

World & Nation

Salvadoran prelate deplors Third World 'exploitation'

Washington (NC) — Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas of San Salvador, El Salvador, condemned what he called "exploitation" of the Third World by wealthy nations, and said the "profit motive" hinders development.

During a Mass in Washington, D.C., the archbishop said that in Latin America, "the phenomenon of 'exploitation' has generated extreme fear of domination."

This fear, he said, indicates how seemingly humanitarian U.S. assistance to Third World nations can lead the poorer nations into dependency and "become something harmful that works to destroy the relationship between our nations."

Archbishop Rivera Damas, president of the Secretariat of Bishops of Central America, known by its Spanish initials as SEDAC, made the comments during a homily in Spanish at the November 6 Pan-American Mass celebrated at Washington's National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

"It is true that with the economic assistance of wealthy nations such as yours, the process of modernization and the application of advanced technology was introduced to developing nations," Archbishop Rivera Damas said in the homily.

But technology is "not the only nor the first need of our nation," he said.

Foreign aid has led to dependency and allowed exploitation, he said. Solidarity, he added, must replace the current relationship between the United States and Latin American nations "so that everyone can be truly responsible for each other."

"What hinders development" is the "profit motive," he said.

He urged an end to what he termed

"rhetoric" about the "brotherhood of our nations," which he said usually reflects "hidden selfishness and is of bad taste."

Instead, the archbishop called for action, citing the "urgent task" of educating people "to share their resources and bring to an end their frustrating selfishness."

The prelate said "the social poverty of our people" is a major obstacle to the unity of the Americas.

"I do not know how that statement sounds in such a wealthy nation as the one in which you live," said Archbishop Rivera Damas. "To me, from a very poor country," he said, it sounds like the Gospel.

The archbishop said Christ did not condemn the fact that some are rich and others are poor. But "what Jesus certainly condemns is the attitude of some who rely on their wealth and power, seeking only to enjoy their bountiful situation at the expense of the suffering of others," he added.

He said he has instituted a campaign in the Archdiocese of San Salvador titled "Giving From Our Own Poverty." The campaign's aim is to "educate both rich and poor people in our country not to depend on foreign aid." Instead, it encourages them to "be responsible for the solutions of our own problems," he said.

Unemployment, combined with underemployment, is estimated to affect more than 40 percent of El Salvador's work force. The per capita income of the nation of 4 million is estimated at \$800, compared to a U.S. per capita income of \$14,461. Between 1982 and 1986, U.S. aid to El Salvador was estimated at \$3 billion, making the country the third-largest recipient of U.S. assistance during that period.



AP/World Wide Photos

DAMAGE INSPECTION — Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega stops November 3 during a tour of the Jinotega province, which was flooded by Hurricane Joan.

France's new 'abortion pill' poses difficult ethical, moral dilemmas

By Julie Asher

Washington (NC) — Controversy over RU-486, a French "abortion pill," reached new heights when its developer, Roussel-Uclaf, said it would pull the drug off the market because of public protests.

That decision was reversed quickly by the French government, which owns 36 percent of the company.

Proponents of the pill say it will alter the debate on abortion, making the decision to abort a totally private matter for a woman, and one day eliminating the need for abortion clinics. They predict that the more U.S. women learn about the controversial pill, the more they will demand it, possibly creating a black market.

Its opponents, including the U.S. Catholic bishops, Catholic ethicists and the National Right to Life Committee and other pro-life groups, have called it chemical warfare on the human fetus, and fear its use would lead to more abortions, not fewer.

They also said not enough research has been conducted to show what harmful side effects are possible, and claimed that the more people know about it and the dangers to women and children, the more alarmed they will be.

Father Richard McCormick, professor of Christian ethics at the University of Notre Dame, is adamantly opposed to the pill since "it simply produces abortions even though they are early."

"Secondly it makes abortion a routine matter," he said in an interview November 3. "It makes abortion part of ordinary, habitual birth regulation. Nobody in his or her right mind ought to be doing that."

He added that another "very dangerous" aspect of making the drug available to induce abortions is that "it takes the abortion question out of the government's control, makes it a completely non-social affair." That, he said, is more significant than people realize.

If the drug is found to be good for other uses, such as treating certain forms of breast cancer, reducing the need for Caesarean-section births and treating Cushing's disease — as some researchers have discovered — then it should be restricted to that, said Father Russell Smith, director of education for Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Center in Braintree, Mass.

Father Smith said RU-486 had been put on

the market "without adequate testing," and added that the drug has been "hailed as a cure-all," which he believes should never be done, even with new cancer treatments.

Flora Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice, which opposes Church teaching on abortion, said opponents of RU-486 would like to constrain "critical research" on such compounds at a time when women "have too few options for good contraception and for safe and effective methods of abortion." In developing countries alone, she said, half a million women a year die as a result of either illegal abortions or difficult pregnancies.

But Dr. John Willke, a physician and president of the National Right to Life Committee, which has said it is unalterably opposed to the drug, has called it a chemical "time bomb," similar to thalidomide or DES.

Thalidomide is a compound formerly used as a sedative until it was found to produce severe defects in children born to mothers who had taken the drug during early pregnancy.

RU-486 taken in conjunction with prostaglandin induces a miscarriage in the early weeks of pregnancy by blocking cells in the uterus from receiving progesterone, a hormone needed to prepare for and continue a pregnancy. Without the prostaglandin, the drug has been shown to work 80-85 percent of the time, and with it, 90 percent of the time.

The company says the drug removes the need for surgical abortions. Some experts said a surgical abortion would be required if the RU-486 treatment failed because the drug might cause birth defects.

Without the progesterone, "the baby starves to death, withers on the vine, dies and drops off," Willke said, adding that the mother has cramps, bleeding, and in most cases, an abortion.

He said all reports on the drug's effects speak of severe cramping, nausea, vomiting and bleeding, sometimes lasting 30 days. Willke added that a "certain probability" of the drug's use will be fetal defects if the unborn child is not aborted.

"While we can't prove that these long-term problems definitely will happen, the drug maker cannot prove that they will not," Willke said. "In the presence of such a potential chemical time bomb it is extremely dangerous to proceed to general marketing of the drug."



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