

World

Bishops support ban

VATICAN CITY — U.S. Roman Catholic bishops will support their church's ban on artificial birth control and will work to assure more complete compliance with their leader said Wednesday.

Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco made the statement denying reports that American bishops, worried about widespread disregard of the birth control ban in the United States, want it modified.

"Neither I nor the American Bishops Conference object or challenge the doctrine of the Catholic Church on contraception," said Quinn, president of the conference. "Neither I nor the American Bishops Conference are calling for a change in the doctrine of the Catholic Church on contraception."

Confusion about the U.S. bishops' stand on the issue arose Monday after Quinn told the World Synod of Bishops meeting at the Vatican that teaching of the birth control ban needed to be improved.

A report of Quinn's speech Monday suggested that he had called for a complete reexamination of the ban on artificial birth control announced by the Vatican in 1968.

"The intent of my speech was to suggest possible ways of making the church's teaching on contraception better understood and more widely accepted," said Quinn, who told the bishops nearly 80 percent of American Roman Catholic women were using banned artificial contraceptives.

The subject of the church ban on artificial contraceptives has been a major issue at the synod, whose theme is modern family life.

Cardinal Pericle Felici told the gathering Tuesday the church's 1968 ban closed the issue once and for all and that further discussion of the ban is useless.

Felici, 69, bitterly attacked the liberal stand of Quinn, who called for a new study of Pope Paul VI's encyclical "Humanae Vitae," banning all forms of artificial birth control.

"I listened to an intervention asking for a new study of 'Humanae Vitae.' I consider the document closed," Felici said, referring to Quinn's argument that modern-day statistics show some 80 percent of Catholic women in the United States use contraceptives.

"There is no need to rediscuss it. There is no need to give credence to statistics because statistics don't mean anything," Felici said.

His comments sharply divided the leading Catholic churchmen attending the month-long 5th World Synod of Bishops, called by Pope John Paul II to discuss the problems of the modern Christian family.

Quinn called for modification of the encyclical, and Britain's Catholic prelate, Cardinal Basil Hume, archbishop of Westminster, also criticized the ban, saying many "good, conscientious and faithful" Catholics could not accept it.

"These Catholics cannot accept the total prohibition of the use of artificial means of contraception, where circumstances seem to make this necessary or even desirable," said Hume.

Archbishop Joseph Bernardin of Cincinnati told the synod, "A new, more positive theology of sexuality is necessary to help people understand and accept the teachings of the Church."

The Vatican invited 53 lay Catholics, many of them family planning experts, to attend the synod to convince troubled Catholics they can live within church teachings on birth control, abortion and divorce, the synod's main themes.

OPEC trio won't cut oil

PARIS — At least three OPEC nations have quietly told industrial countries that because of the Iranian fighting they will not go ahead with a 10 percent cut in crude oil production planned for Wednesday, energy officials reported.

Officials at the International Energy Agency named the three producers as Kuwait, Venezuela and the United Arab Emirates, who together produce about 5.7 million barrels daily.

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