November 1970

For Your Information ...

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Recommended Citation
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The following guidelines are offered to Catholic medical and paramedical personnel who may be affected by the recently enacted change in the abortion law of the State of New York:

1. This law, which takes effect July 1, 1970, does not impose any obligation on anyone to perform an abortional act.

2. This change in the law of the State of New York does not change the immorality of abortional acts. Direct killing of the innocent, whether born or unborn, is against the law of God.

3. The Code of Canon Law (Canon 2350) states that those who procure abortion, not excepting the mother, incur, if the effect is produced, an excommunication.

4. No Catholic medical or paramedical personnel should participate in any capacity in an abortional act. Caring for a patient before or after is not regarded as participating in the abortional act.

5. No Catholic medical or paramedical personnel should advise a person to seek an abortional procedure.

6. In a post-abortional emergency situation, any morally acceptable necessary life-saving procedure is allowed.

7. Since medical and paramedical personnel are not required either by the law or by the hospital code to act against their conscientious convictions, staff of doctors, nurses and others who have moral objections to abortional acts should be excused by the hospital authorities from participating in such procedures. No penalty should be imposed on anyone for following his moral convictions with respect to the immorality of abortions.

8. Medical and paramedical personnel who object to participation in abortional acts should, in fairness to the hospital, make this fact known to the hospital administration.

9. No Catholic medical or paramedical personnel should participate in any capacity in the use of an aborted fetus for immoral experimentation. The usual rules for Baptism appear.

10. If an abortional act is productive of a live infant, objective morality requires that every attempt must be made to maintain the infant’s life.

Issued by Most Reverend Walter P. Kellenberg
Bishop of Rockville Centre
June 18, 1970

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Linares Quarterly

Assistance at Immoral Operations

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The title of this chapter is more restrictive than its contents. For here we present those moral principles which govern, not only assistance at immoral operations, but also cooperation in any type of immoral act.

The importance of these moral principles can hardly be overemphasized. Every doctor and nurse realizes only too well how frequently the application of these principles is required in the medical field. And medico-moral problems of this type are often difficult to solve.

At the outset, it is to be acknowledged that the aid given by an assistant surgeon to a principal surgeon, or by nurses to doctors, in the commission of immoral acts is often rendered unwillingly.

Difficult situations of this type frequently arise because of neglect on the part of those who hold positions of authority in the hospital. When hospital authorities rigidly forbid all immoral operations and place a strict sanction on their prohibition, few embarrassing situations will occur. If hospital authorities deliberately close their eyes to these matters, moral problems will constantly arise for the assistant surgeons and nurses on the staff.

In many cases, of course, the problems do not arise as the result of a malicious determination on the part of hospital surgeons to perform operations which they know to be immoral. Frequently, the problem has a deeper and more serious basis, namely, the attitude on the part of hospital authorities that certain truly immoral operations are not immoral at all. When the ethical code of a hospital and the superior members of its staff is deficient, the doctors and nurses in the institution who possess true moral ideals can expect no end to their problems.

This situation is unfortunately not at all rare. For instance, therapeutic abortion, and sterilization to make impossible future pregnancy which would endanger health, are regarded as


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