

Catholic Hospital: Fetuses Are Not People

Three Colorado bishops said on Thursday they will review a Catholic Church hospital's defense of a lawsuit that argues fetuses do not have legal status—apparently contradicting the Church's teaching on life issues.

The case stems from a malpractice and wrongful death lawsuit filed by Jeremy Stodghill in the 2006 death of his seven-month pregnant wife, Lori, at a **Catholic hospital** in Canon City, Colo. Her twin fetuses also died.

Stodghill filed the suit against Colorado-based Catholic Health Initiatives, which operates hospitals in 14 states, claiming physicians made no effort to save the fetuses by performing a cesarean section.

In its defense, counsel for the hospital said that under Colorado law, a fetus is not a person and that the twins likely would not have survived even with an emergency C-section.

In a letter, Denver Archbishop Samuel Aquila, Colorado Springs Bishop Michael Sheridan and Pueblo Bishop Fernando Isern said that Catholic institutions had “a duty to protect and foster human life,” which they said begins at conception.

“No Catholic institution may legitimately work to undermine fundamental human dignity,” the statement said.

The bishops said that they would carry out a “full review of this litigation and of the policies and practices ... to ensure fidelity and faithful witness to the teachings of the **Catholic Church**.”

Two lower courts sided with the hospital group, and Stodghill

has appealed to the Colorado Supreme Court, which has not yet decided if it will hear the case.

Editing by Tim Gaynor, John Stonestreet.

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