

# Others share views on abortion

Eight speakers, in all, shared their views on abortion with slightly less than 200 participants at the state Right to Life convention Saturday. Bishop Matthew H. Clark started the proceedings with a discussion of three ways in which Christian faith challenges legalized abortion. Beginning that discussion, the bishop said: "The Christian gospel proclaims the sanctity of all human life, and it calls into question any law, tradition or common practice that depreciates, discards or terminates any human life ... The legal sanction that Roe vs. Wade granted to abortion on demand is just such a law. (It) denies the personhood of the unborn child, and thereby grants the legal right to abort this human life. The Roman Catholic Church, and many other Christian denominations regard this as the denial of the most fundamental human right: the right to life."

Secondly, he said, "Christianity places special emphasis on the people whom society marginalizes. Jesus' ministry inevitably brought him into contact with those that society had discarded: the lepers, prostitutes and tax collectors, to name a few ... He proclaimed that His mission was to preach good news to the poor, and therefore, to pay heed to the people His society disregarded."

That emphasis, Bishop Clark said, "poses a fundamental challenge to abortion. Unborn children are poor, powerless and voiceless, and they must be subjects of concern for a religious faith that exercises this option. They are strangers we are called upon by God to welcome."

In enunciating his third point, Christianity's challenge of non-violence, Bishop Clark said "The acceptance of violence against the unborn child cannot do otherwise than nurture a cultural callousness with respect to violence, and this callousness will degrade and victimize each and everyone of us."

Abortion he said, also poses a challenge to Christians, demanding that they work to combat it on three fronts: the pastoral, the legal and political, and the cultural. On the pastoral level, he said, we must prove to the public that abortion is not the panacea for all social ills, by forming and sustaining "loving communities where human life at every stage is cherished. Special attention must be given in our communities to all who are or who have been susceptible to the insidious allure of abortion ... Abortion challenges Christians to be ever-vigilant in their love of these troubled sisters, and in some cases, brothers.

"A caring, loving pastoral response has to be our first line of defense against abortion," he continued. "For even

despite the legal approbation given to abortion, such a response can save the lives of unborn children right now."

Citing examples of efforts on the legal front, Bishop Clark said "It seems clear from polls that the American people have not accepted abortion on demand. But it is equally clear that the majority has not yet been mobilized to carry out the political changes that would reflect this view. By reaching out to those still uninformed, through new and creative means, such positive change may be obtained."

The cultural level of attack, Bishop Clark said, "is the most difficult level to address as it does not present us with the same palpable means we have to respond on the pastoral and political levels. I suggest, however, that in the end it will be our ability or inability to transform our culture that will determine its hospitableness to unborn human life.

"As we transform our culture, we need to pay attention to all the ways in which our culture devalues human life ... We must also be willing to peer into the heart of our society and identify and transform its deepest values in order that they may reflect a fuller appreciation of human life," he said.

The wealth and power of our nation, Bishop Clark said, "can blind us to the poverty and powerlessness of others. Our materialism can lead us to accept a crass utilitarianism that turns people into objects to be manipulated for some spurious end. In creating a culture that values and sustains human life, we must be particularly vigilant in warding off the tendencies of objectifying persons."

State Sen. James H. Donovan took the podium after Bishop Clark. Donovan, who was later presented with the third annual Terrence Cardinal Cooke Award for his pro-life efforts, spoke about a variety of pro-life initiatives in the houses of the New York State Legislature, particularly in the area of Medicaid-funded abortions.

"I've never had a poor person come to me and recommend Medicaid funding for abortions, but I've had people ask me for education," he said, noting that Governor Mario Cuomo puts \$15 million of Medicaid funding into his annual budget "for the express purpose of destroying human life conceived in poverty." Donovan, who represents Oneida County, said he considered it an "insult to the poor that the state allows us to be taxed for this purpose.

"In New York State, we paid last year for 45,000 Medicaid abortions, at 70 percent in New York City," he said, citing statistics on the number of abortions occurring each year at various stages of fetal development. "You'd think people would be outraged.

They're outraged by Auschwitz and Dachau. Those things that happen should teach us a lesson."

Currently, Donovan is working on a petition drive to encourage Gov. Cuomo to end Medicaid funding for abortions, a provision that is not required by law. He hopes to have "hundreds of thousands" of petition cards in Albany by St. Patrick's Day, a prime time to influence the budget process.

Father William B. Smith, STD, former recipient of the Cardinal Cooke award and dean of St. Joseph's Seminary in New York, was the next speaker. His presentation "Death and Dying: Now it's Granny Doe" delineated the legal, moral and ethical difference between removing extraordinary means from a terminal patient and euthanasia, either the administration of a lethal drug or the omission of such basic necessities of life as food, water, moderate room temperature and hygiene.

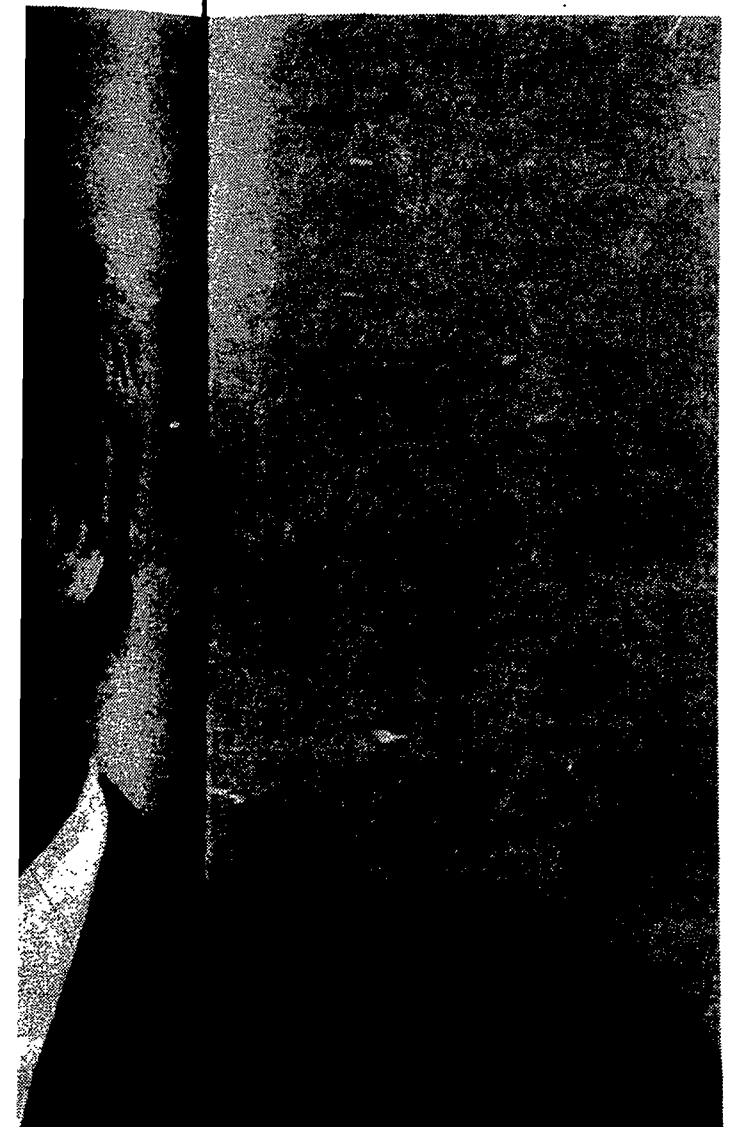
Ten years ago, Father Smith said, the "right to die" controversy centered on whether one could remove an artificial respirator from a terminal patient. Today, he said, it is whether one can remove food and water from a non-terminal patient.

"The right to refuse extraordinary means is already your legal right, your moral right and good medical practice," he said, explaining that the "right to die" is inherent. "The fact that you and I were born guarantees that we're going to die. The Supreme Court cannot confer any extra rights on you."

He said the "right to die" and Living Will debate is a product of word games designed by such organizations as the Hemlock Society to undermine laws against assisted suicide. But mercy killing, aiding a person's suicide attempt, is morally and must remain legally wrong, he said. "No direct, lethal attack on any living person: that's a moral imperative."

Kathy DiFiore, a Rochester native who established Several Sources Foundation in New Jersey, spoke about the needs of unwed, young mothers. DiFiore, who was featured in a Courier-Journal article on July 31, is working to establish a nationwide network of homes for young single mothers.

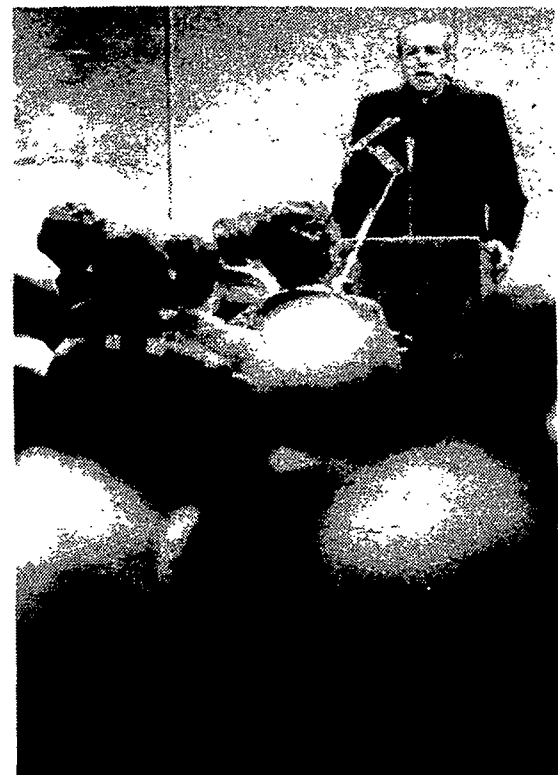
The day's final speaker, Richard Glasgow, spoke on "Planned Parenthood's Pro-Abortion Crusade: Past, Present and Future." Dr. Glasgow, currently the education director for the National Right to Life Committee, was previously a professor at Penn State University. His presentation focused on the agenda of Planned Parenthood and ways in which pro-life activists can combat it.



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Bishop Matthew H. Clark, the first speaker at the October 19 convention, presented the Catholic challenge to abortion.

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answer. Bottcher noted that abortion is convenient for employees, educators and boyfriends because it eliminates any need to make concessions to the pregnant woman or the new mother. "A woman whose pregnancy causes problems for others is expected to do the responsible thing and have an abortion," she said.

Thus, the pro-life feminist concluded, "Legalized abortion has been an absolute disaster for women's rights." She stated optimism, however, about the possibility of separating women's rights from the pro-abortion movement. Some "intellectual feminists" have come to concede that a fetus is human, she said, though they still do not acknowledge that what is "human" is necessarily a person with rights. "Modern academic thought is rapidly losing credibility on abortion," Bottcher said, adding that some feminists also are now allowing that abortion is not morally defensible in all cases.

Feminists for Life is not very well-known, but its members see themselves as a small and growing bridge between right-to-life groups, feminists and liberals. "True feminism is right to life," she said, adding that "pro-life feminists intend to take over the movement and be the leaders of the Third Round."



Father William B. Smith punctuates his discussion of mercy killing and the right to die.