

Archbishop praises Bush for stance on bill

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Suggesting that Congressional efforts to provide federal funding for rape-related abortions would ultimately undermine the credibility of rape reports, Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis has praised President Bush for stating that he would veto the bill containing the abortion-funding provision.

The archbishop, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted that some abortion advocates have argued that restricting abortion to women who suffered rape or incest "would force women to lie" in order to obtain abortions.

"The vague language of the Boxer amendment aggravates this problem, for it allows a woman to report rape after she learns she is pregnant and decides she wants a publicly funded abortion," Archbishop May said in a statement released Oct. 20. "Such a policy has the potential of undermining the credibility of women who file rape reports."

Archbishop May further asserted that the number of pregnancies actually caused by incest or rape is so small "that pro-abortion groups could easily fund all abortions requested in these cases, using a fraction of the money they are spending to try to force the rest of us to pay for these abortions."

Rape and incest were among reasons permitted for Medicaid-funded abortions during fiscal years 1978-1981. Of the four-year total for that period of 56,635 abortions funded by Medicaid, only 181 — or one-third of 1 percent — were attributed to rape or incest. During the same period, 4,965 abortions were funded due to danger to the life of the mother.

The abortion-funding amendment was introduced in the House by Rep. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. It is attached to a \$156.7 billion bill to finance health, education and labor programs for fiscal 1990.

The House passed the spending bill after approving the abortion amendment by a 216-206 margin Oct. 11. The Senate

backed the abortion amendment 67-31 before passing the full appropriations package to the president Oct. 19.

Bush declared Oct. 16 that he would veto the bill if it provided federal abortion funding except to save the life of the mother. The president is on record favoring the legality of abortions in cases of rape or incest but opposing the use of taxpayers' money to pay for them.

In his statement, Archbishop May urged Congress to restore abortion-funding restrictions that have been in place since 1981. He called the pressure for publicly funded abortions in cases of rape and incest part of a larger campaign by abortion advocates "to nullify all (abortion-funding) restrictions and force taxpayers to subsidize elective abortions."

The archbishop predicted that when the credibility of actual rape victims is undermined by false rape reports filed solely to attain abortion funding, "pro-abortion forces would try to persuade the public to solve those problems by eliminating all re-

strictions on abortion funding."

He said that nearly a decade of exclusion of rape and incest cases from federal abortion funding has produced "no groundswell of protest by low-income women; in fact most Americans opposed public funding of abortion except to save the mother's life, and low-income women are more opposed to abortion than other Americans."

"What is really at issue," Archbishop May said, is that "pro-abortion groups will not rest easy until they have forced pro-life Americans to support their agenda by subsidizing the violence of abortion."

Public funding of abortion, at both the state and federal levels, has been a major issue since 1973, when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned virtually all legal restrictions on abortion. On the federal level most of the controversy has centered around abortion-funding in Medicaid, the public health care program for low-income families and individuals.

Since 1981 the Hyde amendment, named for Rep. Henry J. Hyde, R-Ill., has restricted abortion funding under Medicaid to women whose life is endangered by a pregnancy.

Priest calls paper's article on pedophilia 'distorted'

WASHINGTON (CNS) — An earlier published report of "rampant" sexual misbehavior among the clergy is "distorted," according to Father David E. Brinkmoeller, director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Priestly Life and Ministry.

"The great majority of the hundreds of the priests I know work hard, pray hard and are faithful to their celibate commitment," said Father Brinkmoeller in his essay, "In the Face of 'Priest-Bashing,'" which appeared on the op-ed page of the Oct. 17 issue of *The Washington Post*.

Father Brinkmoeller's essay was in response to a Sept. 17 article in *The Post* written by Jason Berry, a freelance writer who has written extensively on priest pedophilia, the sexual desire for children.

A "guess" reported by Berry that 5 percent of the United States' 53,000 priests may be pedophiles was presented "without a shred of evidence," Father Brinkmoeller said.

Berry's estimates that half the clergy is homosexual is based on "extrapolations," Father Brinkmoeller added.

"No solid statistical data exist" on priestly pedophilia or homosexuality, Father Brinkmoeller said. "Nor is it the sort of thing that admits easy quantification."

Father Brinkmoeller said that "nothing could be further from the truth" to Berry's charge that bishops "cover up" pedophilia cases in their dioceses.

"Such cases may have been handled differently in past decades — when psychology was less sophisticated and when child abuse may have been viewed as simply a moral failing for which one should be repentant, rather than as a psychological addiction for which treatment was mandatory," Father Brinkmoeller said.

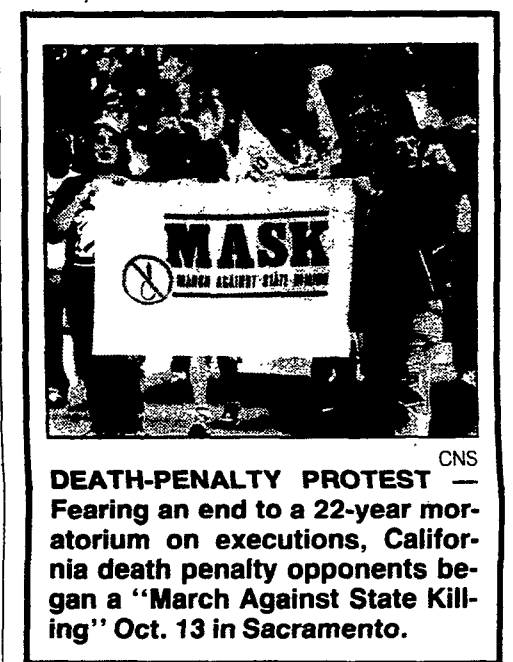
"Today, the hint of such a case is viewed by a bishop with alarm and met with quick and firm action," he said. A 1988 public

statement on pedophilia issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, he added, advises bishops to "move in on such a situation at the earliest possible moment."

Berry "seems to argue" that making celibacy optional would "solve" the pedophilia problem, Father Brinkmoeller said.

Marriage "does not provide an instant cure," he added, citing a *Los Angeles Times* survey that "suggests" 750,000 U.S. women are victims of father-daughter incest, with family members, "especially fathers and stepfathers," more likely to commit incest than any other group.

"There are some priests who feel that the church should change its position on mandatory celibacy," Father Brinkmoeller said, but "many priests believe that celibacy strengthens their ministry and deepens their ability to witness to God's presence and power."



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