

VOICES VOICES VOICES



VOLUME V, NUMBER 2

Special Plea Inside!

Spring 1990

"One in Christ Jesus"

WFF responds to bishops' revised pastoral

On June 1, 1990, WOMEN FOR FAITH & FAMILY (WFF) addressed the bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States concerning the revised draft of the bishops' pastoral on women, "One in Christ Jesus." The ten-point statement, reprinted below, expresses concern that the pastoral might increase confusion and dissent, and asks the bishops to promote teachings contained in recent papal documents as an alternative to approving the pastoral.

The statement was sent to the bishops before their June meeting, although the revised draft of pastoral is not scheduled for consideration and vote until the bishops' November meeting.

The complete text of the statement follows:

To the Bishops of the Church in the United States:

We wish to express our concern about the revised draft of the proposed pastoral letter, 'One in Christ Jesus,' scheduled for consideration by the bishops at their November meeting. Although we are preparing a more thorough critique of the draft at the invitation of the bishops' committee on the pastoral; we include here some of the reasons why we believe it is critically important that the draft be given most careful scrutiny.

1. The pastoral does not actually respond comprehensively to 'women's concerns', nor did the "listening sessions" on which the pastoral was based accurately reflect the experience of most Catholic women. The "consciousness raising" format of the meetings tended to attract discontented women, and the kinds of questions posed tended to elicit predictable critical responses. The data from these sessions was given too much weight in formulating the pastoral's response and recommendations. This draft contains an ominous blueprint for increasing Church bureaucracy and setting in motion machinery (through establishing "women's commissions") effectively to exclude both the testimony and the work for the Church of orthodox women, who already have difficulty enough making effective witness of their faith.

2. There is a fundamental conflict between feminist/liberationist ideol-

ogy and the teachings and tradition of the Church. This essential conflict, which is at the root of much of the confusion and dissent in the Church today, is recognized both by orthodox Catholics and those who reject essential Church teachings; however, it is substantially ignored by the pastoral draft. It fails to address this conflict in a way consistent with the fundamental nature of the Church. Therefore, it also fails to offer useful and consistent suggestions for the inevitable encounter of individuals with ideologies alien to Christianity and to the resolution of problems, conflict and confusion within the Church and in society.

Many of the pastoral's twenty-five recommendations at the end do not follow consistently from Church teachings. In some instances, the recommendations contradict the text itself.

3. Many central concerns of Catholic women are omitted or inadequately addressed by the pastoral. There are many real plagues afflicting women and their families in our modern world: divorce, artificial contraception, fornication, sterilization, abortion, abortifacient pills & IUDs, infanticide, pornography, homosexual perversions, AIDS and other venereal diseases, sex education propaganda, euthanasia, artificial reproduction, child and spouse abuse, to name a few; and for Catholic mothers responsible for the religious and moral formation of future generations, defective or even destructive religious education.

4. Many Catholic women religious encounter problems living their faith within their religious communities. The section on religious life ignores the serious conflicts within religious orders over essential matters of faith, and provides no useful support for orthodox women religious who too frequently are intimidated into silence by dissenting leadership.

(cont. on page 3)

Slender voices

Not since our earliest issue has voices been so slim. It's not that we have nothing to say. On the contrary, our files are bulging with information we need to disseminate. Unfortunately, our coffers are empty.

*For more about our finances, our accomplishments and our goals, see **inside voices** (page 2).*

inside voices...

An important message to our readers...

God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

1 Colossians 4:19

As you see, this is a very skinny issue of **VOICES**. The reason for this is not that we lack material. We simply don't have enough money at present to publish a regular issue. In fact, we thought of skipping this issue; but with so much of importance going on, we decided a little is better than nothing. So we are literally draining our coffers to bring you this issue.

In addition to our annual conference, **VOICES** has been our major means of reaching Catholic women associated with Women for Faith & Family and others interested in our work (including many bishops and clergy). It is also our major budget item. For more than a year we have sent each quarterly issue to about 5000 people, at a cost of approximately \$4,000 per issue.

Although our mailing list has nearly doubled during the past 18 months, we have not charged a subscription fee (nor have we required WFF membership dues) because, frankly, many who are "with us" and who need to hear from us cannot afford to pay. Furthermore, we regard our communication with you as our "mission" or "apostolate," not as a money-making effort.

Judging from the volume of mail we receive, we believe we are achieving many of our goals in publishing **VOICES**: to provide information about issues of concern to Catholic families, news about events affecting the Church and society, reviews, encouragement and suggestions for action and devotions. We have many other plans for the future which we hope will serve you even better. (We wanted to tell you about some of the projects we're working on – especially our booklets for family celebrations of the feasts and holidays of the Church year – and we had planned to include a "reader survey" in this issue, but these will have to wait.)

We do not want to change our practice of sending **VOICES** without charge to all who want to receive it. In fact, our goal is to send at least one issue

to all Affirmation signers in the U.S. (now about 40,000), many of whom have not heard from us since signing this statement of fidelity to the Church. We do not want to exclude anyone who needs us because they cannot afford to give us financial support. However, we do need to pay our bills.

Our only source of funding for all our work has been your donations. Most of these are in the \$5 to 10. range. Fewer than fifty people have ever contributed \$100 or more to WFF.

In order to help us plan for the future (and, we hope, to extend our outreach and activities), we urge you to consider making contributions to Women for Faith & Family on a regular basis. If each person who receives this issue contributes only five dollars, this will make up our current annual budget. If these same people could send us \$20. per year (quarterly donations of \$5.), we could take action on many of the important and worthwhile projects you have suggested, but which have had to be put "on the back burner" for lack of funds.

We do hesitate to ask you for money, because we have families, too, and know how many other worthy organizations are also asking; but we simply know of no other way than this to do our work for you. God willing, and with your help, we hope to continue.

We also ask that you support our work – our publications and our conferences particularly – with your prayers; for we realize that prayer is the only reliable source of guidance and strength and inspiration for work which can be authentically useful to our Catholic faith and to our families.

We earnestly hope we may get to meet many of you at our conference in St. Louis, October 5-7.

May God bless you with a lovely summer; and we will be waiting to hear from you.

Faithfully yours in Christ Jesus,



for the Staff of Women for Faith & family

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Women for Faith & Family, established in 1984, helps provide Catholic women with a means of expressing unity with the teachings of the Catholic Church and deepening their understanding of Catholic teachings.

Women for Faith & Family is a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of Missouri. Tax-exempt donations, inquiries and changes of address may be mailed to **Women for Faith & Family**, P.O. Box 8326, St. Louis, MO 63132. Editorial mail should be addressed to **VOICES** c/o WFF, P.O. Box 8326, St. Louis, MO 63132.

("WFF responds..." , cont. from page 1)

5. There is a deep desire among women for spiritual development — a desire which, when vital and authentic Catholic doctrine is missing, can often lead to disordered and distorted quasi-pagan forms of religious expression (very briefly alluded to in the pastoral). This is a growing problem, especially within some religious communities of women; yet the pastoral offers no program for replacing these increasingly esoteric, alien and spiritually destructive forms of worship with genuine devotions which enrich and enliven true faith.

6. While the new draft contains expanded sections on two critical issues which have been the subject of considerable controversy due to feminist critiques (ordination and contraception), the draft is inconsistent in its treatment of these questions. Although official Church documents and papal statements are cited, the draft's use of these materials is inadequate; furthermore, too many works critical of Church teachings are presented as if they are to be regarded as equally valid or important with Church teaching in elucidating these issues.

7. Implementation of several of the pastoral's recommendations not only cannot help, but may actually hurt the Church's mission. For example, would implementation of the recommendations insisting on a "sexist test" for seminarians, mandating "inclusive" language in the liturgy, establishing "women's commissions" in every diocese, or authorizing support for federal programs such as day-care, "equal pay" and similar "family" legislation actually promote authentic unity within the Church? In fact, no consensus in support of these issues and policies exists, either within the Church or in society, and certainly not among Catholic women.

8. We understand the purpose of a pastoral letter to be essentially catechetical in nature; and that the intention of the bishops in writing such letters is for instruction and formation of the faithful. Therefore, it would seem essential that to achieve this, any pastoral letter should present definitively the teachings of the Church in such a way as to be truly formative, positive and unifying. This pastoral effort may have been fundamentally flawed from the beginning, in that it is not actually the bishops' exercising their teaching function, but their "response" to a limited set of "women's concerns." Furthermore, its entire spirit and disposition, its agenda, process and content were determined and governed to a large extent by the feminist critical perspective. To the extent that the draft failed to accede fully to feminist demands, feminists within the Church are angered by the result. To the extent that the draft erodes Church doctrine and authority by its concessions to these demands and by its conciliatory tone towards those who do not

accept Church teachings (nor her authority to teach), it compromises its character as a pastoral letter.

We are convinced that, if approved by the bishops, the pastoral will not help to resolve conflicts and restore harmony in the Church, among Catholic women and men, in women's religious orders; nor will it increase authentic vocations to the religious life or priesthood. Neither can it help to settle disputes about legitimate roles for laity and women in the work of the Church. This letter will not help to dispel confusion about the Church, her teachings or her mission. It will not help Catholic people to understand and accept the teachings of the Church. It will not help women to deepen their spiritual lives nor to increase personal holiness.

In fact, it seems inevitable that if its recommendations were adopted it would actually be divisive, not unifying; would increase polarization among Catholics; would encourage dissent and increase the temptation of some confused Catholics to ignore the authentic message of the Church when it conflicts with their own notions; and would, in the perception of many Catholics, diminish, rather than enhance, the magisterial authority of the bishops themselves.

9. We earnestly hope that the bishops will find an acceptable alternative to either approving the pastoral draft or prolonging the "dialogue process."

10. We also hope that the bishops will find means to disseminate throughout the United States the teachings contained in such papal documents as *Familiaris*

Consortio, Mulieris Dignitatem, and *Christifidelis Laici*, the 'Charter of the Rights of the Family' and other such teachings which do respond directly to the principal concerns and needs of most women and their families. It seems clear to us that these documents, two of which were issued soon after the first draft of this pastoral letter appeared, were intended especially to address central issues affecting the role of women raised by feminism which have gained currency in the West, as well as providing the groundwork for vigorous and authentic evangelical action by the laity consistent with the salvific mission of the Church.

Surely the Holy Father's intent was that these teachings be used by the entire Church. We would like to see study guides, workshops, symposia, audio and video tapes produced and promoted by the Church which would make the extremely important teaching these documents contain available to everyone.

Finally, we pledge to the bishops our prayers, our support and assistance in any way available to us which might be useful to them in their often difficult task of nurturing the true faith which subsists in the Church and of carrying Christ's liberating message of redemption to the entire world. ◇

"...Many of the pastoral's twenty-five recommendations at the end do not follow consistently from Church teachings. In some instances, the recommendations contradict the text itself..."

In Memoriam

Memorial gifts have been received to honor the memory of

Clyde W. Smith

Carmine D. Diorio, M.D.

Jerome Slad

Requiescat in pace, et lux perpetua luceat eis.



VOICES

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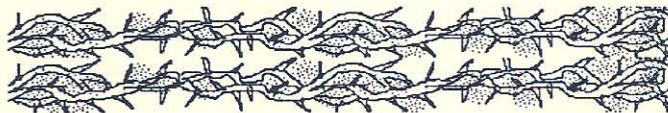
Lenten Program on the Passion

A Lenten morning of recollection featuring illustrated lectures by the Rev. Maurice B. McNamee, S.J., of St. Louis University was held at Annunziata parish in St. Louis on March 31. Fr. McNamee, for many years an English professor, has become in recent years an internationally renowned authority on symbolism in Christian art; especially as seen in Flemish paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

A *Novus Ordo* Latin Mass celebrated by Fr. McNamee began the morning, with Gregorian service music sung by the Crux Ave choir. About a hundred people attended the morning program.

Fr. McNamee addressed the group on the theology and spirituality of the Passion of Christ as reflected in the historic art of the Catholic Church, emphasizing the important role of religious art in teaching the Faith to many generations of European Catholics and in forming the religious heritage of our culture. He is currently working on a book on the Christian art of the Renaissance which will focus on the rich religious symbolism the works contain.

This lenten observance was the latest in a series of seasonal meetings sponsored by Women for Faith and Family as part of its outreach to Catholic families in the St. Louis community. The event was jointly sponsored by WFF and the Catholic Forum of St. Louis. ♦



Tackle every task that
comes along, and if you fear God
you can expect His blessing.

— Ecclesiastes 7:18

Make plans now to attend!

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Juli Loesch Wiley
Johnson City, TN

The Rev. George Rutler
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