

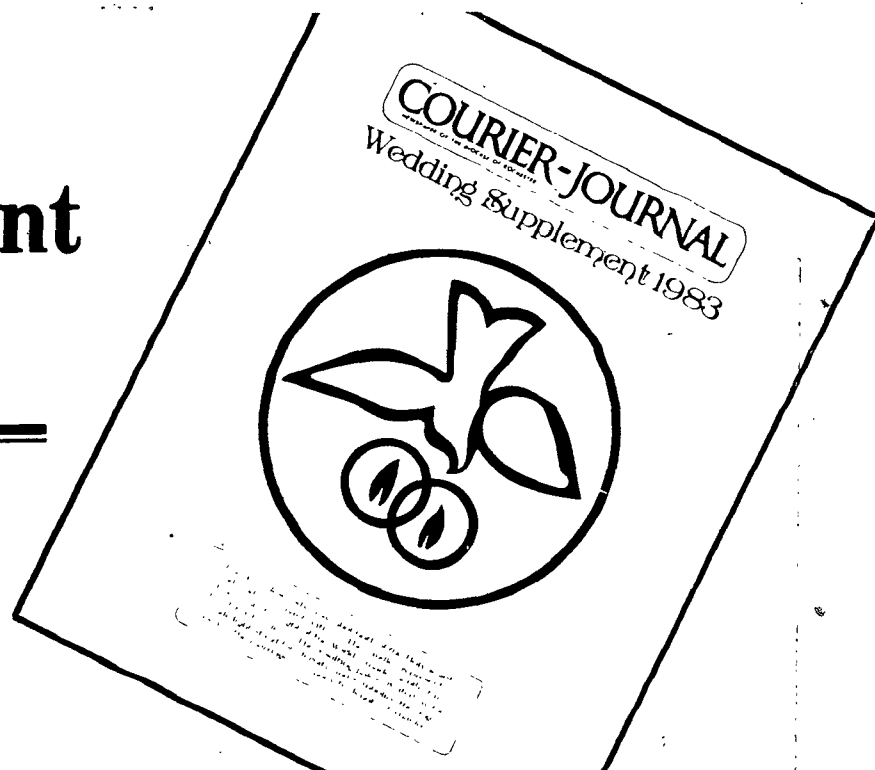
## Catholic Schools Week

In God We Trust  
... and Teach

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## Wedding Supplement 1983

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# COURIER-JOURNAL

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## BISHOP CLARK STATEMENT ON IN VITRO FERTILIZATION

### Related story, Page 4

The announcement by the University of Rochester Medical Center of the local inauguration of a procedure to assist married couples to overcome infertility prompts me to share some reflections and considerations for members of our Catholic community as well as the wider community served by Strong Memorial Hospital.

The procedure known as "in vitro fertilization" has been successful in conceiving and bringing to birth more than 100 babies in many countries around the world. A method of conceiving and bearing a child is not simply a significant advance in knowledge but also a human event with even larger social and ethical dimensions. It is important to present some basic teachings of the Catholic tradition in regard to family life and human life as a basis for discussion and reflection.

1. The family is the primary unit of society; it is also a sacred unit. It is the primary human presence which generates an individual's capacity for knowledge, love and faith. The dignity and uniqueness of family life need social support and affirmation to resist the pressures of our society which promote disintegration.

The gifts of human knowledge and inventiveness must be organized to discover ways to improve upon the capacity of our society to help families to nurture and support children to maturity. Assisting families to raise healthy, good and loving children is the broad context in which any discussion must take place. Any introduction of technology into such a highly personal context as parenting and family life could tend to depersonalize this context within which we value love making and life giving.

2. The teaching of the Church which reflects God's revealed love affirms the unique dignity and sacred value of all human life. I hope we will always speak on behalf of the most defenseless, lest that person be abused or manipulated at any stage of his or her life.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss with all groups the practical consequences of our belief in the sacredness of human life from its first moment. It is this belief which led Pope John Paul II, as recently as Oct. 23, 1982, to state in an address to the Pontifical Academy of Science:

"I have no reason to be apprehensive for those experiments in biology that are performed by scientists who, like you, have a profound respect for the human person since I am sure they will contribute to the most integral well-being of the human person. On the other hand, I condemn, in the most explicit and formal way, experimental manipulations of the human embryo since the human being from conception to death cannot be exploited for any purpose whatsoever. Indeed as the Second Vatican Council teaches, the human person is the only creature on earth which God wills for himself." (Gaudium et Spes, 24)

The policies and guidelines under which the University acts are most important. Central to these guidelines will be procedures on the discarding of unused zygotes and aborting so-called defectives. Both of these would meet the strongest negative reaction.

3. These methods developed in the laboratory have given rise to new hopes among married couples unable to conceive children. These legitimate hopes and dreams cannot be dismissed lightly. How many thousands of couples in our area of

the state want children and cannot have them. This procedure, however, is costly and will be available only to those who can afford it. It is important, therefore, to remember that a primary way that the human community has responded to this plight is through adoption. Equal time and expenditure should be invested in helping childless couples to adopt the children of those who for so many tragic reasons cannot afford to bear or keep them. Thus, the financial cost of this procedure and its promotion in the face of other health care needs are legitimate questions which should be discussed.

In light of these principles about human life in the family, I urge Catholics and others to consider and evaluate the many questions that "in vitro fertilization" raises. Contemporary developments in medicine and genetics give us greater power and knowledge, but also call us to a deeper awareness of the ethical and moral choices regarding the use of this power.

The same kind of study and dialogue undertaken with scientists and with political and military leaders concerning the moral issues of war and peace should also be undertaken with physicians and research scientists around the profound issues of human reproduction and genetics. Science and technology can contribute much to the meaning and enhancement of human life, but there are aspects of being human that transcend the restricted goals of science. A scientific technique can never take the place of solid ethical and religious values which probe the deeper human questions of relationship, ultimate meaning and life itself."

Science and technology must be at the service of the human and not the other way around. As a community we should always strive to improve the quality of human life from its earliest beginnings to its final end. We should not rejoice simply because a procedure is now technically possible, but rather because it is moral and noble — in short, truly human.

## Bishop Urges Criminal Justice Reform

### Related story, Page 4

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has cited the importance of the just-published State Catholic Bishops Pastoral Statement on Criminal Justice.

A diocesan spokesman explained that the statement calls for the reform of our state's criminal justice system; it speaks on crime, the criminal, the victim and justice for all. It stresses that if this much-needed reform of the system is to take place, the three branches of state government must each play a role in bringing about the change.

In their statement, the bishops discuss prison overcrowding as one of the major problems facing the state today. During the past year, the prison population increased at a rate of more than 200 a month. State prisons operate at 115 percent of estimated capacity.

The statements expresses concern that "fears and frustrations of communities regarding appropriate responses to crime have led governmental leaders to adopt a 'get tough' approach to crime. They have responded by passing laws and expanding jail spaces. While the approach may be politically expedient, we have found that it does not adequately address the problem. The

bishops believe that the development, expansion and greater use of alternatives to incarceration is a preferred approach."

In calling for alternatives to incarceration, the bishops make it very clear that they do not recommend that crime be ignored or that there be an easing up on criminals. The bishops affirmed the rights and responsibilities of society to protect its citizens — "Those who commit harm to persons or property must be held accountable for their actions."

They call for new programs which address the needs and rights of crime victims.

In advocating the use of alternatives to incarceration, the bishops specifically mention:

- A more reasonable setting of bail in accord with a person's income status;
- Release on recognizance.
- Pre-trial release.

The bishops called on the three branches of the state government to enact laws and programs which will help to

reduce prison population. They encouraged the judicial branch to recalculate jail time credit to correct computation errors for prisoners.

The legislative branch was urged to allow judges to use more discretion in dealing with non-violent first offenders.

The judicial branch is encouraged to increase the use of restitution and community service penalties and to make greater use of referral for treatment of drug offenders, alcoholics, the mentally ill and sex offenders.

With the system itself, the bishops call for improved rehabilitation programs which prepare prisoners to live productively.

The statement urges individual Christians "to assist us in advocating for systemic change and providing direct assistance to offenders; to offer support to offenders and victims in the form of housing, employment, legal counseling and other areas of need."

The statement concludes: "The Church in New York State will continue to strive for greater use of alternatives to incarceration. We will advocate for a higher quality of life for the offenders and a greater restitution for the victims."