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Excommunication of doctor and mother criticised

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THE EXCOMMUNICATION of a mother and doctor in Brazil following an abortion on a nine-year-old girl has been described as contradicting "the basic tenets of Catholic social justice teaching".

In a statement, the Roman Catholic Womenpriests group called on the Vatican "to reflect the compassion of Christ to this child, her mother and her doctors".

On March 7th in Brazil, Archbishop José Cardoso Sobrinho announced the excommunication of a woman and doctors who participated in an abortion on the woman's nine-year-old daughter who had been repeatedly raped and finally impregnated with twins by the woman's husband and girl's stepfather.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, supported the excommunications.

The Roman Catholic Womenpriests group noted that "ironically, on the same day that Pope Benedict spoke about the dignity of women, these top church officials withdrew the sacraments from the child's mother and doctors who, after all, were trying to save the child's life while the man who violated the body and soul of a small child remains in good standing with the church".

They said that in the case, "the church had the opportunity to act in a pastoral compassionate manner. Instead, it perpetuated further violence in a family already torn apart by violence."

They also said "there should be no such thing as excommunication in the house of God". Last May the women priests and those who ordained them were excommunicated by the Vatican.

Meanwhile, the liberal Catholic We Are Church group has welcomed last week's "remarkable letter" to bishops by Pope Benedict in which he explained his decision to unconditionally lift the excommunication of four bishops of the Society of St Pius X.

"This very personal letter of the pope shows that he is listening to the many voices raised in protest at his action."

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