

Brazil Justice Fines Priest for Saying Pro-Abortion Woman Is Pro-Abortion

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A panel of judges in Brasília, the Brazilian capital, has ordered a Catholic priest to pay a fine for using the word "pro-abortion" to describe anthropologist Debora Diniz Rodrigues, a renowned defender of abortion and director of the Institute on Bioethics, Human Rights and Gender.

Last week judges in Brasília ordered Father Luiz Carlos Lodi da Cruz, president of the Pro-life Association of Anapolis, to pay a fine of US\$ 3,000 for damages against Diniz.

The judges also ordered Father Lodi to refrain from using the word "pro-abortion" to describe those who defend abortion. Upon hearing the sentence, the Brazilian priest wondered aloud "what adjective should be used then to describe someone who defends abortion, since certainly one who defends divorce is not offended by being called pro-divorce nor is a supporter of Communism by being called a communist."

"The judges failed to indicate which word in our language is acceptable, and has the same meaning but is non-offensive, for describing someone who openly defends abortion," Father Lodi said.

An appeals court rejected a motion by Father Lodi to have the sentence struck down, and his only recourse now is to appeal to the country's Supreme Court.

Father Lodi noted it was the first time such a sentence has ever been issued against a non-profit organization that could lead to its bankruptcy, as well as the first time silence has been imposed on pro-life citizens.

According to Brazilian journalist Olavo de Carvalho of the *Diário do Comércio* of São Paulo, the ruling is a "monumental absurdity," which is in no way binding on the accused.

De Carvalho said the sentence implies one of two things: "Either the prohibition they imposed applies to all Brazilian citizens or exclusively to Father Lodi. If it's the first, then the judges went way beyond their capacities as judges and have turned themselves into lawmakers" and "for the first time in history jurisprudence have prohibited speech.

"If it is the second, they have denied a specific citizen the right to free speech enjoyed by everyone else, thus resulting in the most naked act of personal discrimination to ever take place in the history of Brazilian justice."

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