

Philippine president says he'll risk excommunication for legislation

MANILA, Philippines – Philippine President Benigno Aquino said he is willing to risk excommunication from the Catholic Church rather than scrap the so-called Responsible Parenthood Bill, reported the Asian church news agency UCA News.

“I remain committed to pushing for the introduction of a law for responsible parenthood ... at risk of excommunication, it is my obligation as a leader,” Aquino told graduates from the University of the Philippines.

“In the end I must listen to my conscience and do what is right,” the president said. He said he cannot stand by and watch the cycle of poverty continue as unplanned births spiral.

The proposed legislation faces strong opposition from the Catholic Church because of provisions that allow the use of contraception.

UCA News reported that, earlier, church officials called for the scrapping of the Responsible Parenthood Bill and the Reproductive Health Bill, now pending in the Philippine Congress.

Aquino spokeswoman Abigail Valte said the Responsible Parenthood Bill will not favor the church's stand or the position of those supporting the Reproductive Health Bill.

“There is a need to revise, refocus and educate Filipino couples and provide them with all available information regarding natural and artificial methods of family planning, and for them to consult with the individual religious entities they belong to,” Aquino said earlier.