

# Georgetown revokes rights for student club

By Mark Pattison  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Georgetown University has revoked official recognition of a student-run club that dealt with the abortion issue.

School officials announced April 24 they have denied GU Choice access to university benefits on the grounds that the student group violated an agreement to stick to open discussion on abortion and instead moved into abortion-rights advocacy.

Jesuit Father Leo J. O'Donovan, head of Jesuit-run Georgetown, said in a letter to the university community that enforcing the agreement with the year-old group was "extraordinarily difficult and ultimately unmanageable."

GU Choice had been given the same privileges of any other campus group, such as access to funding provided by student fees and to other university benefits.

Father O'Donovan denied that Cardinal James A. Hickey of Washington,

the Vatican, and a group that has sought to have the Vatican revoke Georgetown's Catholic status had any part in the decision.

"I had no instruction from the Vatican," Father O'Donovan said during an April 24 news conference. Rumors that he had been summoned to Rome to discuss the controversy were "simply not true," he added.

He said he had "a few conversations with Cardinal Hickey, and only with Cardinal Hickey" on GU Choice. The cardinal had strenuously objected to the funding plan for GU Choice since its inception in February, 1991.

The funding tie-in was "not the best place" to bring in a student abortion discussion group, Father O'Donovan said. But "if there is a way, the university (setting) is the place where it will be found."

Father O'Donovan's letter said Georgetown since 1989 has had a "free speech and expression policy" applicable to all students.

In a separate letter, John J. DeGioia,

dean of student affairs, said there was a "misperception" that Georgetown's involvement meant the school "supports the advocacy of abortion."

At the press conference, DeGioia outlined three GU Choice violations of the agreement over a two-month period:

- In mid-February, a GU Choice literature table included advocacy for "general legislation for abortion."

- A March opinion essay in Georgetown's student newspaper, *the Hoya*, written by new leaders of the group, said GU Choice received university funds "for the purpose of providing proper education for the pro-choice side."

- A March GU Choice meeting was adjourned and hastily reconvened to discuss plans for the April 5 abortion-rights rally in Washington.

"It seemed the club did not do a very good job of educating its members," DeGioia said.

According to DeGioia, the club's biggest expense was \$645-\$700 spent

to host a lecture by Kate Michelman, head of the National Abortion Rights Action League, in early 1991 as the funding controversy unfolded.

GU Choice's budget for 1991-92, DeGioia said, was \$135. The group would have had a \$105 budget for 1992-93, he added.

Kelli McTaggart, a graduating senior who stepped down in March as GU Choice co-chair, said the group "no longer exists."

A new group, Georgetown University Students for Abortion Rights, was to hold its first meeting April 27, McTaggart said. The new group is not receiving university benefits.

She disputed DeGioia's assessment of GU Choice's violations. "At the time we thought we were acting in complete compliance with the agreement," McTaggart said. She called the incidents "a few minor things," adding, "We contend we didn't do anything wrong."

Referring to DeGioia's objections to GU Choice activities, McTaggart said, "We could not keep operating under that kind of regulation. It was stifling."

In an April 24 statement, Cardinal Hickey said he was happy with Georgetown's decision, calling it "consistent with the commitment of Georgetown University as a Jesuit and Catholic institution of higher Ann Sheridan, president of the Georgetown Ignatian Society, which filed petitions first with Cardinal Hickey and later with the Vatican to revoke Georgetown's Catholic status, hailed the move.

She said it was a "save-face" measure by the university, contending that GU Choice had violated the agreement since its founding.

"We're grateful that they're gone," Sheridan said of GU Choice. "It's unfortunate that there wasn't enough moral courage to say why they're gone."

## Harris

Continued from page 6

ber, Stevens noted in agreeing that California's execution should yield to further study of the cruelty claim. Harris took 11 minutes to die.

Los Angeles Cardinal Roger M. Mahony had argued that executing Harris would open the "floodgates" with many more executions to follow. California has 330 inmates on death row.

San Francisco Archbishop John R. Quinn told Wilson that continuing with the execution would "contribute to the psychology of violence and disdain for human life which is increasingly such a problem in our society."

Harris was convicted of killing two teenage boys in order to use their car in a 1978 armed robbery.

In the ensuing 14 years he was given reprieves for each of five execution dates. In 1990 he came within 12 hours of being executed before the Supreme Court granted an indefinite stay of execution.

That reprieve let stand a federal appeals court ruling that allowed time for further study of Harris' mental condition. Other appeals focused on a pattern of violence throughout Harris' life. He was born more than two months prematurely after his father kicked his pregnant mother during an argument. Other appeals noted a history of being abused as a child and his mother's extensive alcohol consumption she was pregnant.

## How can you keep Alzheimer's from tearing them apart?



You can give him the support he needs to care for the woman he loves. If ne wife Ed Walsh has missed for more than 10 years, since Margaret Walsh was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. To help him cope with her disease, Ed attends a support group sponsored by the

Alzheimer's Association, one of more than 250 agencies and programs you make possible through United Way. This year, nearly a million people will turn to these agencies for help. The best thing you can do to help them is to give generously to United Way.



United Way  
It's the best thing you can do.