

# Pursuing Women's Rights

Following is excerpted from a recent address given by Pope John Paul to an international congress on the family which explored the family and the status of women.

I am very happy you have tackled this fundamental and delicate subject, for it deserves to be dealt with in depth, with wisdom, realism and without fear. Not only is our civilization very sensitive, sometimes hypersensitive to it, but it corresponds to a real need, for the upheavals in social life and the movement of ideas bring forth many challenges and passions in this field. In fact God be thanked, many women have fully developed their gifts in their concrete lives and have brought about the development of those around them. We had marvelous testimonies of this at the Synod.



But a certain number of women rightly feel the need to be understood better, in their dignity as a person, in the value of the tasks which are customarily theirs, in their aspiration to realize fully their feminine vocation within the family and within society. Some are weary and almost crushed by so many worries and burdens, without finding sufficient understanding and aid. Some suffer and regret being relegated to tasks which they are told are secondary ones. Some are tempted to seek a solution in movements which claim to "liberate" them although it would be necessary to ask what liberation it is a question of, and not to mean by this word emancipation from what is their specific vocation as mothers and wives, or imitation, leading to uniformity, of the way in which the male partner finds fulfillment. And yet all this evolution clearly shows that there is a real feminine advancement to be pursued, in many respects.

It is essential therefore to begin by strengthening woman with a deeper study of a certain number of considerations: her fundamental equality in dignity with man in God's plan; what qualifies her as a human

person as compared with man in order to live in a personal communion with him; her vocation as a daughter of God, a wife and mother; her appeal to take part in a free and responsible way in the great tasks of today; and for this reason, her capacity and her duty of developing her personality fully: apprenticeship in competences, training in the spirit of service, deepening her prayer and faith life, from which she will make others benefit.

Care must be taken that woman, is not, for financial reasons, necessarily tied down to work that is too heavy and hours of work that are too long, in addition to all her responsibilities as homemaker and educator of her children.

Society should make the effort to organize itself differently.

Women at all levels of family life also provide an unequalled contribution to the future of society and the Church, a contribution which cannot be neglected without great harm to the latter as well as to the woman herself, whether it is a question of the conditions surrounding motherhood, the necessary intimacy with her little ones, the education of children and of the young, the attentive and prolonged dialogue with them, the care to be taken over the many necessities of the home, in order that the latter may be welcoming, cosy, comforting on the affective plane and educative on the cultural and religious plane.

Who would dare to deny that in many cases, the stability and success of the family, its human and spiritual development, owe a great deal to this presence of the mother in the home. It is therefore a real professional work which deserves to be recognized as such by society; it calls moreover for courage, responsibility, ingenuity and holiness.

It is a question therefore of helping women to become aware of this responsibility and of all the gifts of femininity that God has put in them for the greater good of the family and society. Thought must be also given to women who are suffering from frustrations or precarious conditions, to help them by getting them to help those around them.

## Centering on Service



Human Life Commission

Based on a consistent and explicit Catholic teaching of the sacredness of human life at all stages, the Human Life Commission addresses a variety of issues, particularly abortion, euthanasia and live fetal experimentation through educational, pastoral and legislative efforts.

Each year, the Catholic community is asked to support the commission's efforts through contributions on Respect Life Sunday, the first Sunday of October. The 1980 total was \$23,621. The funds received are the commission's sole support.

Half of the money is returned directly to support the diocesan Pastoral Care Network made up of Birthright, Lifeline and live-in organizations such as Melita House.

These not-for-profit groups are aimed primarily at direct counseling, referral and pregnancy testing for women with unexpected pregnancies. They are not involved in direct services which help a person carry out a decision to induce abortion and they are not involved with political campaigns.

Through funds received, Birthright was able to open a new office this year in Rochester, increasing its interviews by 38 percent and

pregnancy testing by 50 percent. In 1981, the funds will encourage a Birthright office in Ithaca. Each county in the diocese will then have at least one pastoral care group. Some funds have been given to state and local incorporated Right to Life educational groups and St. Bernard's Seminary library. The remaining funds go for staff, audiovisuals, educational and legislative programming.

In-service training days are provided organizations offering care to women with distressful pregnancies. In all, 70 people have heard speakers address such topics as Principles of Crisis Counseling. Catholic Family Center offered insights on its unwed mother and adoption divisions as well as services offered. This year, a woman who has suffered through an abortion, subsequent pregnancy and releasing her baby for adoption shared her experience with the group.

Members of the commission, its staff and other qualified local speakers provide an educational series on such sacredness of life topics as Hunger, Elderly, Abortion, Teenage Pregnancy, Handicapped, Imprisoned, Death and Dying and Capital Punishment for any group throughout the diocese, free. To date, 10 parishes have

used the programs. Audiovisuals are available to the community as well as a well-stocked library and pamphlet resource. For instance, this year abortion and euthanasia will be addressed by film and a panel of experts in programs co-sponsored by St. Thomas Lawyers Guild, Right to Life, Greater Rochester Association of Evangelicals, Office of Family Life and the commission.

The commission has established Congressional District Action Committees throughout the diocese which can immediately respond to our state and national representatives when pertinent legislation is proposed. Each parish was asked to participate by signing Life Roll cards designating the individual's willingness to write legislators regarding a Human Life Amendment.

With regard to capital punishment, progress toward its elimination in this state has been very slow. For the past several years, the State Legislature has passed death penalty bills. Fortunately, Gov. Carey has vetoed them and the attempted overrides have failed. The Department of Justice and Peace has presented workshops on the issue to three parish groups, including a debate with Assemblyman Lloyd Rifford from Auburn.

The Human Life coordinators are Ange and Peg Turiano and they may be reached at the Department of Justice and Peace, 750 W. Main St., Rochester, N.Y. 14611 or by phone at (716) 328-6400.

## Business in Diocese

R. Paul Miller, MC, has assumed directorship of Medical Services at St. John's Home on Highland Avenue. Dr. Miller is a graduate of Notre Dame University and Georgetown Medical school. He interned at Bellevue Hospital in New York City.

He has also served at St. Mary's Hospital where he designed and equipped the research laboratories. Dr. Miller resides with his wife, Rigmor Lindhal Miller, and their four children on East Boulevard.

## Respect Life Service Set

Father Edward Bryce, director of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Respect Life Committee will join with Rochester people to thank God for the life we share and to pray for the success of the Human Life Amendment to the Constitution on Thursday, Jan. 22 at 7:30 p.m. at Sacred Heart Cathedral. The Mass, sponsored by the diocesan Human Life Commission, is open to all interested persons, and will be followed by a reception.

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