

Bishops Life Unit Opposes 'Definition of Death' Laws

Washington (NC) — Citing medical, moral and legal disagreements over the value of such legislation, the bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities reaffirmed its opposition to "definition of death" laws.

The committee, chaired by Cardinal Terence Cooke of

New York, said "a compelling need for such legislation has still not been demonstrated." The committee, which first stated its opposition to "definition of death" laws in 1977, gave its assessment in a "resource paper" sent in April to all U.S. bishops.

It took particular notice of a model definition of death statute which has been adopted in some states and was endorsed in 1982 by the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

But, according to the paper, the situation is complicated by the fact that medical and other experts do not agree among themselves on criteria for identifying brain death or on whether brain death can be equated with death itself.

There are fears, the committee stated, that some doctors may want to use "brain death" as a medical and legal fiction to obtain transplant organs from comatose but still-living patients. There is also evidence, according to the paper, that pro-euthanasia groups have attempted to use the definition of death movement as a way to legalize euthanasia.

The committee asked if the model statute could be "a stepping-stone to euthanasia or a bulwark against it? Does it prevent less restrictive 'brain death' definitions from being approved or set a dangerous precedent for them?"

More than half the states have enacted some form of legislation equating death with "brain death," and in other states courts have approved the legal concept of brain death. But existing statutes and court rulings differ among themselves.

According to the committee's resource paper, definition of death legislation has become an issue the United States largely in response to the development of medical life-support technology. Traditional criteria of death -- the cessation of breathing and heartbeat -- have increasingly been abandoned in favor of "brain death."

"I'll go for it," muttered my husband.

"This is an experiment," I said and soothed him by saying that maybe the youngest would make him some baked ziti with melted cheese, her contribution to microwave cookery, later.

Cautiously, I took one slice of bread and cut it to make a half sandwich, spreading it liberally with chunky peanut butter. I wrapped it in the paper towel but forgot and put it in on high power. It came out soggy, then grew hard. The dog thought it was delicious.

Sarah Child



All in the Family

Leave It To the Dog To Gum It Up

As regular readers know, I like to pass on culinary treats when I hear about them.

The following tips all are from kids and involve use of a microwave oven — a commentary on the age we live in.

The first came via the head of the house who heard it from an acquaintance who is rearing two teenage sons by himself.

"Isn't cooking every day a bit of a chore?" my husband asked.

No, reported the man. The boys, it seems, like peanut butter sandwiches warmed in the microwave.

"That can't work," I interrupted. "Bread gets soggy, then hard in the microwave."

"Nah," said our teenage son and he described how his three friends, Chuck, Jim and Kurt, wrap their peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in a paper towel and put them in the oven on warm for half a minute.

The next suggestion came courtesy of our daughter, the senior, whose friend, Eric, uses up breakfast leftovers by putting peanut butter and jelly between two pancakes and warming the whole sandwich in the same way.

"Gross, isn't it?" she muttered, "though it's not as bad as what Mary does. She spreads a graham cracker with butter, adds marshmallows, tops it with another buttered graham and melts it all in the microwave."

Not bad when you get a craving, I noted, but I like my own fix better, i.e., mixing chunky peanut butter with Hershey's syrup to make hot peanut butter fudge topping for vanilla ice cream.

Wanting to see if the peanut butter sandwich in the oven really works, I asked for takers. "Make it peppers and

Academy Alumnae To Meet

The Nazareth Academy Alumnae Association will hold its annual banquet, 6:30 p.m., Monday, May 2 at the Mapledale Party House.

Members of anniversary classes, beginning with the class of 1913, have received individual invitations, but all Nazareth graduates are welcome to the event.

Present will be past principals and teachers of the school, and the golden jubilee class will be particularly feted.

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Communion Breakfast

Parents and teachers at Nazareth Academy will sponsor a Communion Breakfast at 10 a.m., Sunday, May 1, at the school. Father Brian Murphy, school chaplain, will be celebrant. A pancake breakfast will follow in the cafeteria. Individual tickets are \$2.25, family tickets \$8 and are on sale at the school. Further information is available by calling 872-5337.



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