

CATHOLICS FOR FREE CHOICE IS NOT AN AUTHENTIC CATHOLIC VOICE - 1 JULY 2005

The Catholic Church recognizes that each person is made in the image and likeness of God. It believes in the sanctity of life and the inherent dignity of the human person. Therefore, the Church is opposed to abortion.

The Church's teaching is that "Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception ... The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation" (Catholic Catechism 2270 & 2273).

We must respect, promote, and enhance human life at every stage and in every context – from conception until natural death. When human life is considered cheap or easily expendable in one area, eventually nothing is held as sacred and all lives are in jeopardy.

CCSJ reaffirms its commitment to strive to build a culture of life and to reject the culture of death that pervades our country and our world. In his encyclical, *The Gospel of Life* (1995), the late Pope John Paul II mentioned abortion as part of the culture of death. Our recently elected Pope Benedict XVI has reaffirmed his commitment to maintaining the Church's stance on issues such as abortion.

It is necessary to restate this position in light of recent statements made in the media in Trinidad and Tobago by Ms Frances Kissling, President of a group called *Catholics For Free Choice* (CFFC).

We note that in September 2003 Sheila Briggs, self-styled Catholic Theologian and member of the Board of CFFC, had visited T&T to discuss similar issues. While CCSJ respects the right to free speech, it is important to state that the group, *Catholics For Free Choice*, is NOT an authentic Catholic voice.

Catholics For Free Choice is recognised as an arm of the abortion lobby in the USA and throughout the world. In 2000 the then President of the US Bishops Conference in the USA, Bishop Joseph Fiorenza, said in a strongly worded statement, *Catholics For Free Choice* "is an advocacy group dedicated to supporting abortion. It is funded by a number of powerful and wealthy private foundations, mostly American; to promote abortion as a method of population control...the group's activity is directed to rejection and distortion of Catholic teaching about the respect and protection due to defenseless unborn human life."

This statement came in reaction to a year-long campaign by *Catholics for Free Choice* to eject the Catholic Church from the United Nation because CFFC and other pro-abortion groups object to the pro-life position the Holy See delegation has taken at a number of UN world conferences.

CCSJ agrees with the US Bishops who, in their statement about CFFC, said that “the use of the name Catholic as a platform for promoting the taking of innocent human life and ridiculing the Church is offensive not only to Catholics, but to all who expect honesty and forthrightness in public discourse.

“We state once again with the strongest emphasis: Because of its opposition to the human rights of some of the most defenseless members of the human race, and because of its purposes and activities deliberately contradicting essential teachings of the Catholic faith, *Catholics for Free Choice* merits no recognition or support as a Catholic organization.”

Archbishop Gilbert has approved this statement of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice. He has also prohibited all Catholic parishes, schools and institutions in the Archdiocese of Port of Spain from allowing the organization of *Catholics For Free Choice* to use their properties for any reason.