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CATHOLIC COURIER DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, N.Y.

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Vitae

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"I'd rate it as his best encyclical," Balinsky said, an endorsement seconded by Dr. Michael Aiello, president of the Catholic Physicians' Guild, which claims about 100 diocesan physicians as members.

"This one reads very easily, very easily," Aiello remarked.

In particular, Aiello praised the pope's linking of artificial contraception with abortion as part of an attitude that debases sexuality and marriage, and that threatens fertility. Aiello said there has been a dramatic increase in sterility and disease in patients over the last several years who use and misuse artificial contraception, or who were not fully aware of abortion's side effects.

Additionally, he hoped that Catholic physicians would respond to the pope's call in "The Gospel of Life" for the promotion of "centers for natural methods of regulating fertility." Numerous users of artificial birth control have unwittingly harmed their reproductive capacities, Aiello claims, and many couples desperately need credible, accurate information on natural family planning if they want to preserve their ability to have children.

'This is one area where faith and natural science go hand-in-hand," Aiello observed.

The Catholic physician also praised the pope's condemnation of euthanasia, and he criticized some of his colleagues for promoting the practice in the name of relieving pain.

"I think physicians have a one-track mind," Aiello said. "They get used to making a person completely better."

Success in treating illnesses can lead physicians to deny their own fallibility, Aiello said.

"Many people, including physicians, love control," he stated.

He added that the medical profession should concentrate on alleviating the pain of the dying through medication and the loneliness of the dying through hospice care and other such approaches.

The encyclical claims many threats to life are not only sanctioned by law and considered a matter of personal choice, but carry with them the seal of approval from democratic majorities.

To Carol Crossed, a consistent life ethic activist and parishioner at Rochester's Corpus Christi Church, this represents the ultimate abdication of responsibility in civil society, a position she outlined in a two-page commentary she sent by facsimile to the Catholic Courier.

wrote. "The 'if-you-don't-want-an-abortion-then-don't-have-one (mentality)' is giving rise to 'if-you-don't-like-irradiated-food-then-don't-eat-it.'

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Crossed added that, ironically, the same church that has been ridiculed through the centuries for condemning Galileo is now attacked for acknowledging the scientific community's vast research into the life of the fetus, research which should only buttress the church's contention that the unborn merit protection.

Ultimately, though, the greatest strength of "The Gospel of Life" is its proclamation that people find fulfillment only in solidarity with one another, according to Dr. John F. Crosby, chairman of the philosophy department at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio.

Crosby spoke on the encyclical during an April 29 speech at Irondequoit's St. Thomas the Apostle Church, and in a follow-up phone interview from his university office.

"I think it's very important that its condemnations of abortion, euthanasia and suicide are based on certain affirmations about human life, and the dignity of the human person," Crosby said.

Crosby concluded that "Evangelium Vitae" will strengthen both Catholics and non-Catholics committed to protecting life, and will anger some who oppose church teaching.

"I think it will probably be taken like the teachings of our Lord - as a sign of contradiction," he said.

To our embarrassment, one line from the Apostles' Creed was inadvertently omitted from last week's page-one art detailing the s creed's text. The full text of the Apostles' Creed follows: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into Hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

