



THE CHURCH 1973
Fr. Andrew Greeley

I think I have made it clear in previous columns that I think the Supreme Court decision on abortion was a judicial monstrosity.

The learned justices made fools of themselves, and Nixon's "strict constructionist" appointments are beginning to look even more absurd than they did at the time they were made.

But if the decision was a totally unjustified "raw exercise of judicial power," I must also say that the behavior of some Catholic anti-abortionists is equally foolish. (And I assure all of them who will send me their hate mail that I don't bother opening it, so they might as well save their stamps.)

American Catholics have every right to object to the Supreme Court decision, and they have every right, too, to their conviction that abortion is murder. However, when some anti-abortionists yield to rhetorical excess in their argumentation, they become quite indistinguishable from the fanatics on the other side.

The legalization of abortion does not mean that a society is in danger of collapse or that the powers of evil have taken control of it. Abortion, lamentably, is virtually a universal of the human condition. Together with infanticide it is the "ordinary" form of population control that has existed for centuries in almost every human society.

The population explosion, for example, was brought under control in Western Europe in the last century by abortion and infanticide (along with coitus interruptus). Flushing a child down a sewer is an abominable thing, and it doesn't matter whether the child has been born or would have been in three months. Unfortunately, it is an abomination that the human race has almost universally practiced. (And it is an abomination from which the "so-called" Catholic countries have not been free.)

Whether there will be any more abortion in the United States now that it is no longer a crime may be open to question. Perhaps there will be some increase, at least at first. The law makes it easier and socially more acceptable to destroy unborn life: but the sad truth is that even in the United States of America unborn life has never really been considered very sacred. This may be another way of saying that we haven't got much beyond barbarism and that our legal code has slipped back somewhat toward the level of the savage. The human race has a long way to go before it becomes civilized.

Nor am I persuaded that Americans are any more or less likely to believe that the slaying of unborn life is moral than were our predecessors. The rationalizations for abortion today are sophisticated, as befits a sophisticated people. But that they are any more convincing than the rationalizations used in France in the nineteenth century

50TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. and Mrs. James J. Mulhern celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on April 13. A mass was said in their honor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, by Father Eugene O'Hara, OFM, their nephew.

They were married in St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1923. They have two daughters, Mrs. Dennis (Margaret Mary) Byrne, Mrs. Gerald (Jane) Doran, and two sons, Thomas and James, Jr. They have 14 grandchildren.

or in Greece in the third century B.C. or among peasant peoples in any century seems to me to be problematic.

Humankind has always had arguments available for getting rid of unwanted children, arguments which if not wholly persuasive were at least adequate to soothe the consciences of those involved in abortion and infanticide.

I think a strong human and legal case can be made against the destruction of unborn life, but I think that case can be made most effectively by rational, civilized, sophisticated men and women who are secure in their own ethical visions and are not compelled by their inner needs toward fanaticism.

Unfortunately the hierarchy and the Catholic intelligentsia — each for its own reasons — has permitted the argument against abortion to fall into the hands of those who are in many cases fanatics and kooks. Crusaders and self-righteous zealots are the last ones who will be able to make a case against something which is so pervasively part of the human experience as the destruction of unborn life.

Bishops Meet in Syracuse

The Catholic bishops of New York State will meet April 30-May 1 in Syracuse as Region II of the National Catholic Conference of Bishops to discuss the topics of marriage of the family, the effect

of the Supreme Court pro-abortion decision and youth and the Church.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan and Auxiliary Bishops Dennis W. Hickey and John E. McCafferty will attend the meeting.

positive ways of encouraging respect for human life — before birth and after — in American society."

The discussion paper on "Christian Marriage and Family Life" will be led by Ogdensburg's Bishop Stanislaus J. Bizzana. The companion paper on Youth and the Church will be presented by Rockville Centre Auxiliary Bishop John R. McGann.

Some 32 bishops, all the ordinaries and auxiliaries (both active and retired) of the eight dioceses of the state are eligible to attend.

The two-day meeting will be open to the press except for the brief executive session on Tuesday afternoon. A special celebrated Mass by all the bishops will take place at the Syracuse Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on May 1 at 5 p.m.

The 12 regional meetings, including this one in Syracuse, replace the Spring general meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops held in previous years.

Trinity Alumnae Plan Meeting

On Monday, April 30, the Trinity College Alumnae of Rochester will hold a dinner meeting in the Brass Rail Room of the Midtown Tower Hotel. Cocktails will be served from 6-7 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m.

Mary Jane Ryan Malone, president of the Trinity College Alumnae Association of Washington, D.C. and Kathy Cosgrove, admissions counselor, will be the guest speakers.

Nancy Rubery, president of the Trinity College Alumnae of Rochester, is honorary chairman, assisted by Mrs. Eugene Bergin, Mrs. Richard Chapman, Mrs. Michael Hanna, Miss Pat McGuire, Mrs. William Modney and Miss Betsy Stett.

CARD PARTY

The Rosary Guild of Sacred Heart Cathedral will hold its annual fund raising card party to help the School of the Holy Childhood, April 27 at 8 p.m. in the school hall.

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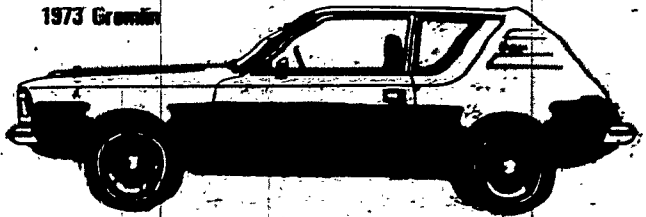
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