

# WORLD & NATION

## Newspaper condemns court's suicide ruling

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican newspaper condemned a court decision overturning New York state's ban on physician-assisted suicide, saying it reflected a "total eclipse of values" and a disregard for life.

"Life and death cannot be reduced to a private matter, nor to a bilateral choice between the individual and the doctor," the newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, said in a commentary April 5. It was written by Father Gino Concetti, a moral theologian.

The newspaper expressed hope that the U.S. Supreme Court would reverse the lower court's decision, thus restoring the "immutable principles that protect the right to life."

It was the first Vatican comment on an April 2 ruling by the New York-based 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which said the state's laws prohibiting physician-assisted suicide violated the Constitution. The ruling asked what legitimate interest the state could have in "requiring the prolongation of a life that is all but ended." (See related story, page 3.)

The Vatican newspaper called this "dangerous" legal reasoning that distorts the role of the state, omitting its duty to protect basic human rights.

"The state cannot refuse interest in the sick or in the terminally ill," it said.

"In a civil and advanced society, the state is asked to provide all those means that make life enjoyable and gratifying," it said.

"Such means must also be guaranteed to the terminally ill, so that the illness may be treated as effectively as possible by medical science and so the sick may be respected in their dignity and lovingly assisted until natural death," it said.

The state is not doing its duty unless it accepts this responsibility, it said.

The newspaper said the latest court decision was a sign of a seemingly unstoppable trend toward legitimizing euthanasia in the United States and in Europe. Every day there appears to be a new effort to make euthanasia acceptable to public opinion and to chip away at legislative restrictions, it said.

The church teaches that euthanasia, or the direct causing of death for the purpose of ending suffering, is always wrong. It says that under some conditions, it may be morally acceptable to refuse extraordinary life-prolonging medical procedures.



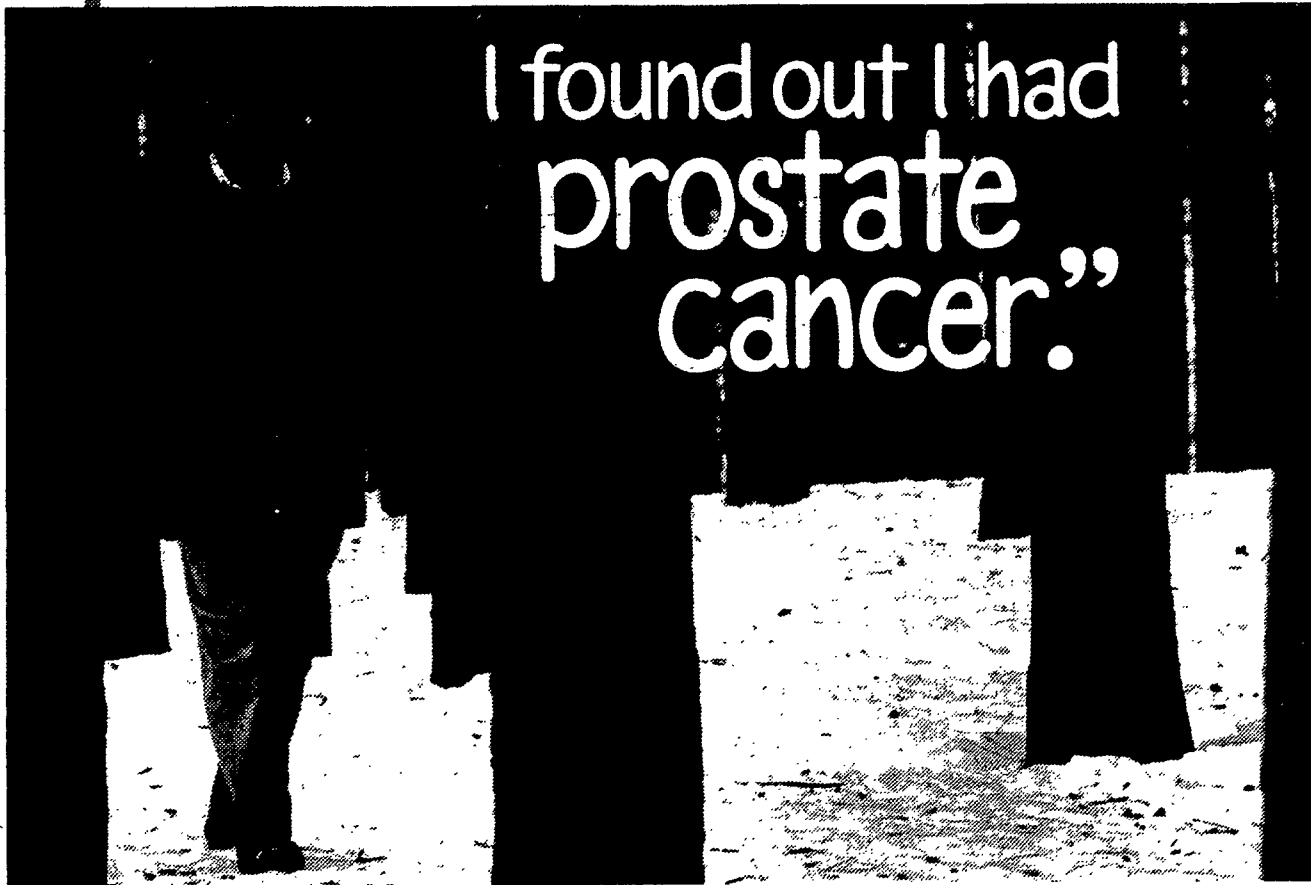
Reuters/CNS

### Pope blesses Vatican crowd

Pope John Paul II blesses the crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square to celebrate Easter April 7. In his *urbi et orbi* (to the city of Rome and the world) message, he prayed for victims of war and poverty.

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