

Supreme Court Reviews Abortion Decisions

Washington (NC) — The Supreme Court Nov. 30 heard arguments challenging abortion restriction laws in Missouri, Virginia and Akron, Ohio, and opened what may be its most detailed look at abortion since its 1973 decision.

But the court gave no indication it was interested in overturning the 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which overturned most state restrictions on abortion.

The Reagan administration, supporting municipalities' and states' rights to restrict abortion, also argued that it was not

seeking to overturn legalized abortion, at least not now.

These laws are at issue:

• Restrictions in the Akron, Ohio, ordinance which provide that any girl under 15 must have the consent of one parent or a judge before obtaining an abortion; that doctors inform patients seeking abortions of the risks of the procedure and tell them that "a fetus is a human life from the moment of conception," that fetuses disposed of in a "humane" way, and that there be a 24-hour waiting period before the abortion is performed. These provisions

all were struck down by a federal appeals court. The appeals court upheld another provision that abortions after the first trimester of pregnancy must be performed in a hospital, but this provision is being challenged by abortion clinics and thus is also under Supreme Court review.

• A Virginia law requiring that all second trimester abortions be performed in a hospital. A Virginia doctor convicted of performing an abortion outside a hospital after the first three months of pregnancy is appealing that law. The Virginia Supreme Court upheld this conviction.

• A Missouri law that required that all abortions after the first trimester be performed in a hospital; also provisions requiring parental consent for abortions on girls under 18 (upheld by an appeals court) and that a second physician be present in abortions of "viable" fetuses (struck down by an

appeals court).

A court decision on the cases is not expected until July.

Debate focused on the constitutionality of the various restrictions.

According to Alan Segedy, speaking in behalf of the Akron measures, the restrictions do not limit women's choices regarding abortion but actually increase them.

"Was it to discourage abortion?" he asked in a discussion. "It was to the extent that we feel that a certain number of women, if they were given certain information about the unborn child, would not elect to have an abortion. And if that woman has time to think it over, she might not go through with it," he said.

Segedy told the court that "the right is not a right to have an abortion but the right to make a decision: abortion or childbirth. The state has an interest in

protecting the woman's freedom of choice whether or not to have an abortion. This is not a burdensome law, this is a choice-enhancing law."

But Stephen Landsman, speaking for Akron abortion clinics, said the measure "treats women as if they are not to be trusted to know their own minds and to make rational decisions."

The U.S. Solicitor General Rex Lee came in for some tough questioning, when, arguing as a friend of the court, he said that the court should no longer act as if

any restrictions on abortion are unconstitutional and instead should defer more judgment on the issue to legislatures.

Justice Harry A. Blackmun, who wrote the 1973 court decision, asked if Lee was saying *Roe v. Wade* should be overruled.

"No, I am not," Lee replied. "That issue must await another day."

But, he argued, the abortion issue involves balancing disparate interests, and legislative bodies can do that better than courts.

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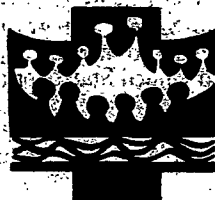
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Insights In Liturgy

By Father Benedict Ehmann



'O' Antiphons Of Advent

In the treasury of the Church's Advent the "O" Antiphons may fairly be regarded as its brightest jewels. They are placed, one a day, in the last week before Christmas, from Dec. 17 to 23, in the Office of Evening Prayer, as a frame for the Canticle of Mary, the "Magnificat."

More than that, now in the revised liturgy, they also are in the Mass, on those same days, as verses for the Gospel Acclamation; and thus are becoming familiar to the people who do not attend the Office of Evening Prayer.

There are seven of these very special antiphons. Each has the same pattern: the exclamation O, followed by one of the titles of the Messiah, after which is the appeal, "come," and the petition for a particular work of salvation.

We may regard the initial O not simply as a word of address. In the mind and heart of the praying Church, it has a deeper resonance. It expresses surprise and wonderment at the coming of our God, awe and reverence because He who comes is our God. It can be as eloquent as the face of a wondering child, wide-eyed, open-mouthed. It sets the mood of the whole prayer, like a mantra in meditation.

The biblical titles of the Messiah ushered in by the O add up to an imposing procession of images in which the Lord of history invested Himself during the long span of the centuries before He came. Beginning with His role in Creation, they move forward through those ancient epochs right up to the Incarnation.

It must come home to us how the Old Testament was pregnant with Christ. His word and power shining mysteriously through the mists and shadows of antiquity, long before the Angel Gabriel was sent to announce to the Virgin Mary that the time was now ready, and she would in flesh and blood become pregnant with Him.

Limits of space here do not allow a proper development of each of these Messianic titles, but the relevant Scripture passages will be cited so that you who read this may be moved, by devotion or even curiosity, to look them up. Here they are, in proper sequence:

Dec. 18 — O Wisdom, from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end mightily, and disposing all things lovingly: come, show your people to salvation. (Proverbs 8:9; Sirach 24: Wisdom 8:1-5)

Dec. 18 — O God of Power and Might, our Covenant Lord, you appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and gave him the law on Sinai: come, stretch our your mighty hand to set us free. (Exodus 3, 19 and 20.)

Dec. 19 — O Root of Jesse, you stand as an ensign to the nations, and before you kings will close their mouths in awe, and nations will bend their knees: come to save us, do not tarry. (Isaiah 11; 52:13-55.)

Dec. 20 — O Key of David, and Scepter of the House of Israel, you open and no one can close, you close and no one can open: come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and lead your people to freedom. (Isaiah 22:22.)

Dec. 21 — O Orient from on high, splendor of eternal light, and sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. (Malachi 3:20; Luke 2: 7-8; Hebrews 1:3.) It is interesting to note that this antiphon of Christ the Light occurs on the shortest day and longest night of the year.

Dec. 22 — O King of the Nations, their Desired One, the Key-stone which makes Jews and Gentiles one: come, save the creature you fashioned from the dust of earth. (Haggai 2: 6-9; Isaiah, 28:16; Ephesians 2:14.)

Dec. 23 — O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the Desire of the nations: come, set us free O Lord our God. (Isaiah 7:14; 8:8; 9:1-2; Genesis 49:10.)

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