

**RE: US Catholic healthcare systems' sterilization of 10,000 women in Texas  
Institutionalized dissent by sisters and hospitals 40 years after Humanae Vitae  
Need to bring Catholic hospital ethical directives in line with best practices of the US Catholic Church**

FROM: Public records in the State of Texas

TO: His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI  
Cardinal Secretary of State  
Papal Nuncio  
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith  
Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life  
Pontifical Council for the Family  
Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers  
Cardinal DiNardo and the Bishops of Texas  
Home dioceses of the hospital systems operating in Texas and their sponsoring sisters: Albany, Baltimore, Chicago, Dallas, Evansville, Houston, Kalamazoo, Orange, St. Louis, San Antonio, Toledo, Washington  
All other US Cardinals and Bishops  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Committee on Doctrine and Pastoral Practice

USCCB Respect Life Office  
USCCB Committee on Family, Laity, Women, and Youth  
Texas Diocesan Vicar Generals, Chancellors, Priest Councils, Family Life Offices, Respect Life Offices  
Catholic media: Texas diocesan papers, *National Catholic Reporter*, *Catholic Register*, *Our Sunday Visitor*, *Catholic World Report*, *First Things*, *Inside the Vatican*, *the Wanderer*, Catholic News Service, EWTN, Catholic World News (cwnews.com), Catholic bloggers  
Secular media: *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Washington Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *US News & World Report*, major Texas newspapers, Texas papers in cities with Catholic hospitals, papers in Chicago, Dallas, Orange, St. Louis and Toledo (head offices of the Catholic hospital systems operating in Texas).

---

A recently published study of public records (see [www.wikileaks.org/wiki/Catholic\\_hospitals\\_betray\\_mission](http://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/Catholic_hospitals_betray_mission)) shows the six US Catholic hospital systems with facilities in Texas reported to the state from 2000 through 2003 that they sterilized over 10,000 women in violation of human dignity and the Gospel. The systems also reported 57 events coded as legally induced abortion or "termination of pregnancy" that may have violated Catholic belief and practice. These six systems operate 90 hospitals in 20 states and their various sponsoring communities of religious sisters operate an additional seven systems with over 150 hospitals in 34 states, so immoral procedures could be nationwide. An independent review examining the study's findings and the implications for Catholic healthcare is attached. The review includes a one page data summary. All the materials may be freely distributed.

July 25, 2008 will mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the epic controversy that swept American Catholicism following the publication of the papal encyclical on birth control, *Humanae Vitae*. This was the first open dissent by US Catholics against the moral teaching of their church. The degree to which Catholics and Catholic universities have since departed from official teachings in their daily lives has been chronicled by social scientists and historians. What has not been well-documented previously is the extent of dissent by the sisters and the hospitals they operate.

Because the sisters' fidelity to church teaching and to the US bishops' hospital directives has been presumed, Catholic hospitals have been allowed by the bishops to monitor themselves. This may have seemed adequate in the past and, in any event, there was no independent means of verifying actual hospital practice. This is no longer the case. The institutionalization of dissent at the sisters' hospitals is now obvious to anyone who examines the Texas data—and might be equally clear in data from other states. Self-monitoring has not worked. Catholic hospitals should no longer be exempt from the standard of accountability the bishops' have accepted for themselves and mandated for all Catholic ministries regarding ethical conduct. The Catholic hospital directives should be revised to meet this standard, including transparent reporting to independent review boards as done in abuse cases.

The Pope recently spoke to the US bishops about challenges to Catholic life: "Is it consistent to profess our beliefs in church on Sunday, and then during the week to promote business practices or medical procedures contrary to those beliefs? Is it consistent for practicing Catholics to ignore or exploit the poor and the marginalized, to promote sexual behavior contrary to Catholic moral teaching, or to adopt positions that contradict the right to life of every human being from conception to natural death?" Catholics await a response. If priests who abuse and politicians who dissent are penalized for infidelity, are the religious sisters and their hospitals not to be held accountable for decades of unyielding dissent and offenses against tens of thousands of women and, possibly, the unborn?