But the El Salvadoran government accused the church of fomenting the

continuing wave of clashes between campesinos and government troops or landowner-led paramilitary units. "There is a subversive plan in the countryside that has the support of church groups," a military spokesman said.

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