

**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) 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 40th 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?