

*Criminal Code*

the large families associations, Pius XII brought the matter up again and referred once more to the question of direct abortion or murder of the child before, during or after childbirth.

However justified, the distinction between the various moments of life already conceived or not yet conceived, in the light of secular or religious law, and some civil or penal effects, according to moral law, it is in all cases a serious and guilty attempt against sacred human life.

Reference is made to the mother's life in the amendments to the Criminal Code.

● (9:40 p.m.)

In the course of this address, Pope Pius XII goes back to the question: Is the child's life to be preferred to that of the mother?

At no time and under no circumstances has the Church taught that the life of the child must be preferred to that of the mother. It is erroneous to put the question in these terms: either the life of the child or the life of the mother. No! Neither the life of the mother nor that of the child can be directly destroyed. In any case, there can be but one requirement: to do the utmost to save both the life of the mother and that of the child.

But it will be argued that the life of the mother, particularly the mother of several children, is comparably worth more than the life of an unborn child.

Answering this sad question is not difficult. Inviolability of the life of an innocent being does not depend on its greater or lesser value.

Besides, who is capable of judging with certainty which of the two lives is really the most valuable? Who could tell what the future has in store for this child and to what height could bring him his achievements and his perfection.

Then, Pope Pius XII goes on to discuss accidental death of a child occurring during therapeutic treatments to the mother:

At all times, we have purposely used the expression "direct attempt to the life of the child" and "direct murder". For instance, if it were a matter of saving the life of the expecting mother, without considering her pregnancy, in the case of an urgent surgical operation or therapeutic treatment, that would, accidentally result, in the unavoidable death of the embryo, in no way sought or wanted, this act could no longer be described as a direct attempt to the life of an innocent being.

In those conditions, the operation could be allowed as other similar medical interventions, bearing always in mind that it is a question of prime interest, as life would be, and that it is impossible to wait until after the child's birth or to use some other effective means.

I shall mention the letter of Canadian Bishops. More recently and more specifically in connection with the proposed amendments to

[Mr. Rondeau.]

the Criminal Code relating to abortion, the Canadian Catholic Conference which speaks for the Episcopate, laid down again its instructions to the Catholics of Canada in a statement issued on December 5, 1968. It is a statement reaffirming the position of the Canadian Catholic Conference on abortion, issued by the executive committee in the name of board of directors of the same Conference, and I quote:

While discussions are going on about the proposed amendment to the act on abortion, many people still wonder why the Catholic Episcopate of Canada has taken on abortion a stronger position than on the sale of contraceptives.

The difference in attitude stems from the fact that abortion involves the sacred right to life. Therefore, once again, we declare that it is not possible to consider abortion as a personal matter, as if in that case, another person's life was not at stake.

That point is already obvious in the statement made in February 1968 by the Canadian Catholic Conference. Moreover, we wish to stress here that the stand taken by the Bishops cannot be considered as a position dictated solely by reasons of a religious or theological nature. It rather results from our deep conviction that law and social customs must be greatly respectful of that most precious possession that human life is, and in this particular case they cannot be heard if we do not speak for them. This is why our appeal is addressed first to every intelligent man concerned with those prime values. However, we must remind Catholics that they—

...still...

—have to abide by the teaching of the Church, regardless of a legislation intended for a pluralistic society.

The Canadian legislation on abortion must respect the invaluable honor of any human life and must render each one of us more, not less, respectful of life. This is the way civilization should plan ahead.

Several people think that by changing the act we could bring about a decrease in the number of clandestine abortions and minimize their disastrous effects, but the experience of a few countries where a similar act has been adopted tends to prove that will rather be the other way around.

In its December 1967 report, the parliamentary committee on abortion acknowledged the fact that there had been insufficient studies and inquires conducted in this field. While the bill is being considered in the House of Commons, should we not make public the findings of the studies made since the parliamentary committee's statement was issued.

Owing to its complexity, we cannot expect to solve the problem of abortion through easy solutions.

The solution we are recommending is entirely different: to promote respect of human life at all stages of its development, through education and legislation which would be an education in itself;