The Vatican's Declaration
On Procured Abortion...

A Charter For Political Action

By WILLIAM H. MARSHNER

Editor's Note: With a few notable exceptions, Catholics in this Country have given little attention to the Vatican's Declaration on Procured Abortion, issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith last November. In the following commentary on this landmark document, Mr. Marshner demonstrates that the Declaration is more than a moral exhortation against abortion; it is a call for Catholics and all men of goodwill to take the offensive against all those who seek to institutionalize—in the name of the common good—this most heinous of crimes.

This is the third major declaration in as many years from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The first of these attacked the errors of Schoonenberg and Rahner concerning Christology. The second reproved the errors of Hans Koenig, Avery Dulles, and many others regarding the Church—her identity and infallibility. Now comes the Declaration on Procured Abortion, issued not in Latin like the others but in French.

When a doctrinal statement is issued by the Vatican in a modern language, there is a reason. In this case it is obvious that part of the reason is the legislative situation in France: Catholic thinkers decline to recognize the fetus as authentically human or, alternatively, decline to insist upon the "Catholic" position in a secular, pluralistic society. These two situations, the one speculative and the other practical or legislative, will sound immediately familiar to Americans. We, too, have Rockefellers, Currans, and Drinans. Why, then, did the Vatican choose to speak on this burning subject in French rather than in English?

The answer to that question lies, I think, in a bitter irony. The United States has never been a Catholic country; from the beginning, we have found it necessary...
The world" (paragraph 25), that "to acting in their role as citizens especially in France, Catholics (and all others of good Abortion definitions the Vatican dissents. prosperity (that of the corporate limited to the horizon of life in the path of true progress of the human gradually forgotten that " a convert. established religion always at­...