

Prelates attack abortion, mentality behind it

By Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The world's cardinals went to the Vatican last week to launch a frontal attack on legalized abortion and the mentality behind it.

At a meeting convoked by the pope the cardinals said the problem has grown beyond personal morality to encompass social ethics and the pressing need to legally protect the lives of the weak and defenseless.

Their plan calls for Catholic politicians to reverse the tide of legalized abortion, for a high-level church document by Pope John Paul II on the contemporary dangers of abortion, and for improved pro-life activities by bishops even if this goes "at times against the grain."

The plan was developed at an April 4-7 special meeting of the College of Cardinals to discuss contemporary threats to human life and the threat to Catholics from the rise of sects. The pope invited all 141 cardinals to the Vatican meeting; 112 attended.

It was the fourth time that Pope John Paul has held a special meeting of the cardinals to discuss pressing church issues. The previous meetings concentrated on Vatican finances and structural reforms of the Roman Curia, the church's central administrative offices.

Abortion quickly became the main issue at the April meeting and dominated the final conclusions. The conclusions on sects were general, leaving specific initiatives to local bishops.

Speakers during the meeting estimated that up to 50 million abortions are performed each year.

The conclusions were contained in an April 7 communique, which said that abortion "is no longer solely a problem of individual morality" and is "corroding the ethical foundations of authentic democracy" by downgrading the value of life.

Society has moved "from an acquiescence when confronted with a legally

allowed moral evil to its justification, and even to its paradoxically asserted obligation," it said. The process has occurred where the "dominant mentality no longer recognizes the value of human life," particularly of the "poor, handicapped or gravely ill," it added.

The cardinals asked Christian politicians and other public figures sensitive to human values "to conform their legislative and political initiatives to the undecidable duty to respect human life."

The communique also blamed a "false feminism which sees the promotion of women according to male categories" and pushes in the background the woman's "specific vocation of custodian of life."

The tone of the abortion discussions was set on the first day by the pope and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Abortion is a sign of the "struggle between the culture of death and the culture of life," affecting the future of the church and society, the pope said.

Cardinal Ratzinger said abortion represents a real "war of the powerful against the weak, a war that aims at the elimination of the handicapped, of those who are bothersome and even those who are simply poor and 'useless.'"

Despite the work of pro-life movements, the church is losing ground in its efforts to protect the unborn, Cardinal Ratzinger

Class of 1951 at Mercy plans reunion for May 3

ROCHESTER — The Class of 1951 at Our Lady of Mercy High School has scheduled a reunion for Friday, May 3, at The Party House, 677 Beahan Road.

Any class member who has not received information on the reunion should call Jane Gores Casper, 716/671-3759, or Carm Lamuraglia Iulianello, 671-4661.

said. He was the first cardinal to suggest a new church document on the need to protect human life and its social and political dimensions.

Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York said an "anti-life climate" has been created by wealthy pro-abortion organizations. Cardinal Giacomo Biffi of Bologna said the increase in Italian abortions has been accompanied by widespread doctrinal confusion among the people.

The communique also criticized population control programs using artificial birth control, experiments on embryos, aspects of genetic engineering, war, illegal drug trafficking and the arms trade.

Regarding sects, the communique said their growth is a threat to the church because aggressive recruiting methods cause "numerous Catholics to join religious communities foreign to their tra-

dition."

Catholic groups targeted by sects include "youths, migrants and those less reached by pastoral programs providing solid formation and adequate church structures," said the communique.

The church needs a "new evangelization" sparked by a "healthy theology" to help Catholics rediscover their identity, it said.

The threat must be faced with "evangelical charity and pastoral courage," it said.

At an April 8 press conference Cardinal Francis Arinze, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, said specific measures were not developed because it "is the primary job of the local church to figure out what response to give" based on the sects in their region.



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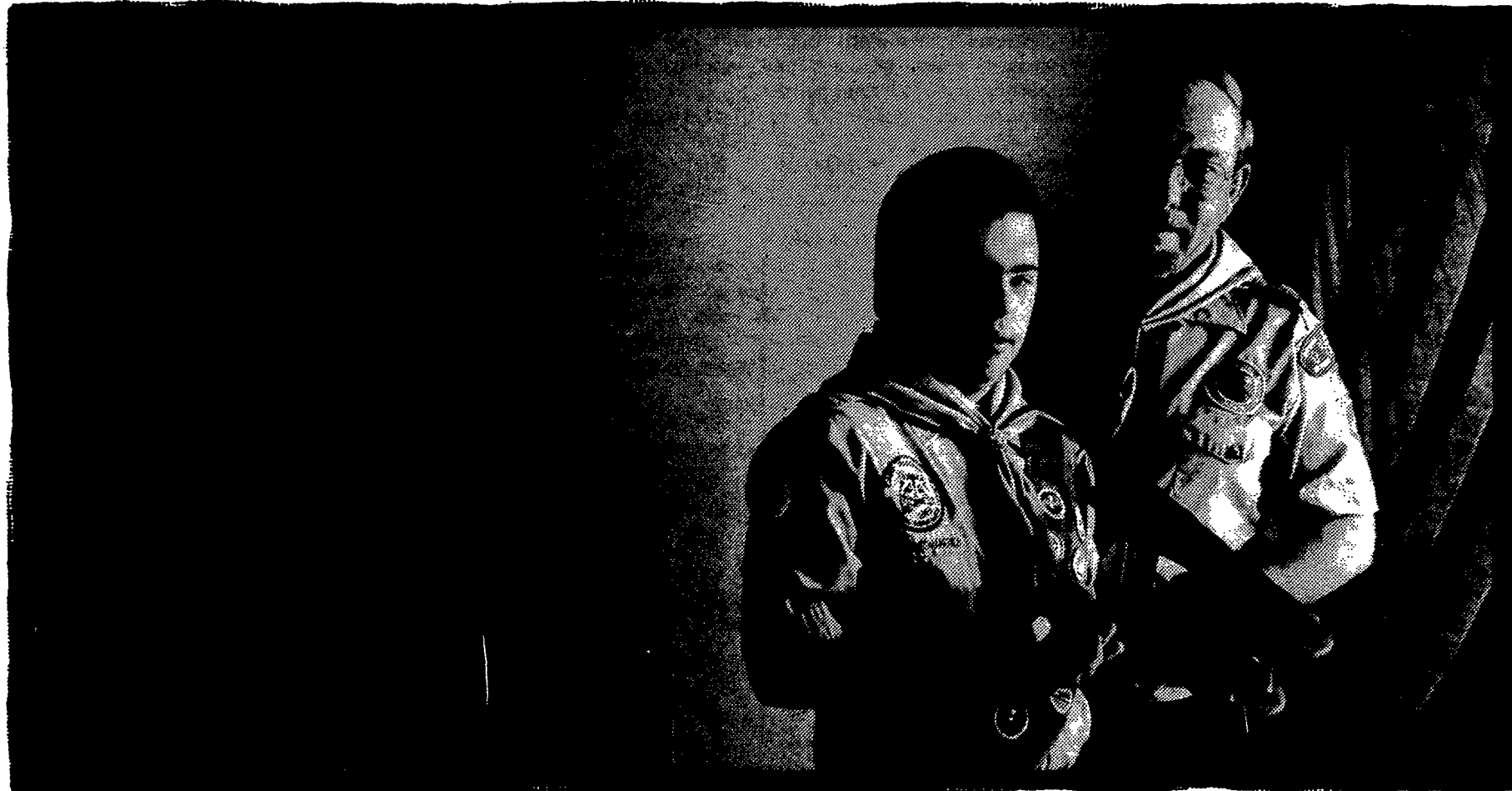
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