

Family Charter

Continued from Page 1

by the Holy See consists of four parts: an introduction explaining the nature of the document, a 13-point preamble laying out the context and theoretical basis for the charter, the 12-article charter itself, and three pages of sources and references for the points in the charter and its preamble. Most of the sources cited are church documents, but documents from the international political community are also cited, including several references to the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The first three articles of the charter deal with the rights of marriage.

Article 1 declares the right of each person to choose freely whether to marry or remain single, but insists that couples with a "marriage duly contracted" have a clear primacy in law over "non-married couples." Article 2 declares the right of spouses to marry only by their "free and full consent" and recognizes the "same dignity and equal rights" of both spouses in marriage. Article 3 declares the right of spouses to "found a family" and to decide freely on the number of their children. Responsible family planning, it says, must follow "the objective moral order which excludes recourse to contraception, sterilization and abortion."

The next two articles deal with children.

Article 4, that "human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception," has seven subsections. They range from condemnations of abortion and of experimentation with embryos to demands for full protection of children born out of wedlock, orphans and handicapped children. Article 5 declares the primary rights of parents in the education of children and lists six points of concern, including the rights of parents to oversee a child's sex education and to assure proper religious and moral education.

Articles 6-8 deal with human rights of the family in the socio-political and religious order.

These declare the family's rights: "to exist and to pro-

gress as a family" with dignity, independence, privacy, integrity and stability; to live its religious beliefs both privately and publicly; and to "exercise its social and political function in the construction of society."

Socio-economic rights are the subject of Articles 9-11.

"An adequate family policy on the part of public authorities" is called for by the first of these. The second, on work, states the right to a just "family wage" and calls for recognition of "the work of the mother in the home." The third cites the right of the family to "decent housing" and "basic services."

Article 12, devoted to "families of migrants," calls for "the same protection as that accorded other families" for immigrants, emigrant workers and refugees.

Charter

Continued from Page 1

political function" and to form associations to achieve its socio-political values effectively.

9. "An adequate family policy" by governments is needed "in the juridical, economic, social and fiscal domains."

10. Working conditions and wages must respect family needs and rights.

11. Families have a right to "decent housing," a suitable "physical environment" and "basic services for the life of the family and the community."

12. Families of migrants -- immigrants, emigrant workers, refugees -- "have the right to the same protection as that accorded other families."

Sex Ed Document

Continued from Page 1

in groups, above all if they are mixed," it stated.

The document warned that criticisms normally raised refer more to methods used by some teachers than to the enterprise itself.

Catechesis must "illustrate the positive values of sexuality, integrating them with those of virginity and marriage in the light of the mystery of Christ and of the church," the document continued.

This catechesis should show that the first vocation of the Christian is to love and that the vocation of love is realized in marriage or in the life of celibacy.

"Sexual intercourse, ordained towards procreation, is the maximum expression on the physical level of the communion of love of the married," according to the document. Divorced from this context "it loses its significance, exposes the selfishness of the individual and is a moral disorder."

Sexuality is achieved in the full sense "only with the realization of affective maturity, which manifests itself in unselfish love and in the total gift of self."

The document cited pro-

blems such as pre-marital relations, masturbation, homosexuality and drug abuse and called for preventive action.

"It is love and care which educate toward value, dignity, respect for life, for the body, for sex for health...Only a freedom which is authentic, educated, aided and promoted offers protection from the quest for illusory liberty of drugs and sex."

The document said it is the responsibility of the state to safeguard its citizens against the abuse of minors, sexual violence, permissiveness and pornography.

The media, by intrusiveness and suggestion, display to youth "a continuous and conditioning stream of information and training, which is very much more trenchant than that of one's own family," the document warned.

It repeated Pope John Paul II's call for responsible Christians, parents and members of the media, not to hide behind a pretext of neutrality in monitoring what young people read, hear and see and it urged civil authority to regulate the media to protect public morality.

Parents have the right to ensure that their children area not compelled to attend classes which are not in agreement with their own moral and religious convictions, the charter stated.

The Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education said that it is aware of cultural and social differences in various countries and said its guidelines should be adapted to the pastoral needs of each local church.

The congregation also noted that some Catholic organizations already have begun to carry out positive work in sex education, but difficulties are found in countries "where the urgency of the problem is not recognized or where perhaps it is thought that it resolves itself without specific education."

The document on sex education reiterates statements made in the Charter of the Rights of the Family, released by the Holy See Nov. 24.

The charter stated that sex education is the basic right of parents and must always be carried out under their close supervision, whether at home or in education centers chosen and controlled by them.

Parents have the right to ensure that their children area not compelled to attend classes which are not in agreement with their own moral and religious convictions, the charter stated.

Family Structure Critical, Says Diocesan Official

Following are comments from Frank Staropoli, director of the diocesan Family Life Office, on the charter:

This document calls structures to an explicit recognition of family units as a critical structure in society and urges the principle of subsidiarity as an operative principle for both Church and state.

Some of the points are aimed at specific situations in particular countries. For example, in a number of countries, families are not free to decide on the size of their families. Sterilization is required after one or two children.

However, I would say that in the case of those articles which are already guaranteed rights for families in this country, these rights then become the obligations of families to be exercised. For example, the charter mentions the family's right "to exercise its social and political function." We have that right. It is then our obligation to do so.

Several points specifically apply to us. For example:

1. "Families have a right to decent housing and basic services for life." This calls both the Church and the government in our country to accountability for those in this country who do not yet have those basic needs secured. Even more so, this highlights our affluence in relation to the rest of the world and the obligation that imposes on us.

2. "Parents have the original, primary, and inalienable right to educate their children." This is a challenge to both our public and Church educational systems. In a positive sense, how can we assist parents in their primary roles as educators; or, how have our structures usurped the rights of parents

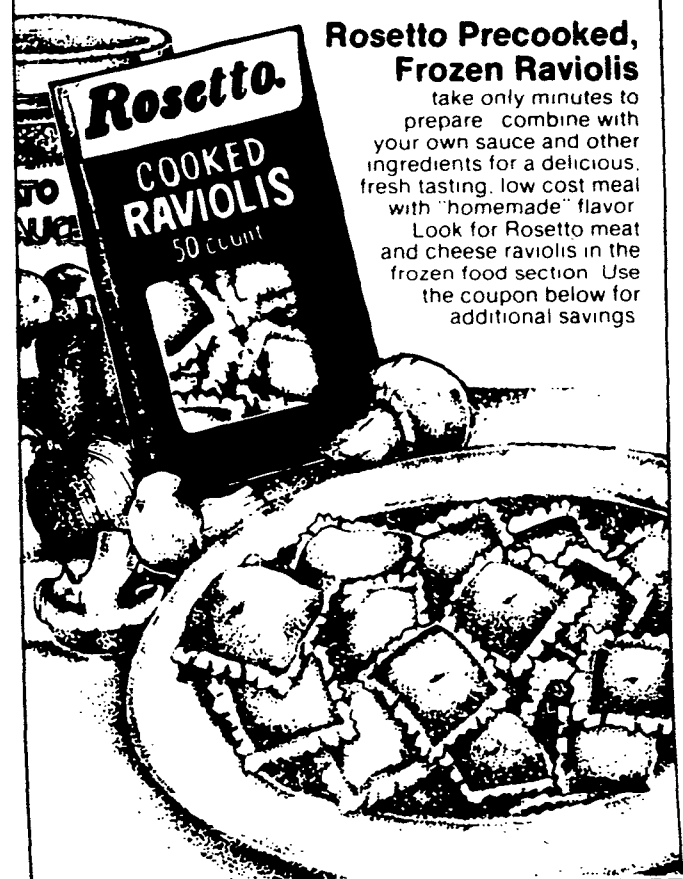
to educate?

3. "Families of migrants have the right to the same protection as that accorded other families." This speaks directly to the situation of Haitians in this country, for example. If the government is not insuring this right, it then becomes the obligation of the

Church to provide sanctuary.

The document is an interesting reflection of the growing international focus of the Church in Rome. The Church has moved beyond its past preoccupation with developed western culture and it has urged us to do the same.

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Document

Continued from Page 1

entrusted "indiscriminately to just any member of the school community."

Group education, especially groups of both boys and girls, requires special precautions and teachers should allow time for individual consultation. Bishops should establish guidelines for sex education in groups, especially for mixed groups.

Problems such as premarital relations, masturbation, homosexuality and drug abuse call for the preventive action of love and care from the Christian community.

It is the responsibility of the state to safeguard its citizens against the abuse of minors, sexual violence, permissiveness and pornography. Civil authority should regulate the media to protect public morality.

Parents and members of the media must not hide behind a pretext of neutrality in monitoring what young people read, hear and see.

The sex education guidelines should be adapted to the pastoral needs of each local church.

School Adds Computers

Seneca Falls - The staff at St. Patrick's school has coordinated a computer center for the students.

The center opened in October and currently consists of three Apple II computers located in the basement of the old building. Program goals for the first year of operation are to teach computer awareness to all students, use computer assisted instruction beginning with grades 4-8 and adding grades K-3 as soon as possible during the school year, offer some form of basic programming to the 8th grade students.

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