

U.S. Bishops: Must Oppose ERA As Is

See editorial, Page 17
Washington (NC) — The National Conference of Catholic Bishops announced April 19 it will "have no alternative but to oppose" the Equal Rights Amendment if a clause is not added excluding abortion and abortion funding from its scope.

In a news release the NCCB said its Administrative Committee in March approved a resolution stating the new position on ERA "because of the serious moral problems" that would be presented by an ERA without the inclusion of an anti-abortion clause.

The NCCB also announced establishment of an ad hoc interdisciplinary committee to study implications of the ERA. The committee is chaired by Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis, NCCB vice president.

Msgr. Daniel F. Hoye, NCCB general secretary, said the Administrative Committee at its March meeting had noted recent developments in Congress and the courts which he said raise questions about ERA's implications not only for abortion but for private educational institutions, the tax-exempt status of charitable organizations, religious exemptions in federal grant statutes and government aid programs.

"In general, it seems fair to say that the potential gravity of the amendment's implications is the product not so much of its own terms as originally understood by sponsors and supporters, as it is of an ambiguous congressional record and the interaction among ERA, legislative enactments and other legal principles," Msgr. Hoye said in a statement.

The ad hoc committee

studying the implications of the ERA will present its findings and recommendations to the Administrative Committee in September, the NCCB said.

Previously the bishops have taken no position on the ERA itself. Last fall, without changing its basic neutrality, the bishops' conference announced support for a proposed amendment to the ERA sponsored by Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., which supporters say would make ERA "abortion neutral."

Major supporters of the ERA, such as the National Organization for Women, want Congress to resubmit the proposal to the states for ratification without amendment.

The NCCB statement said that at the March Administrative Committee meeting a joint report on the issue was presented by the NCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, chaired by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, and by Wilfred Caron, NCCB general counsel.

The statement said the Administrative Committee also discussed a March 9 ruling in which the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania used that state's ERA to strike down Pennsylvania's prohibitions on public funding of abortions. Pro-life groups have argued that a federal ERA similarly could affect federal abortion restrictions.

Msgr. Hoye said the Administrative Committee in its discussion reaffirmed the bishops' commitment to women's rights.

"The discussion made clear the committee's concern that there be no doubt about the conference's fundamental commitment to civil rights and the dignity of the person, and its support of governmental and private efforts to promote fair treatment of all people and prevent all forms of wrongful discrimination between the sexes," he said.

The Administrative Committee is a panel of some 40 bishops which conducts the business of the NCCB between annual general meetings.

More Opinions

O'Rourke Story Misleading

EDITOR:

Although St. Patrick's Day 1984 is now just another faded memory, the Courier-Journal should be reminded of a National Catholic News Service article it carried that week concerning Michael O'Rourke, honorary grand marshal of this year's parade in New York City. It contained pertinent, factual omissions that are central to the controversy surrounding Mr. O'Rourke and they represent the essential reasons why the parade committee focused on his plight.

The article covered only half the story: that O'Rourke was a member of the Irish Republican Army (during the mid '70s), escaped from a Dublin prison in 1976, fled to and illegally entered the U.S., married an American citizen, was arrested and held in prison in New York City since 1979, and is currently fighting deportation, that he was named honorary grand marshal of the N.Y. City St. Patrick's Day parade.

The other half of the story, the questionable integrity of justice he has received in our country, was not reported: O'Rourke has been held in prison in New York -- without bail -- since 1979; the judge who first heard his case to fight deportation claims he was intimidated off the case by immigration agents.

Judge Ernest Hupp, a former immigration judge, said he had been followed 125 miles from his chambers in Philadelphia to his home in Baltimore by two men in a black sedan. He stated that he was prepared to rule in O'Rourke's favor, and he believes that was the reason for the surveillance. Later, after stepping down from the case, he learned that the two men following him were Immigration and Naturalization Service agents. He was replaced by a judge who subsequently found for the government.

On Feb. 28, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato joined as original cosponsor of S.2357, a bill to provide a six-month delay in deportation proceedings to allow O'Rourke and his attorneys time to explore all available remedies. Rep. Borski and Sens. Specter and Heinz of Pennsylvania have joined D'Amato in calling for Judiciary Committee hearings of both houses into the episode involving Judge Hupp.

The Republic of Ireland is not seeking extradition of O'Rourke. The entire affair smacks of intrusion into U.S. legal proceedings by another foreign power whose years of oppression in Ireland created the Michael O'Rourkes.

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Consecration To Mary

EDITOR:

Let me begin by commending Pope John Paul II for leading the Catholic world in consecration to the mother of God -- a heroic act, a step in the right direction. Consider the following:

1. **Words of Christ** -- "Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in Heaven" and "He who hears you hears me." Christ telling us to listen to His vicar. In consecrating ourselves to Mary we are accepting with love the great gift of Jesus who said, "Here is your mother." We are consecrating ourselves to her service which is the service of Jesus.

2. **Tradition** which is "no less sacred than Holy Scripture." Wearing of a scapular as a sign of consecration to Mary. A tradition as old as our holy church. Most popes have worn one. Most religious communities require one to be worn. The Blue Army highly recommends this holy practice. The tradition of the morning offering which begins, "O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings..." -- a tradition of consecration to Christ through Mary.

3. **The Saints** -- "We must offer ourselves to the service of his divine mother and ask of her the grace to practice virtue. It is well to choose every year among the feasts of the Blessed Virgin one for which we have the most tender devotion and to make a very special preparation by dedicating ourselves anew, and in a more particular manner, to her service, choosing her for our sovereign lady, advocate and mother." -- St. Alphonsus Liguori, Glories of Mary, Practices of Devotion.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

Tending The Lost Sheep

Sunday's Readings: (R3) In: 20/19-31. (R1) Acts 2/42-47. (R2) 1 Pt. 1/3-9.

Easter celebrated the reception of the elect into the Church. Following this stage in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is mystagoga -- the reflection on the mysteries received on Easter Eve.

For a few years, Jesus gathered 12 fishermen to Himself. After He had taught them, shared with them all that the Father had made known to Him, He sent them out to teach all nations. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." That is the rhythm of Christianity: "Come go." "Come, follow me" then "Go, teach all nations." So the Twelve were called "apostles" that is, men sent.

So it is with the neophytes, and all of us baptized like them. For nearly a year, they had come to walk in the journey of faith. Then they were baptized. Why? For privilege? By no means! They were baptized for mission! We all are gathered by Christ, filled with the good news, only to go forth and share it with others. No one lights a candle and puts it under a bushel. That, too, is the rhythm of the Mass. "We gather together to sing the Lord's praises." We listen to the bread of the word; then we break the bread of the Word Himself -- communication (listening to the word) leads to communion (receiving the Word in Holy Communion). But why? The Concluding Rite of the Mass tells us why: "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." In other words, we come to Mass in order to go, among other things, and make Christ present in our everyday world. We come to Mass in order to be sent.

Most religions tend to be insular and parochial. Not Christianity. This sending was not something peripheral or incidental. It was essential and still is. Either the Church grows or she dies, as does any other vital, living thing when it ceases to grow. So Luke explains Pentecost as the empowering of the apostles to give witness of Jesus "in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes even to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1/8).

The people who knew Jesus witnessed an amazing thing: a "man" who came back from the dead, a "man" who had conquered man's greatest enemy -- death! They were impressed! William James used to tell his students, "There is no impression without expression." So the apostles went forth and expressed their impression -- they told the good news of Jesus Christ.

There are 15 million inactive Catholics in the United States. Divide that total up among the number of Catholic parishes in America and that means there are roughly about 800 inactive Catholics in every parish in the United States. When I first heard our Lord's words -- "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" -- I used to think He was talking to the apostles. Wrong! He is talking to you and to me. I bet everyone of you who read this article have a friend -- a fallen-away Catholic. Sometimes all that is needed to bring such a one home is an invitation. We had a parish mission not too long ago. For many Sundays before it, I asked my parishioners to spot an inactive Catholic and by prayer and invitation bring him or her to the mission. As the Father sent Jesus and Jesus sent the apostles, so the Church sends us -- "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord," by bringing home the lost sheep.

St. Louis de Montfort consecrated himself: "In the presence of all the heavenly court, I choose thee for my mother and for my mistress. I deliver and consecrate to thee my body, my soul, my goods." -- from "The Secret of Mary"

4. **Our Blessed Mother** herself who asked for this consecration to be made at Fatima.

Yes, there is only one Mediator between God and man -- Jesus Christ. But don't forget, Mary is our mediator with Jesus. This is

the whole truth. This is what our faith teaches by sound doctrine. A good Catholic doesn't choose what he or she wants to believe out of the true faith as if he were shopping in a store.

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THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

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How can I help a grieving friend?
 People in early grief often are shocked and unable to believe what has happened. They may feel angry or guilty and have difficulty organizing their life, sleeping or eating. If you wish to help you should encourage expressions of feelings. This means listening to the grieving as they talk about the death and their pain over it. You can also provide practical assistance such as babysitting, organizing the household and driving your friend to appointments. Attending the funeral or visitation gives you an opportunity to express your feelings and to give needed support. If you can't go to the funeral or visitation contact your friend and express your feelings as soon as possible after the death.

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