
Documentation

The Church speaks out

The following excerpts are from the statement issued by the Brazilian National Bishops Conference, following their 29th Annual General Assembly, held April 10-19 in Itaiçi, São Paulo.

As a show of faith, and an expression of our pastoral mission in the face of the resurgence of violence, and in communion with Pope John Paul II, promoter and defender of life in the midst of a culture of death, we denounce and condemn all of the personal and collective crimes committed against life. We also repudiate all proposals and practices which undermine or deny the basic values of human dignity. . . .

Just as in the recent past we opposed repression and torture, today we oppose those bills being discussed in the National Congress proposing the death penalty.

We denounce the extermination of infants, youth, and adults, on the streets . . . in the slums and suburbs of the large urban centers. The real death penalty . . . above all affects the poor and outcast. All those who make up, support or finance extermination groups, grievously violate God's Plan. . . .

In the name of the God of life, we radically oppose the bill for liberalization of abortion. The alarming incidence of the criminal practice of abortion leads us to cry out, ever more loudly, on behalf of life. To embrace the path of death and to deny our very God, places the future of humanity at great risk. . . .

Even more serious and criminal is the action which mutilates the source of life in men and women. Sterilization, particularly on a mass scale, is to be condemned, and worse, when it is done without the individual's consent. We likewise denounce the anti-natalist mentality which leads to the indiscriminate use of contraceptives. . . .

The disregard for life and for the human being is seen, moreover, by the scandal of children abandoned on the streets, and by the humiliation to which the elderly and retired are subjected. . . .

Lastly, we cannot remain silent in the face of the indebtedness and economic slavery to which the country has been subjected over recent decades, with grave consequences for the population's existence. We will inform our brother bishops in the nations of the First World of the degrading conditions to which the Brazilian people have been subjected by

the multinationals' economic order. Moreover, the current economic-financial policies leading to recession, unemployment, low wages, and impoverishment of the middle class, dangerously jeopardize social conditions.

The following are excerpts from an article by Brazilian Cardinal Eugenio Sales, published in the June 1 O Globo. Cardinal Sales refers to discussion at the Extraordinary Consistory held in Rome on April 4-7.

. . . At a time when there is no respect for the sacred and intangible value of existence, the Church feels compelled to, above all, defend the right to life from conception until its natural end. It raises its voice on behalf of the most defenseless, the unborn. We are witnesses to an infamous war of the powerful against helpless human beings; the elimination of the poorest among the poor, the suppression of what is judged by egoism to be useless or which causes complications for the materialist conception prevalent in modern society. . . .

Since opposition to human life takes on catastrophic dimensions, today it is incumbent on the Church to take a firmer stand.

The sentiments of the Consistory members were unanimous. In the final declaration, the world's cardinals "affirm the sacred inviolability of human life, a gift from God, today threatened ever more directly, from inception, with the impressive spread of often legalized abortion, and now frequently linked to unacceptable genetic manipulations. . . .

In the legislative area, [we must] present laws or bills on abortion, trafficking in embryos, and euthanasia as intrinsically immoral activity.

From a political standpoint, the manipulations of a Western, imperialist society vis-à-vis the Third World, must be exposed. . . .

The Mexican Bishops Conference warns of invasion of foreign pharmaceutical companies, to impose birth control.

The May 22, 1991 issue of *El Heraldo* reported on the warning issued by the Mexican Bishops Conference to the effect that, by the fall of this year, several international pharmaceutical consortia were planning to flood the Latin American market with a large number of contraceptive and abortion mechanisms which are still in the experimentation phase in other countries. Bishop Norberto Rivera Carrera, president of the Commission on the Family, and Bishop Francisco López Félix, Curia secretary, said that among substances being contemplated was the abortion pill, RU-486, whose use in France has caused over 60,000 abortions. Bishop Genaro Alamilla, spokesman for the Bishops Conference, denounced the role of the United Nations not only for sponsoring genocide in the Persian Gulf, but for allocating \$9 billion to finance studies on the need for population reduction. This will be an "escalation of death, whose victims will be women and innocent children," Alamilla warned. "This is an outrage."