

Vatican official urges women to consider morality, safety of RU-486

VATICAN CITY - Even though taking the abortion pill RU-486 may be less traumatic than a surgical abortion, it still involves the taking of an innocent human life, said Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

"It is still abortion," the archbishop said in an interview with the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* after Italy's drug-regulating agency approved nationwide use of the RU-486 abortion pill July 30.

The administrative council of the Italian Drug Agency voted to authorize the sale of the abortion pill, but placed two conditions on its use:

- To comply with Italy's abortion laws, the pill must be administered in a hospital or clinic and the woman must remain there until the abortion is completed.
- While most European countries have authorized use of RU-486 up to the ninth week of pregnancy, the Italian regulatory agency restricted the period to the seventh week of pregnancy.

In Italy, abortion is legal in all cases through the end of the third month of gestation, but the agency said that adverse reactions and the need to resort to a surgical intervention increased when RU-486 was used after the seventh week of pregnancy.

Archbishop Fisichella told *Corriere della Sera* that "it is obvious that the canonical consequences" of using RU-486 are the same as those incurred for getting a therapeutic abortion: automatic excommunication.

But he said women also should understand that according to information given to the Italian Drug Agency by Exelgyn, the distributor of RU-486 outside North America, 29 women have died after taking the drug, which was legalized in France in 1988 and is now available throughout most of Europe and North America.

"Do not take it, first of all, because it is evil," the archbishop said. "Do not do it

because the collateral effects are not known. Do not do it because science should serve life, not death.”

Taking the pill “is a direct and deliberate” abortion, he said.

“The fact that taking a pill can be less traumatic for a woman does not change the substance; it is still abortion,” he said.