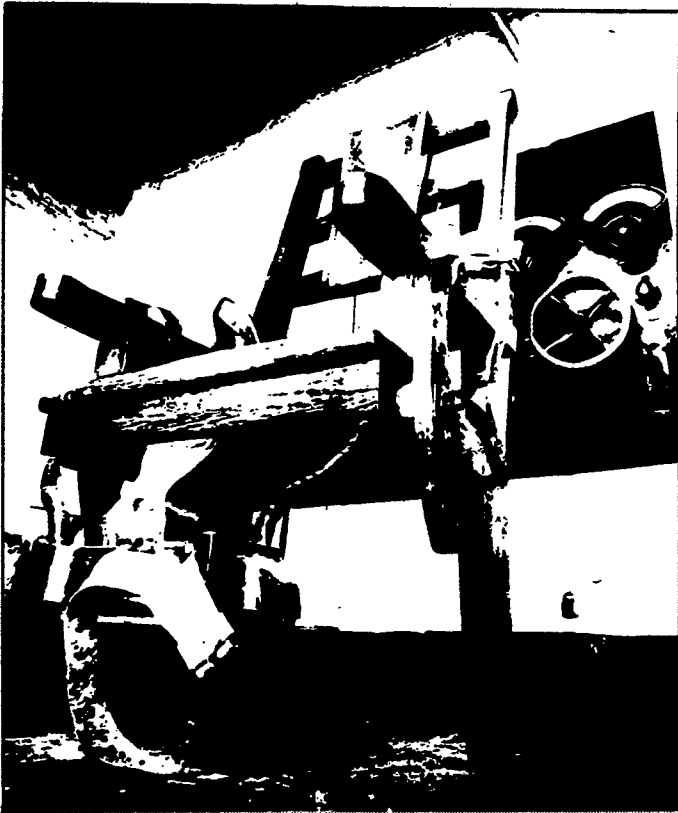


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1,202 Waiting to Die

Washington (NC) -- The number of inmates on death rows across the United States jumped 13 percent in 1983 to a record 1,202, according to a Justice Department report released July 8.

The report also said 252 death sentences were handed down, and 113 people left death row. There were 99 cases of commuted or overturned sentences, while five prisoners were executed.

Nine persons already had been executed in the first six months of 1984. At the time of the report only 20 prisoners had been executed since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976.

All of the 1,202 death-row prisoners have been convicted of murder, the report said. The report also said the courts had been "increasingly reluctant" to allow lengthy appeals. The average stay for death-row inmates is 28 months.

Geographically, the South led the country with 65 percent of the death-row population.

Florida had 193 death row inmates, Texas had 163, California had 149 and Georgia had 102.

There were 38 states with death penalty laws on the books in 1983. Five states -- Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, South Dakota and Vermont -- have the law but no death-row inmates.

Abortion Rate Down ... But

Washington (NC) -- Pro-lifers credit education and alternative services with helping to reduce the U.S. abortion rate but said they can take little comfort in the latest figures released by the Centers for Disease Control.

The CDC reported July 6 that for the first time since 1973 there was only a fraction of an increase in the number of abortions reported.

In 1981, 1.3 million abortions were reported to the CDC, compared with 1.29 million the year before -- an increase of less than 1 percent. James Buehler, a CDC medical epidemiologist, said in previous years the increases ranged from 4 to 15 percent.

The ratio of abortions to live births and the rate of abortions among the childbearing population edged down slightly.

"The national abortion ratio decreased slightly from 359 legal abortions per 1,000 live births in 1980 to 358 per 1,000 live births in 1981," the CDC reported. "Since 1980, the national abortion rate decreased from 25 legal abortions for every 1,000 women aged 15-44 in 1980 to 24 per 1,000 in 1981."

According to the report, abortions were performed mostly on young white unmarried women who had not previously given birth. Two-thirds of the women who had abortions in 1981 were under 25 years old.

The CDC has kept records since 1969, but it was not until 1973 that the Supreme Court struck down state restrictions on abortion.

Father Edward M. Bryce, director of the U.S. bishops' Office for Pro-Life Activities in Washington, said July 9 he was relieved that the figures did not go up. But, he said, "even if the abortion rate has declined somewhat, the enormity of well over a million abortions each year

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Pope Reaffirms Teaching of 'Humanae Vitae'

Vatican City (NC) -- Pope John Paul II reaffirmed, July 11, the teaching of the encyclical, "Humanae Vitae," that the conjugal act in marriage always must be open to procreation.

During his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square, Pope John Paul told several thousand people that one of the basic tenets of Pope Paul VI's encyclical is that "each marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life."

That teaching, the pope said, is central to the encyclical and is based on "the inseparable connection, which God desired and which man cannot break on his own initiative, between the two

aspects of the conjugal act: the unitive aspect and the procreative aspect."

Pope John Paul said the connection in marriage between procreation and the union of the couple "is founded on the intimate structure of the conjugal act itself, which enables husband and wife to generate new life, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and woman."

"By safeguarding both of these essential aspects, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love," the pope said. "At the same time it remains faithful to God's design for the purposes of marriage in directing husband and wife

toward their high calling of parenthood."

A Vatican official said the pope's remarks were part of a series of talks aimed at countering "confusion and doubt" caused by some Catholic theologians on the issue of birth control.

Referring to the "language of the body," the term he has used to describe the sacramental nature of the marriage, Pope John Paul said that during the conjugal act it is essential that this sacramental dimension be understood.

"A rereading of the 'language of the body' in its truth is particularly important in

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Where Catholic Ferraro Stands on Key Issues

By NC News Service

Rep. Geraldine Ferraro, D-N.Y., as Walter F. Mondale's vice presidential running mate, brings some Catholic, feminist, ethnic, working-class values to the Democratic ticket.

A Catholic, the daughter of Italian-American immigrants, Ms. Ferraro has a mixed record on issues of interest to Catholics. She has opposed legal restrictions on abortion but supports tuition tax credits for parents who send their children to parochial schools.

"A tough Democrat," as she calls herself, Ms. Ferraro, 48, has attacked the Reagan administration's foreign and domestic policies, opposed the deployment of the MX missile and spoken against "reckless adventures in Latin America." She opposes mandatory school busing, supports Israel and is pro-ERA.

Her selection makes histo-

ry -- no woman has run on a major party's ticket as the vice presidential candidate. Only four other Catholics have been vice presidential candidates for the Republican or Democratic parties.

She is a liberal, a lawyer, a former public school teacher, a wife and the mother of three children.

Ms. Ferraro has said that as a matter of conscience she is against abortion. "I am Catholic and I accept the teachings of my faith," Time magazine quoted her as saying. Yet she scored straight zeroes (regarded as pro-abortion) on five out of five votes in 1982 and 1983, according to the National Right to Life Committee. (The Equal Rights Amendment was included as one of the five votes studied by the N.R.L.C.)

Ms. Ferraro co-sponsored a tuition tax credit bill in the House which would have

aided parents of parochial school children. Evelyn Aquila, an assistant superintendent of schools for the Brooklyn diocese, said Ms. Ferraro offered her "full support" to tax credit legislation, including the Packwood-Moynihan bill which failed in the Senate in 1983.

Ms. Aquila said she believes that Ms. Ferraro "sees parochial schools as a system that we should keep alive, that has a great deal to offer to society."

Ms. Ferraro also has urged Pope John Paul II to take a closer look at the problems of overpopulation, poverty, economic injustice and disease in Central America.

Ms. Ferraro represents New York's 9th district, a blend of ethnic working-class Italians, Greeks, Asians, Jews and Latins. The Queens district is known as the home

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Rome Confers with Local SSJs on Constitution

By John Darr

The Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (SCRS) of the Latin rite, the Vatican body responsible for the affairs of all religious institutes of the Latin rite, has announced that it has received a letter from the Superior General of the Society of the Sacred Jesus (SSJ) regarding their constitution.

The letter, according to a letter from SCRS Secretary General, Father Peter D'Arcy, has "many points which require a clear sense of direction and a decision on the part of the congregation."

The SCRS is a department of the Roman Curia, the central governing body of the Catholic Church, which is responsible for the affairs of all religious institutes of the Latin rite.

The SCRS is currently reviewing the constitution of the SSJ, which was approved in 1964, and is expected to issue a decision in the near future.

There are "lack of precision with regard to the content of vows, the works of the congregation and the relationship between the superior general and her council."

"These points," he said, "and others which have arisen should not be too difficult to handle."

Drawing up the constitution and its complementary documents has taken several years for the congregation, an effort actually dating to the 1964 mandate of the Second Vatican Council to renew religious orders according to the wishes of their founders.

The constitution of the SSJ today is a statement of principles. The complementary documents, which deal with the practical aspects of the congregation's life, are still being developed.

The SCRS is currently reviewing the constitution of the SSJ, which was approved in 1964, and is expected to issue a decision in the near future.

has its blessings and its difficulties."

Sister Elizabeth Anne said last week she welcomed the dialogue and the opportunity to explain the congregation's renewal experience during the past 20 years.

Sister Rosalima Hayes, a member of a special committee established to take part in the constitutional work and a major figure in the congregation's renewal, said she hailed the pastoral interest and openness evidenced by the Vatican. "My only reservation is that it came so late," she said. Nevertheless, she too welcomed the opportunity to engage in dialogue.

She said she was "at a loss to know what is coming from the process."

Sister Elizabeth Anne said the dialogue will revolve around a list of 15 questions on the SSJ's constitution, drawn up by SCRS.

She said the comments could be divided into three parts: those in which minor changes would be made, those on

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