

Newspaper

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titled "The Moral Norm of 'Humanae Vitae' and the Pastoral Task," the newspaper said its publication followed "a recent public" statement by a "noted moral theologian."

The commentary said objections raised to the church's teaching on birth control include accusations of "excessively rigid and intransigent" interpretations of the teaching and concern that the teaching is hurting the church's credibility.

The mass media have also "relaunched, with undue simplifications and erroneous interpretations, the doubts and fears of some theologians," further confusing the faithful, it said.

"The objections are formulated, not a

few times, without that scientific rigor which is distinctive of a serious theological reflection. Sometimes one resorts even to personal attacks, spiteful and troubling," it said.

Couples who find it difficult to follow moral norms "deserve great respect and love," it said, but the church must identify "by name the good and the evil in the sphere of responsible procreation."

The church's teaching as declared in the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is that contraception is an "intrinsically disordered act" which is prohibited, without exceptions.

This prohibition "is not a theological opinion open to free discussion," it added. "Teaching the contrary means leading the moral consciences of couples into error."

Moral theologians "must not create ob-

scacles" for the consciences of couples, it said. "This happens above all when one feeds doubts and creates confusions with public disputes of magisterial teachings constantly repeated."

What "threatens and ruins" the credibility of the church's teaching authority is "the concerted and systematic dispute which some theologians have repeatedly raised regarding 'Humanae Vitae' and, subsequently," the apostolic exhortation "Familiaris Consortio."

Iran

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this kind, orchestrated by a variety of bigger and lesser satans."

Six Moslems were killed during a demonstration against the book in Pakistan Feb. 12 when police opened fire on a crowd outside the American Center in Islamabad. Other demonstrations and book-burnings have occurred in Iran, India and England.

Rushdie, born of an Indian Moslem family and now a British citizen living in London, was given police protection at his home after Khomeini issued his death edict. The ayatollah also called for the killings of the book's British and American publishers.

Budget

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lion, and for Medicaid, the government health program for the poor, from \$34.3 billion to \$37.6 billion.

Nonetheless, while proposing to expand mandatory Medicaid coverage to include more pregnant women and poor children, Bush also wants to end funding for certain costs of administering the program.

"It's dollar for dollar," Shellabarger said. "Every dollar he put into Medicaid he took out of the administrative costs. This is what we mean when he is not being forthright with the American people."

Shellabarger said the budget uses a similar approach to housing and homelessness.

"He talks about fully funding the Stewart McKinney Act" and about supplying an additional \$50 million for other homeless needs, Shellabarger said. But Bush's budget also would cut funding for rural housing almost in half, he added.

Overall, when it comes to Bush's first budget, "we're still trying to figure it all out," Shellabarger said. "But as we begin to look underneath, we find it is not all he said it is and, indeed, it's much worse than we would have imagined. It's going to be very difficult to support this budget. It's not a good budget if you are poor in America."

Stephen

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Lyons is now undergoing training to become a Stephen Minister. "I decided to become a minister because I know how much it helped me," she said. "It will give me an opportunity to help someone else in the way I was helped."

Those who have experienced loss themselves enrich the program by becoming Stephen Ministers, Lee Skerrett noted. "When a person goes through a crisis in their life, it's hard for them to believe that someone who has never had a crisis could understand," she said.

Meanwhile, Lyons noted, undergoing the training has a spiritual effect on the ministers. "It's really changed my life and the way I look at things," she said. "I'm learning things that make me feel better about myself. I feel more confident even in my everyday relationships."

The sense of confidence fostered in the ministers has equipped them to deal with such situations as the three deaths while Father Kreckel was away, Lyons continued. "We felt so relieved that we had started this program," she said. "I just felt that there was so much that we'd already been prepared for."

According to Jeffers, the effects of Stephen Ministry have spread beyond the ministers and the "helpees," calling parishioners in general to be more caring, more sensitive, more aware of the needs of fellow parishioners. Frequently, the parish secretary added, parishioners call her to report people who seem to be in need of a Stephen Minister.

Lyons likewise has seen a change in the parish due to Stephen Ministry. "You see a different kind of concern for people," she observed. "They seem so much more aware of people and their problems. People who were once not in touch with the com-

Scrutinies

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dual lives and the Lord who conquers the evils of our social lives. In fixing our eyes on Jesus, we seek clearly with the heart what life is meant to be and, like the blind man now cured, we worship Jesus alone as Lord.

The third scrutiny asks us to identify with Lazarus, who without Jesus falls ill, dies and begins to rot. Without Jesus, we are bound head to toe by our mortality, and have no hope in the face of certain death. Jesus, however, is resurrection and life, and our faith in him — like that of Mary, Martha and Lazarus — breaks the bonds of death and brings us from the dark tomb of death into the bright light of new life. We then are like Thomas the "Twin" who says, "Let us go along, to die with him." We are Jesus' faithful followers who embrace the inevitability of death with hope in the fullness of life Jesus came to bring.

As the church extends its hands in prayer over the elect in the next few weeks to strengthen their resolve to follow Christ, we acknowledge our own need for deliverance from evil, and of healing and strength from God in Christ.

Thursday, February 23, 1989

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