

WORLD & NATION

Father Aristide confirms reports he is engaged

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (CNS) — Haiti's president, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has confirmed to journalists that he is engaged to marry.

Although he declined to identify his fiancée, media reports identified her as Mildred Trouillot, 33, a Haitian-American lawyer who has been working for Father Aristide. Trouillot is a member of one of Haiti's wealthiest and powerful families.

"As far as the date is concerned, I don't have one yet. When I know, I will tell you," a smiling Father Aristide told reporters.

Although rumors had circulated for weeks that Father Aristide, 42, had become close to a woman associate who worked long hours with him at his office, many were surprised to learn of the wedding plans.

"The president was attracted to her, but needed some coaching from other men in the office on how to make a move," one foreign official said. "I think it's just great that he has someone in his life."

Father Aristide was dismissed from the Salesians in 1988 because of his involvement in politics. Since then, he has been



Haitian President Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide comforts a young AIDS patient Dec. 1 at a hospital run by the Missionaries of Charity in St. Martin, a slum of Port-Au-Prince.

prohibited from exercising his priestly ministry.

In 1994 he applied for dispensation from his vows. Such requests are handled either by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith or by the Congregation for Worship and Sacraments.

The process can take years and involves a thorough investigation of the individual's understanding of priesthood and its obligations at the time of ordination, personal ability to make a lifelong commitment to celibacy as well as the current situation of the applicant.

Vatican officials could not be reached for comment on Father Aristide's situation Dec. 4.

Friends of Father Aristide and Trouillot said that from when they met

in Washington in 1993, the pair had a special friendship. Trouillot wrote some of Father Aristide's speeches in English and became a kind of cultural translator, acting as an intermediary between him and U.S. officials.

She is a distant relative of former provisional president Ertha Pascal Trouillot, who led Haiti in 1990 in the months leading up to Father Aristide's election in the nation's first democratic vote in history.

Father Aristide has said he would step down from office Feb. 7, as required by the constitution, but that he might run for president again in 2000.

Father Aristide was toppled from power in a 1991 military coup and spent three years in exile in Washington. His shadow government employed a raft of attorneys — including Trouillot — to help him win international support to return to power in October 1994.

Court lets stand abortion ruling

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Supreme Court Dec. 4 let stand a ruling that said the state of Colorado cannot refuse to pay for abortions for victims of rape and incest.

Without comment, the justices declined to hear an appeal of lower federal court rulings saying as part of participating in the Medicaid program, Colorado must pay for abortions in those cases where indigent women seek abortions after becoming pregnant as a result of rape or incest.

Among those decrying the Supreme Court's refusal to hear the challenge, American Life League president Judie Brown called it "unconscionable" that the government would force taxpayers to pay for any abortions.

Colorado voters in 1984 passed a state constitutional amendment prohibiting use of taxpayer funds for any abortions except those necessary to save the mother's life.

In 1994, Congress approved a change in the then 10-year-old Hyde Amendment ban on federal funding of abortion to allow abortion funding in cases of rape and incest.

The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a federal district court ruling that said Colorado's restrictions could not supersede the federal requirements of its participation in Medicaid. The restriction violates "the basic objective" of Medicaid in providing medically necessary care, the appeals court said.

In appealing to the Supreme Court, Colorado's attorney general suggested the ruling might force the state to leave the federal-state Medicaid program, which provides care for 300,000 people a year in the state.

"For the cost of a very few abortion procedures each year, hundreds of thousands of citizens will suffer the loss of necessary medical services," the state's appeal said.

Arguing against the appeal, attorneys who challenged the state's restriction said five federal appeals courts and seven federal trial judges had ruled in concurrence with the Colorado case.

"It is a cruel irony," Mrs. Brown said in her statement, "that while the father of the child cannot and will not receive the death penalty for the crime he has committed, his preborn child conceived as a result of that crime can be executed without benefit of trial, jury or judge."

"No one wants to talk about these crimes — they are violent and repulsive — but as long as they are so quickly covered up by a government willing to pay for the killing of the children conceived as a result of these crimes, the violence of rape and incest will not go away," she said.

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