

## Italian Bishops Protest Against Divorce Proposal

ROME — (NC) — The Italian Episcopal Conference has called on all citizens to oppose parliamentary proposals to relax legal restrictions against divorce.

In a statement issued following its meetings in Rome (April 19 and 20), the conference's executive committee addressed a "pressing appeal to all responsible representatives of Italian society and to all citizens that in conformity with constitutional norms, with Italian tradition and with the Catholic conscience, the family — founded on indissoluble marriage — may be defended and a great offense and grave injury to the institution of the family may be averted."

The statement, issued in the name of all Italian bishops, was an obvious reference to legislation currently being prepared for parliamentary debate by Socialist and Communist party deputies which would allow divorce, at least in restricted cases. Magazine and newspaper articles have been devoting increased space to the problem in what appears to be a preparation for a major political battle, and it has become a widespread subject for discussion among people.

**ITALIAN LAW** currently has no provision for civil divorce under any circumstances.

Citing the ecumenical council's teaching against divorce in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the bishops' statement reminded Italians of the "gravity of the threat to the dignity of the person, particularly with respect to women and children, and to the unity and tranquillity of the family and the good of the Italian community" if such laws are passed.

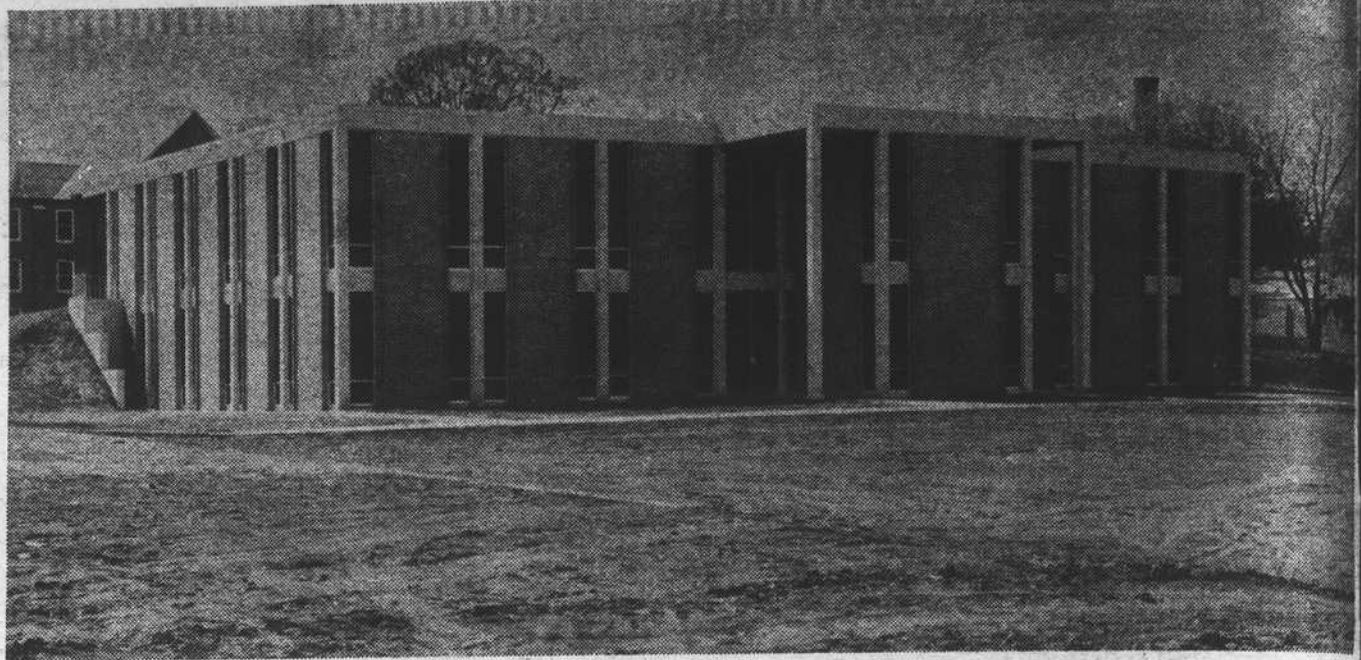
It further commits all Catholics to a "most responsible and firm action in defense of the family and for the peace and affirmation of the moral values of our country."

**THE MEETING**, headed by the conference's president Giovanni Cardinal Urbani of Venice, was held primarily to prepare an agenda for the late June meeting of the entire episcopate and to discuss moves to conform the conference more completely with the new norms contained in council documents.

According to a conference spokesman, "close attention was given to problems of religious and moral life in Italy . . . Questions regarding the family and its foundation—indissoluble marriage—were the object of particular reflection. In this respect the conference felt duty bound to express its thoughts clearly in a special statement."

Other discussions, he said, concerned the "spiritual and cultural conditions of the clergy as well as of the laity. Relations between them were the object of deepened study, attentive proposals and precise conclusions which will be made known in due course."

**THE INFLUENTIAL** Milan daily, Corriere della Sera, the spokesman said, found it significant that the statement on divorce came from the Italian bishops rather than the Holy See, indicating the "will of the present pontiff



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to limit direct intervention of the Vatican in Italian politics to absolutely extraordinary cases."

The editor of the Vatican City daily, L'Osservatore Romano, Raimondo Manzini, wrote the same day the bishops' meeting ended (April 20) that "disavowal of the institution of the family can only lead in the conscience of the community to a weakening assessment of its value to the point where the doctrine of the unity and indissolubility of matrimony become regarded as relative and rescindable—at least with the passing of time. But this is a delusion. The Church cannot change or overrule laws established by God."

The following day (April 21), Vittorio Bachelet, president general of Italian Catholic Action, discussed the problem at length in a signed article appearing in the Catholic press.

"**AS CITIZENS**," he said, "we are deeply convinced that the indissolubility of marriage has been and still is one of the strongholds of our society because it has safeguarded the unity of the family, which nobody wants to renounce, at least not explicitly."

He said he recognized there are many "painful cases" of marriages in shipwreck, but he added that "legalization of these disasters would not solve them, but would at most multiply them at everyone's expense. . . ."

"The dignity of man and woman, of married couples as human beings and of marriage, on which the Italian constitution bases the unity of the family recognized as a natural society, do not seem to us to permit these legalizations. We say this, of course, on the basis of our own vision of life, society and the family, but also as citizens who want to realize in the interest of society that substantial Christian vision on which our constitution is based."

## Commencement Address

Continued from page 4A

ish community, will also receive an honorary degree.

The Rev. Aelred Graham, O.S.B., prominent Catholic theologian and

headmaster of the renowned Ivy League Portsmouth Priory Preparatory School in Rhode Island, will deliver the Baccalaureate sermon to the graduates and will receive an honorary degree, together with Mr. Thomas A. Garrett, prominent Catholic higher education leader.

Out of the largest senior class in the Abbey's history, 95 are candidates for degrees at the May 24 exercises. Nine graduates are from Gastonia, 13 from Belmont, three from Mt. Holly, ten from Charlotte, one from Bessemer City, and one from Crouse.

## Calls Curia

Continued from page 1A

an attempt to prefer — as the Lord said — the 'mandatum Dei' to customs established in the course of time."

'**MANDATUM DEI**' or God's commandment, is a consecrated expression referring to Christ's command to love God above all things and one's neighbor as oneself.)

Pope Paul continued: "This is a reform which psychologically and practically is not easy."

He recalled that the principal reform Pope John wanted the council to achieve was "not of doctrines but of souls."

**IN A PASSAGE** with strong ecumenical overtones, he declared: "may the orthodoxy which has been given us never be for us a reason for pride or prestige, an argument for empty polemics or against charity, a pretext for the selfish laziness of the fortunate, but rather a spur to greater study and to more fervent prayer, indeed to brotherly understanding, to greater zeal."

## Five Graduates

Continued from page 1A

and Bernard J. Dioguardi, of Babylon, New York, a graduate of the class of 1965, is in university work in Lima, Peru.

The Alumni Office is now planning a reunion and a symposium of these former students when they return home to stimulate further interest and enthusiasm for the Peace Corps work and dedication. A good number of present Abbey students are contemplating enlistment in the Corps.

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