

**Holy See protests funding of testing on abortifacient**

UNITED NATIONS (NC) — The Holy See has protested U.N. funding for research on the abortifacient drug RU-486, which dislodges a fertilized egg from the womb. Developed in France, the drug reportedly causes side effects of nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. Speaking on behalf of the Holy See, Auxiliary Bishop James T. McHugh of Newark asked, "Is the clinical testing to be carried out on women in developing countries? Our delegation expresses strong opposition to the clinical testing of unproven and possibly harmful drugs on people in developing nations ..." Bishop McHugh's statement also observed that U.N. funding for the drug runs "contrary to the position taken by the 1984 International Conference on Population ... (which) was concerned with safeguarding the health of women and discouraging abortion ..."

**Court rules on racketeering**

WASHINGTON (NC) — A federal appeals court ruling that 24 pro-lifers demonstrating at an abortion clinic violated a federal anti-racketeering law could threaten free speech rights and prompt a Supreme Court clarification, pro-life and civil liberties activists said. In a decision March 2, a three-judge panel of the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found the 24 pro-lifers in Philadelphia violated a federal anti-racketeering law by extortion and by use of "fear, harassment, intimidation and force" against an abortion clinic. An attorney for the pro-lifers said the panel's ruling was being appealed to the full appeals court.

**Carmelites ordered to leave**

WASHINGTON (NC) — The Vatican has ordered four Carmelite nuns barricaded in the infirmary of their New Jersey monastery for the past five months to leave and said that the fifth nun, who is 72 years old, may remain if she "promises obedience." Mother Teresa of the Trinity Hewitt, prioress of the Discalced Carmelite monastery in Morristown, said March 6 that the barricaded nuns had not responded to the letters sent to each of them by Cardinal Jerome Hamer, head of the Vatican Congregation for Institutes for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life.

**Archbishop to fight sanctions**

WASHINGTON (NC) — Citing "widespread discrimination in hiring" and abuse of illegal aliens, Archbishop Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles said he will petition the U.S. Catholic Conference to organize a coalition to fight government sanctions against employers of illegal aliens. He also urged the federal government to institute a "conscience clause" that would exempt non-profit and church-run institutions from employer sanctions and allow them to hire illegal aliens.

**Chilean cardinal doubts threat**

WASHINGTON (NC) — Chilean Cardinal Juan Francisco Fresno Larrain of Santiago has expressed doubt that military officials will make good their threat to arrest Auxiliary Bishop Sergio Valech Aldunate, also of Santiago, for his refusal to surrender medical records held by a church agency. The officials have demanded the records as part of their search for evidence in the case of a suspected guerrilla.



Residents of Caracas, Venezuela, carry the body of a man killed during rioting last week against price increases. The uprising has caused as many as 50 deaths and 500 injuries, police estimate. AP/Wide World Photos

**Historian regards church as declining**

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh  
NC News

WASHINGTON — The United States is "living through a genuine revolution" and its Catholic Church is in "serious decline," according to Monsignor John Tracy Ellis.

But in the decline, the church in the United States is following a pattern seen by the entire church throughout its long history, Monsignor Ellis added. "The nearly 2,000 years of the church's life" has been marked by "dying here, being born there," he said.

Monsignor Ellis, the premier historian on American Catholicism, said that currently the church is in a "very, very serious period of decline," the most serious one in its 200-year history.

The 83-year-old scholar spoke about the state of the American church in an interview with National Catholic News Service for the bicentennial of the establishment of the U.S. church. The church in the United States officially was established in 1789 when Father John Carroll was named the first bishop of the newly created Diocese of Baltimore.

The American church's current down cycle is being influenced by a revolution taking place in the nation, said Monsignor Ellis, who lectures at The Catholic University of America.

"I have read about revolutions, taught about revolutions, but I never thought I was going to live through one," he said. "Well, I'm very definitely living through a revolution."

"Society's in tumult," he said. "All the accepted things of the past are largely on the sidelines. And the morals of the people in general have taken a very, very grave downward course."

"Divorce, separations, the abuse of

children, the utter permissiveness of sex — I mean these are things that simply did not exist in the United States a generation ago. They're a product of the break which came roughly in the 1960s which brought on this revolutionary condition."

"The church can't help but be affected by it," he said. "She doesn't exist on Mars. She exists here."

He described the decline in Mass attendance as a "a drastic drop" and said it is the chief sign of trouble in the church. "If

one were to compare the Mass attendance on Sundays and holy days of obligation with those of our co-religionists in France, in the Netherlands, in other places — we look very good," he said. "But we are down drastically from what we were in the 1960s. It's a fall-off."

As a historian he said he could not predict where the revolution and decline would lead. "The data is too elusive," he said. "It may change within 48 hours."

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