
France: Bishops on revision of bioethics law in Senate, “no human being can treat another as an object”

“No human being can treat another as an object”. This fundamental principle underlies the Declaration of the Permanent Council of the Bishops of France, made public today, on the revision of the bioethics law under discussion in France. The draft law - strongly supported by President Emmanuel Macron - was overwhelmingly passed by the National Assembly with 359 votes in favour, 114 against and 72 abstentions last October. Now the text is soon to be debated in the Senate, where it is expected to face stronger resistance. A public demonstration called “Marchons enfants” was organized by Catholic associations in Paris last October to protest against the revised law. Earlier on in September, bishops too had expressed their concern by organising an “evening debate” at the College Saint Bernard in Paris. The debate was broadcast live on KTO and on all social networks of the Church. Today, at the end of the Permanent Council which took place from 6 to 8 January, the Bishops reaffirmed their strong concern for three points in the text, which, “if finally adopted”, would pave the way for “insoluble contradictions” and would amount to “a serious misconception of what ethics is. A misconception which, if not clarified, - according to the Bishops - would be of the order of carelessness for the future” and would affect the whole French society. The first “questionable” point highlighted by the Bishops is the risk of “subjecting, as required by the law, the medically assisted procreation (PMA in French) of a new human being to a ‘parental project’”, and thus of making the parents’ “absolute desire” a priority over the good of the child.

The biggest novelty introduced in the revised text is the possibility for “any couple made up of a man and a woman, or two women, or any unmarried woman” to access PMA and being reimbursed by the National Health Service, and the fact that recourse to assisted procreation is decoupled from the infertility criterion. In this regard, the Bishops wrote: “The legalisation of filiation without a father or paternal ancestry and of motherhood by simple declaration of will, before the notary, even without the woman experiencing gestation, achieves the ‘unbelievable’”. “Is it right to take society in this direction?”, the Bishops asked, insisting on the need to include in the text a clause allowing “conscientious objection” which also applies to cases of medical termination of pregnancy. The third point raised by the French Bishops is the extension of the pre-implantation diagnosis which, according to the Bishops, would pave “the way for an increased selection of unborn children”, thus creating a “liberal eugenics”. “Not only wanting a child without any genetic variant is an illusion, but it would also” dehumanize “our humanity!”. “These three points - the statement from the Permanent Council reads - tell us something about the headlong rush in which our western societies, subject to liberalism and market laws, are caught”. “We encourage citizens - the Bishops ended - to make their reservations known. We reiterate that every child should be allowed to grow up free and protected in their dignity, in communion with all others, throughout their life, whatever their ethnic or social origin, religion or lack of religion and sexual orientation. No human being can treat another as an object”.

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