

## Catholic Peace Fellowship

### Statement on Abortion

The January 22, 1973 Supreme Court decision on abortion deprives all unborn human beings of any protection whatever against incursions upon their right to life and has thus created a situation we find morally intolerable, and one which we feel obliged to protest.

In issuing this statement in the name of the Catholic Peace Fellowship, we wish to make it clear that we do not speak for the Fellowship of Reconciliation with which we are affiliated. The FOR has not to this point taken an official position.

From the point of view of biological science the fetus is an individual human life. The social sciences may attempt to define "fully human" in a variety of ways, but their findings are inconclusive and, at best, tentative and certainly supply no basis for determining who is or who is not to enjoy the gift of life. No one has the right to choose life or death for another; to assume such power has always been recognized as the ultimate form of oppression.

A primary obligation of civil society is to protect the innocent. A legal situation such as now exists in the United States, making abortion available upon demand, is an abdication of the state's responsibility to protect the most basic of rights, the right to life.

We make this statement to protest a policy and a practice, not to condemn any individual for a tragic decision she or he may have felt forced to make, just as in our protest against war and its destruction of human life we pass no judgment upon the individual who acts in good conscience.

But just as we urge our leaders to institute policies that will put an end to the constant threat of war, so we call upon them, in particular our legislatures and courts, to undertake a prudent and thorough reassessment of the abortion issue in all its ramifications and to develop a policy that will extend the rights and protections afforded by the Constitution, and inherent by nature, to the unborn, and at the same time to provide every support and assistance to those who might otherwise be driven to consider abortion as a solution to real and demanding personal problems.

We reject categorically the Supreme Court's argument that abortion is an exclusively private matter to be decided by the prospective mother and her physician. We protest the thoroughly logical and perhaps inevitable extension of a practice which, though first argued in a personal context, has rapidly become a social policy involving publicly funded clinics and supportive agencies.

This is not a "Catholic issue," and to dismiss it as such is to deny the dedication and the contribution of those of other religions and of none. Nor is this simply a matter of one group of citizens imposing its own morality upon others, any more so than our conscientious resistance to the war in Viet Nam, to conscription, etc. Indeed, we insist that these positions are all of one piece, stemming from what Albert Schweitzer called, "reverence for life," and the consequent obligation to oppose any policy or practice which would give one human being the right to determine whether or not another shall be permitted to live.

For many years we have urged upon our spiritual leaders the inter-relatedness of the life issues, war, capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia and economic exploitation. We welcome the energetic leadership our bishops are giving in the abortion controversy and we are proud to join our voices with theirs. At the same time we must point out that, ultimately, the sincerity of our words and theirs on any of these issues will be measured by our readiness to recognize and deal with the underlying social problems which turn many people to these deadly alternatives, to condemn all forms of social and economic injustice and to work for their elimination and the establishment of a social order in which all may find it easier to be "fully human."

Signed June 28, 1974 by:

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*[Catholic Peace Fellowship is a member organization of Consistent Life]*