

UNCLASSIFIED

Such *Be enter in*
Station but not file
Bo. 1/4

7



British Legation to the Holy See

91 Via Condotti
I-00187 Rome

Telephone 889-462 887-473
678.9462 679.7479

WRJ 014/2	
Reference	
1- APR 1981	
OFFICER	BY
PA	Our reference.
12 M 1/4	Date 15 26 March 1981

226/25

R P Osborne Esq
WED
F C O
LONDON

Dear Roy,

ABORTION

1. In his homily following the Angelus celebration attended by an estimated 25,000 people in St Peter's Square on Sunday, 22 March, the Pope praised an Italian Bishops' Conference statement made on Tuesday, 17 March, which called for abortion laws "to be overcome with all legitimate means and opportunities". "I make their pastoral intention mine," the Pope said. "I make it mine," he repeated.

2. Quoting from the statement, the Pontiff said, "It is the special task of the Church and our Episcopal ministry to reaffirm first of all that procured abortion is death, the killing of an innocent creature". He added that no one can have an attitude of pliant consent or passivity in the face of abortion.

3. Reaffirming traditional Roman Catholic teaching, the Pope said, "the image of God is present in every human being from the first instant of conception. It is in this context that one places the effort to inscribe divine law in the daily life of the earth, so that beyond any equivocation the value of motherhood and the full defence of human life is guaranteed."

4. The Bishops' Conference statement condemning abortion was issued in the midst of a heated campaign to repeal Italy's three-year old abortion law. Italy's state provides abortion-on-demand for women in the first three months of pregnancy. Italians will go to the polls in June to vote on a series of referenda, including two opposing abortion proposals: One, sponsored by the Church-supported Movement for Life, seeks to limit abortion only to cases of extreme physical danger for the mother. The other, sponsored by the small left-wing Radical party, proposes to liberalize the law by extending the time restriction and allowing for abortions to be performed outside public facilities.

5. Italy's left-wing political parties have accused the Vatican of political interference because of its anti-abortion statements.

Now May 14
Referenda.

J H Callan

cc Chancery, Rome