

DOCUMENT

A group of Catholic intellectuals against PAL on abortion

LIFE AND BIOETHICS

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On August 12th 2020 the Italian Ministry of Health, ostensibly in response to the so called Covid-19.1 "pandemic", issued the *Guidelines for the Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy Using Mifepristone and Prostaglandin*, which allowed for the administration of

chemical abortifacient to pregnant women up to the 9th week of pregnancy and at Day Hospitals, so that women are to be sent home to suffer the painful and dangerous process of expelling their dead baby. There was a reaction of some Catholics reported also in *Avvenire*, the newspaper of the Italian Conference of Bishops (according to *ABC News*), criticizing the increased risk for the woman's health implied in these new directives. In this context, on August 14th the Pontifical Academy for Life issued a *Note* concerning those *Guidelines*. To that *Note* a group of Catholic thinkers and Scholars now replied through a document that *La Nuova Bussola Quotidiana* is publishing today ([here](#) the integral text).

The authors of the document find some positive aspect in the Pav *Note*, but they also point out that there "are several reasons why those with upright moral standards should be saddened and seriously dissatisfied with this document." Those reasons are the following:

1. The PAL is ambiguously stating that Law 194 (1978) is the framework which we all have to confront or bear in mind ("tutti dobbiamo misurarci"), and even is – because of the part thereof that mentions a support to pregnant mothers in difficult situations – the common ground on which a "shared civilization" could be built by those who defend life and those who support a supposed right to abort the unborn babies. Now obviously the Law is the legal framework that we have to bear in mind, but the ambiguous Italian expression "con cui tutti dobbiamo misurarci", "with which we have to *measure* ourselves") suggests that Law 194 is an inevitable *status quo* than cannot possibly be criticized or altered: and, in fact, the *Note* does not in any way criticize or propose any change to the law itself. Indeed, the *Note* limits itself to call for "a full respect of its [the Law's] provisions" ("il richiamo alla 194 e al pieno rispetto di quanto in essa previsto").

But obviously a Law which removed the obstacles for the killing of innumerable innocent human beings is not a *status quo* that can possibly be accepted or tolerated without criticism. So, says the new document by Catholic intellectuals, "[the said law 194] is not the measure with which we all are measured, and, therefore, it cannot provide the basis for what the PAL calls 'an idea of a shared civilization' (*"un'idea di civiltà condivisa"*). There is a Divine Measure which truly measures us all. And it is a Measure that not only condemns all the crimes allowed by this unjust law, but also rules out the kind of obsequiously mild criticism thereof now offered by the Pontifical Academy."

2. A statement reported in *L'Avvenire* (according to *ABC News*) criticized the increased risk for women that these new directives imply and the PAL, instead of supporting the

author, criticized her, although mildly.

3. If the *PAL Note* at least mentioned the increased risk for mothers implied in the directives, on the other hand it failed to even mention the extension of the time in which chemical abortifacients may now be administered to pregnant women, that of course will increase the number of innocent babies being killed. This the authors find an extremely grave omission in a document issued by an Academy connected to the Holy See and founded by John Paul II and Jerome Lejeune. It is as if the increase in the possibilities of killing babies were non-existent in considering the moral standing of the Ministry's new directives.

4. Another grave point is that the *PAL* speaks on occasion of abortion as “an event that is undergone more than chosen” by the woman or the couple, due to economic reasons. In doing this, the *PAL* is using a language that sounds merciful but really implies a significant disregard of human responsibility and dignity. As if human beings could not behave morally and avoid mortal sin (a homicide in this case), with God's grace, in spite of adverse circumstances.

5. The last point criticized is that the *PAL* adopts a euphemistic language that can cause confusion among the faithful. Some examples are: (a) “interruption of pregnancy”, instead of “abortion”; (b) the *PAL* never, in its whole *Note* mentions the gravity of the sin of abortion.

The document ends with a very interesting reflection inspired in St. Augustine's *City of God*: the last fifty years should have taught Christians that Jacques Maritain's dream of a new “secular Christendom” that could peacefully collaborate with the world, was nothing but a dangerous illusion. Original sin and the power of Satan was gravely disregarded in Maritain's calculations. Actually, the “collaboration” of Catholics and the world since the 60s has brought us to this bankruptcy of civilization where telling the truth about the most fundamental features of God's creation (including, for example, the distinction between men and women, or the due respect for the dignity of all human beings) is considered more and more as a crime.

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