

# Issue threatens rural life

By Mark Pattison  
Catholic News Service  
WASHINGTON (CNS) — Corporate hog farming is being increasingly seen by Catholic Church leaders as a threat to the viability of U.S. rural life.

Sandra A. LaBlanc, communications director for the National Catholic Rural Life Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, said the conference receives more calls from dioceses about the corporate hog farming issue than anything else.

The biggest overall threat is the loss of a way of life that has sustained rural America for generations.

Family farmers, trying to compete with the corporate farms, go into debts with bank loans. One mishap and they can lose their farm.

That is less likely to happen in corporate farming, according to Christopher Dodson, executive director of the North Dakota Catholic Conference. One corporate hog farmer wishing to set up shop in the state has said it has \$55 million with which to set up an operation and satisfy governmental regulations.

## Father Robert Drinan ...

# ‘Law is important part of social fabric in U.S.’

By Erika W. Martinez  
Catholic News Service  
SALT LAKE CITY (CNS) — In the United States, “law is a more important part of the social fabric than anywhere else in the world,” said Jesuit Father Robert F. Drinan, a legal scholar and former U.S. congressman.

America’s lack of a common culture, religion, tradition or ethnicity gives the law its tremendous power to set moral norms and unite citizens, he said.

But “contrary desires” within the nation make it difficult to say how effectively the law unites us, he added, citing the country’s high divorce rate as a problem perhaps beyond legal remedy.

“With every other marriage ending in divorce, what can the law do to control matters when a tidal wave like that collapses?” he asked.

The priest, who teaches law and legal ethics at Georgetown University in Washington, spoke with the Intermountain Catholic, the newspaper of the statewide Diocese of Salt Lake City. He was in Utah to teach a summer course in legal ethics at the University of Utah College of Law.

From 1970 to 1980, Father Drinan represented a Massachusetts district in the House of Representa-

Most family farms would raise hundreds of hogs — so consistent a source of income hogs were called “the mortgage-buster.” Corporate farms, though, raise tens of thousands of hogs for slaughter.

Tending to all those hogs aren’t farmers but farm hands, paid a wage for the work they do. It’s not the hands who reap the profit from the operation, but the corporation.

Jim West, a permanent deacon in Thompson, N.D., had 2,000 hogs on his farm when he quit in 1995. “The big guys were getting so big we couldn’t get a reasonable price,” he said. He, like other family farmers, also had fewer resources than the corporate farms to deal with droughts in 1989-91 and floods in 1993-94.

“We couldn’t take all the work and (get) no return on it,” West said. “It was slave labor.”

One issue that cannot go unnoticed is what to do with hog manure. It is usually composted and sprayed onto croplands as fertilizer, but the quantities are mind-boggling.

“I still have 400,000 gallons of ma-

nure I’ve got to get rid of,” West said. The odor could be smelled from three miles away. “People say it went further,” he added.

The smell from a big operation’s “lagoons,” as they are euphemistically called, can be detected up to eight miles away, West said.

The strain on rural water systems can be immense, warned West, especially if hog waste leaks and gets into groundwater supplies or rivers.

Dodson said the issue can be framed in terms of Catholic social teaching, taking into account ownership, stewardship, and the effect corporate farming has on the community.

He pointed to the “Catechism of the Catholic Church” which speaks of “moral obligations, including those toward generations to come” as being a driving force behind Catholic participation in the issue.

“The challenge in the church is to express (the church’s view) to parishioners and non-Catholics,” Dodson said.

It is not always so easy to convey, especially to legislators.

Catholics to link justice and faith, and to make the law more responsive to all citizens’ just demands.

The Jesuit told the Intermountain Catholic that religion is strongly behind the power of the law to effect good in society. While in Utah, he was working on an article for the Georgetown Law Review on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in June.

“We need the free exercise of religion,” said Father Drinan, calling the issue “a basic clash between those who want to exalt religious freedom and those who say it’s not that important.”

The issue is a tough one, he added. “You have a confrontation between the Congress and the court. That’s never good.”

Religious freedoms must be protected, even for religions that seem strange to some, he emphasized. “If we encourage religion, it will be a strong force in our public life.”

A priest for 44 years, Father Drinan is the new national chairman of the American Bar Association’s Standing Committee on Professionalism. When he’s not lecturing or writing, he likes to give retreats for lawyers.

While the emphasis is on spiritual matters, he said, he also includes discussion on legal ethics.

clause against lethal injection because they believed a fear of doctors committing euthanasia by needle had played a major role in the defeat of proposed assisted suicide laws in Washington and California.

But studies from the Netherlands have come to light since 1994 showing that as many as one-fourth of patients who take lethal doses by mouth suffer drawn-out deaths. The Netherlands still has criminal laws against euthanasia but has codified official guidelines which, if followed, virtually guarantee immunity from prosecution. Dutch doctors who practice euthanasia give a lethal injection if an oral poison acts too slowly.

Derek Humphry, leader of the Oregon-based Euthanasia Research and Guidance Organization, told the Oregonian that the public is “ready for whatever works best.”

But in a recent letter published in the Oregonian, Dr. Gregory Hamilton of Portland urged repeal of the law, citing the case of Dr. James Gallant, a Corvallis physician who may face murder charges for allegedly giving a lethal injection to an unconscious 78-year-old woman in March 1996.

Hamilton is a co-founder of Physicians for Compassionate Care, a coalition of doctors opposing assisted suicide.

“If Oregonians don’t repeal Measure 16 (the 1994 law) this November by voting yes on Measure 51,” he wrote, “we may soon have Dutch-style deaths in this state, with assisted suicide leading to euthanasia for the terminally ill, then euthanasia for the chronically ill, then euthanasia for the psychologically distressed, then from voluntary euthanasia to involuntary euthanasia.”

# Packet of materials deals with hog issue

By Catholic News Service  
WASHINGTON (CNS) — Because the National Catholic Rural Life Conference was receiving so many requests from dioceses for help on the corporate hog farming issue, staffers there eventually assembled a packet of materials to guide diocesan officials confronted with the issue.

The packet includes:  
• “Corporate Hog Update,” a newsletter on the corporate hog industry published by PrairieFire Rural Action.

• The transcript of a “60 Minutes” segment aired Dec. 22, 1996, called “Pork Power,” which described both the strength of the corporate hog industry and the smell of the waste from corporate hog farms in North Carolina, where hogs outnumber people.

• Position statements from the Iowa Catholic Conference. One states, “We strongly endorse legislation that requires industrial type large hog production programs to be environmentally sound.” Another declares, “We support incentives in rural areas to create new jobs which provide decent wages and safe working conditions.”

• Remarks by Holy Cross Brother David Andrews, rural life conference executive director, made this year to the National Farmers Organization. In them, he reiterates a position held by the conference since 1949: “Concentration of land ownership, to the exclusion or detriment of the family-type farm, (is) socially unjust and (requires) correction by governmental action and by informed public opinion.”

• University of Missouri research in 1994 showing that independent

hog producers created three times as many jobs as contract producers, and that for each 12,000 slaughtered hogs produced by contract producers, there was a net loss of at least 18 jobs.

• A statement by the Coalition to Preserve Family Farms of the Diocese of Sioux City, Iowa, which looked at how corporate hog farming affected the North Carolina economy. The state lost 48 percent of its pork producers between 1988 and 1994. In the two counties which contain 44 percent of North Carolina’s hogs, the number of farm jobs fell by one-third in 10 years, the population has been stagnant, and sales and property tax money have trailed badly behind the state as a whole.

• A passage from the book “Broken Heartland” by Osha Gray Davidson, which sharply criticizes the “get big or get out” mentality in hog farming today. He also asked, “What happens when something goes really wrong?” at a corporate hog farm.

“That question was answered in North Carolina in late June of 1996, when the dike surrounding a 12-foot-deep lagoon of hog feces and urine broke, allowing the contents to flow across nearby fields before spilling into the New River. Much of the 25 million gallons of manure from the lagoon entered the river, killing thousands of fish and contaminating water for miles downstream,” Davidson said.

“Worst of all, the site of the accident wasn’t some ancient lagoon built before the risks involved were understood. It was a state-of-the-art, nearly new holding pond, designed under what had been termed ‘stringent’ new state regulations.”

## Internal closure lifted ...

# Palestinians awaiting access to Jerusalem

By Catholic News Service  
BETHLEHEM, West Bank (CNS) — The Israeli Defense Forces lifted the internal closure on Bethlehem, permitting Palestinians to travel to other Palestinian-controlled towns but not to Israeli-controlled areas, such as Jerusalem.

Most Palestinians living in Bethlehem work in Jerusalem. As of Aug. 27, when the internal closure was lifted, they were still not able to get to their jobs.

“This is not a big achievement,” said Bethlehem Mayor Hana Nassar. “This is not what we are looking for. It is a very minor step taken in the right direction. What we are looking for is the lifting of the total closure. We can now move within our district, but that is not enough.”

At the Vatican, a spokesman said the nuncio to Israel, Archbishop Andrea Cordero Lanza di Montezemolo, had met with Israeli Foreign Ministry officials to express deep concern over the Bethlehem closure.

The spokesman, Father Ciro Benedettini, said the nuncio’s action had fallen short of a formal protest, but had made clear the Vatican’s disapproval of the measure.

The Vatican newspaper, L’Osservatore Romano, said the Vatican had voiced its diplomatic objections in order to favor a return of “tolerance and understanding” to the region.

“Negotiation remains the only practical instrument to restart the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority,” it said in a front-page article Aug. 28. The newspaper called on

government leaders in the area to prevent “enemies of dialogue” from gaining the upper hand. “Palestinian and Israeli leaders cannot forget that, in front of the international community, in front of the family of nations, in front of the conscience of the entire world, they have made a commitment to make the region safe and liveable,” it said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Israeli Radio from South Korea, where he was visiting, that the Israeli government has intelligence information indicating a terrorist cell active in the Bethlehem area has plans to carry out another attack in Israel. He said the closure would remain in place until Israeli security is assured.

The closure was imposed following a double suicide bombing in Jerusalem July 30. Israel lifted the closure from other West Bank towns and Gaza Aug. 15, but kept it in place in Bethlehem and the neighboring towns of Beit Tsaour and Beit Jala.

A parish priest in Beit Jala said the effects of the closure have been severe.

“This area around Bethlehem especially lives from tourism, and since one month everything has stopped. The people, they are suffering. (The Israelis) have opened up some points between the villages, but not to Jerusalem, and that is very important, also for religious reasons,” said Father Youssef Rizkeli, director of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem’s school in Beit Jala. “Nothing is enough. We need peace and need

justice. We need to see all the fruits from the peace process,” he said.

“Everything will come back again with good will from both sides,” he added. “We hope and we do not lose hope; we are suffering at the moment.”

In late August, Palestinians protested the extended closure on their city.

Palestinian youths and Israeli soldiers clashed at Rachel’s Tomb at the entrance to Bethlehem, which is under Israeli control. Palestinians threw rocks at the soldiers, who responded with tear gas and rubber bullets. Several Palestinians were injured during the confrontations.

On Aug. 23 a group of some 600 Italian pilgrims held a prayer service at the border between Bethlehem and Jerusalem when their convoy of buses was not permitted to go through the checkpoint. They were eventually permitted into the city after several Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, intervened.

“We did not protest against anybody, we just prayed and said we had the right to go in to Bethlehem,” said Father Rodolfo Cetoloni, spokesman for the group. “We prayed and sang and when we finally arrived, the people of Bethlehem also sang songs of praise and joy. We want the right to pray in a Christian place. ... It was very emotional. I think the soldiers were also happy that we were able to go through.”

Political and religious leaders in Bethlehem led a demonstration Aug. 25 attempting to open up a roadblock of boulders set up by the Israeli Defense Forces between Bethlehem and Beit Tsaour.

# Homeless man is arrested in Omaha priest’s murder

By Charlie Wieser  
Catholic News Service  
OMAHA, Neb. (CNS) — Cathedral bells tolled Aug. 26 for 81-year-old Father William Kleffman, who was found bludgeoned to death in the rectory of St. Agnes Parish in Omaha Aug. 21.

Father Kleffman, the first priest to be murdered in the history of the Archdiocese of Omaha, was killed less than two months after retiring from 56 years of priestly service.

A 56-year-old homeless man, who worked for three days at St. Agnes and Our Lady of Guadalupe parishes in Omaha to earn bus fare to California, has been arrested. Rogelio Tomas Gallegos has been charged with killing the priest while committing a robbery and sexual assault.

Although he doesn’t have a criminal record in Omaha, Gallegos has a history of violent crimes in several states dating back to 1969, including rape, assault with a deadly weapon and aggravated armed robbery, according to court records unsealed the afternoon of Father Kleffman’s funeral.

The funeral Mass at St. Cecilia’s Cathedral was attended by an overflow crowd of more than 1,000, including nearly 130 priests and Omaha Mayor Hal Daub. Archbishop Elden Francis Curtiss was the principal celebrant.

Concelebrating were retired Archbishop Daniel E. Sheehan of Omaha; Father James Kleffman, the slain priest’s brother from Missouri Valley, Iowa; and Father Damian Zuerlein, who replaced Father Kleffman as pastor of St. Agnes Parish on June 25.

During the homily, Father Lucian Astuto told the gathering of Father Kleffman’s courageous service as a chaplain in World War II, his devotion to Catholic education and his reputation as the “singing priest.”

“As Captain William Kleffman, he managed to make it to many battlefields. Veterans will tell you of Father Kleffman speeding behind enemy lines to pick up men left behind,” said Father Astuto, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Omaha and a close friend of the deceased priest. On one of Father Kleffman’s rescue missions, a mortar shell ex-

ploded, throwing him from his jeep, Father Astuto said. Another shell fell nearby, severing the leg of a young soldier. “Though injured himself, Father Kleffman crawled to the aid of that soldier,” he said.

Father Astuto also shared how Father Kleffman was known as the “singing priest” because of his love of singing at Mass and with the students at St. Agnes School.

On the first day of classes every year, Father Astuto said, “Father Kleffman would gather the students around the flagpole and sing ‘God Bless America.’”

Father Kleffman was “a man of many talents, accomplishments, honors and successes,” Father Astuto said, “but the most significant aspect of his life was his priesthood” because he loved serving the people of God.

“This tragedy cannot be undone, but it can be reversed if someone will take his place,” Father Astuto told the somber crowd that included St. Agnes students and altar boys. “Nothing would make Father Kleffman happier than to see his altar boys and graduates from his school studying for the priesthood.”