



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

25 February 2008

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Legislature,

The important issue of emergency contraception for rape victims is addressed by AB 377, which is pending in our state legislature at this moment. This topic came once again to our serious attention at the recent meeting of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, and our conversations yielded certain results with which we all strongly agree.

Since we initially took our position of neutrality, we have never wanted to yield on any of three commitments: 1) compassionate care for women who suffer the tragedy of rape, 2) compassion toward a child, a unique human being with unique DNA, who might have been conceived as a result of that rape and, 3) compassionate concern for all who might be involved in making decisions about emergency contraception, especially our physicians and healthcare workers – their consciences in this matter must be protected. The laws of biology and reason, as well as the teaching of the Catholic Church, make clear that compassionate care of women who have suffered the tragedy of rape includes emergency contraception. But, should conception have already occurred, “emergency contraception” can become abortifacient and, in this instance, our compassionate care for a child possibly conceived stands alongside our compassionate care for the woman who was raped. Emergency contraception can, at times, amount to abortion, and both reason and our faith tell us that this is never acceptable. About this we must be very clear.

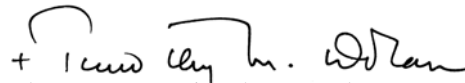
Unfortunately, our position of neutrality has created the impression, in the minds of some, that we are waffling on the pro-life stance that is so basic to human reason, to our American civil rights tradition, and to our faith. This misinterpretation of our stance and its intent has been furthered by the public support of our position of neutrality by Planned Parenthood and the so-called Catholics for a Free Choice, both of whom are pro-abortion and have argued against conscience protection in this particular instance. Construing our initial position of neutrality to be virtually one of support for the passage of this bill could not be farther from the truth.

Nor did our position of neutrality dispense any legislator from properly forming his or her conscience with regard to a vote on this bill, nor from following that well-formed conscience. We want to be completely clear: a well-formed conscience certainly can lead a legislator to oppose this bill and, if you choose to do so, you will enjoy our complete support.

At this important moment we also want to pledge our prayerful support to physicians and health care workers, with the promise that we will stand strongly beside them in the future should the effects of emergency contraception legislation ever threaten the freedom of conscience which belongs to every human person as foundational to his or her religious liberty.

During these last days of determining the disposition of emergency contraception legislation before the end of your current session, please know that you have our prayers for the burden you carry, in terms of protecting the common good, and our respect for your willingness to accept that serious responsibility which is yours. We remain very grateful for your consideration of these, our latest reflections, in this particular matter.

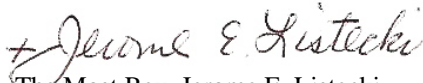
Sincerely yours,

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The Most Rev. Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of Milwaukee
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Green Bay

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The Most Rev. Robert C. Morlino
Bishop of Madison

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The Most Rev. Jerome E. Listecki
Bishop of La Crosse

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The Most Rev. Peter F. Christensen
Bishop of Superior