

## Doctor of Dogmatic Theology and Ob/Gyn Condemn Early Induction Abortions at Catholic Hospital in London Ontario

By John-Henry Westen

LONDON, Ontario, December 23, 2008 (LifeSiteNews.com) - Rev. Msgr. Ignacio Barreiro, the Rome Director of Human Life International and a Doctor of Dogmatic Theology, has reviewed and denounced the ethical guidelines which have permitted a Catholic hospital in London Ontario to terminate the pregnancies of babies who are severely disabled.

Last month, LifeSiteNews.com broke the news of a Catholic hospital in London Ontario which has been performing eugenic abortions on babies with lethal fetal anomalies for 20 years (see coverage: <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/dec/08121111.html>). While the chief ethicist at the hospital, Fr. Michael Prieur, assured LifeSiteNews.com in an interview that the procedure of "early induction" in cases of lethal fetal anomaly was in line with Catholic teaching, documents from both the National Catholic Bioethics Center and the Doctrinal Committee of the US Bishops Conference condemned the procedure. LifeSiteNews.com obtained the ethical guidelines of St. Joseph's Hospital and published them online here: [http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008\\_docs/EarlyInductionEthi...](http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008_docs/EarlyInductionEthi...)

Msgr. Barreiro told LifeSiteNews.com, "These guidelines claim that it morally permitted to practice early induction after viability of the child, when there are severe and even life-threatening circumstances affecting the child in the womb." He explained, "The first question we should ask is, is this early induction going to have a therapeutic effect on the child? It is evident that if a child suffers from anencephaly this early induction will not have any therapeutic effect on the child."

Msgr Barreiro continued, "Then what is the purpose of this practice, in the opinion of their supporters, is to relieve the emotional distress of the mother.

"What are the consequences of early inducement in the child? It hastens the death of the child by depriving the child of the good of gestation. It is evident also that an early delivery of a 'viable' child will endanger the life of the child due to complications of prematurity. A health care institution that favors early induction of anencephalic 'viable' children knows and as consequence wills it, that a child should be born in conditions that are objectively life threatening to him. So it can be said that early induction is akin to euthanasia. It willfully creates a life threatening situation for the child that will hasten his death."

Barreiro, a highly respected theologian in Rome, concluded his assessment saying: "So as a consequence early inducement of a child that suffers from anencephaly is immoral and violates the teachings of the Church as they are presented in USCCB Moral Principles Concerning Infants with Anencephaly, September 19th 1996, and in NCBC Statement on Early Induction of Labor of March 11th 2004." (Those documents are available online here: <http://www.usccb.org/dpp/anencephaly.htm> and here: <http://www.ncbcenter.org/04-03-11-EarlyInduction.asp> )

LifeSiteNews.com also sought the opinion of Dr. Michael Shannon, a Catholic obstetrician/gynecologist who practices in Kitchener Ontario. Dr. Shannon told LifeSiteNews.com that despite the hardships, "the teaching of the Catholic Church is clear - pregnancy termination for whatever reason is just that - pregnancy termination."

Speaking to Fr. Prieur's discussion of the disposition of the parents in such situations, Dr. Shannon said, "The 'feelings' or 'prayerful discernment' of the couple have nothing to do with the consistent teachings of the Catholic Church in these situations and objective moral truth."

The guidelines from the Catholic hospital say that the early induction may only be performed "after viability." Dr. Shannon, however, says, "To wait until viability is reached (approximately 23 to 24 weeks gestation) and intervene by terminating the pregnancy for non-medical indications is still abortion (just done later in the pregnancy)."

Dr. Shannon concluded, "In 16 years of practice as an obstetrician-gynecologist I have never seen or heard of a case of anencephaly which resulted in the mother's life being put at medical risk. In fact, in the case of a woman carrying an anencephalic child, I would always counsel the couple to allow the pregnancy to go to term and induce labor then if it has not occurred naturally (or to the point where the child died in utero) and intervene at that time for necessary medical indications. The parents then have the consolation that they have not terminated the pregnancy and have allowed nature to 'take its course'."

See related LifeSiteNews.com coverage:

Exclusive: Twenty Years of Eugenic Abortion at Ontario Catholic Hospital  
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