

Violent attack draws range of plans for 'war' on crime

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Richard Cohen, the *Washington Post* columnist, writing of the attack on a young woman jogging in New York City's Central Park said: "We must declare war." Then he recommended a "war plan" being studied at the White House.

The no-nonsense Pat Buchanan, whose autobiography *Right From the Beginning* is recommended, recoiled. "The Great Society was going to deal with crime 25 years ago and a trillion dollars ago. Remember? We don't need more studies to tell us how to deal with savages for whom gang rape is 'fun,' as one of the wolf-pack said from his cell block."

Buchanan continued: "We are losing the war on crime because we are demoralized. The enemy is unafraid. And we will not win the war on crime until the fear that was pounding in the poor girl's heart, as the pack was running her down, is transferred to the hearts of the savages who assaulted her."

What a scenerio. A dozen teenagers go



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

down from Harlem to go "wilding" in Central Park. They chased down a 28-year-old woman who was jogging in the park. They beat her to the ground with a pipe. They smashed her face with a brick. When she quit fighting, exhausted, she was stripped, molested, gang-raped and left to die in a puddle.

Buchanan comments: "Paralyzed with guile, equating evil with illness, worship of the 'process' and 'procedures,' our Lords Temporal have lost sight of the first purpose of law: *Salaus Populi*, the safety of the people. Until America's war against crime is taken away from the talkers, and turned to the people who know how to wage it, the barbarians will prevail, and we

probably ought to get our women out of the parks."

What a state of affairs. Many of our women are afraid to go shopping, or even leave their own homes for fear of muggers. An elderly friend of mine was mugged twice in Washington. She continues to suffer from a broken hip and spinal trouble, and will all her life. The first mugger escaped. The second got a light sentence. Consider our helplessness before the dope peddlers who demoralize much of our nation, especially the poor and disadvantaged. We lock our churches after morning Mass, depriving our people of religious freedom. We have discontinued votive lights, a consolation to so many, for fear of arson from the vandals. You can add to the litany of iniquities perpetrated by savages, and appreciate Buchanan's suggestion: "Quit talking and take action to protect our people. This is a war of barbarians free to attack our citizens." And our citizens have little redress against the barbarians.

Some time ago I watched Governor Mario Cuomo during a question period on

the television, as he defended his vetoing the capital punishment bill passed by the Senate and Assembly, which represent the will of the people. A questioner asked: "What would you do if some goon attacked your wife, molested and raped her? What would you do?" The governor replied: "I'd probably get a baseball bat and start out after the attacker to bash his brains out. But when I simmered down, I'd still be against capital punishment."

My reaction to his reply was: "I should hope that you would catch up with the barbarian before you had a chance to simmer down."

Bleeding hearts speak of love of Jesus for all men. And this is correct theology. But I have never heard a bleeding heart quote the other part of Our Lord's admonition, which has on the one hand: "Come, you blessed of My Father," and the other hand, "To the wicked shall I say: 'Depart from Me, you accursed.' It seems a greater charity to save men and women from hell, than to encourage them in their iniquities by down-playing their malice.

Extremist rhetoric continues to define U.S. debate on abortion

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

The abortion issue isn't going to go away. Indeed, it seems destined to tear apart the body politic for years to come.

Until the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision is overturned, protests against it will continue in full force.

And yet if the decision were overturned, the battleground would only move to the 50 separate states, where the conflict could become even uglier.

Last month, a crowd of some 300,000 demonstrated on behalf of abortion rights in Washington, D.C. A few months earlier, on the anniversary of the court's decision, a smaller, but no less vociferous, anti-abortion march was also held in the nation's capital.

In terms of their moral assessment of abortion, the two sides could not be farther apart. In terms of their political strategy, however, they seem to be strangely in agreement.

Pro-choicers and pro-lifers alike — with exceptions, of course — have adopted a one-issue approach. For both sides, only abortion counts. And that is precisely what troubles their natural allies.

Those who are otherwise sympathetic to the constitutional and civil-rights arguments of the pro-choice side — at the very least, that abortion ought not to be totally prohibited by law — are nevertheless profoundly concerned about the pro-choice movement's apparent neglect of other issues important to women.

These issues include day care, parental-leave policies, long-term care for the elderly, and financial assistance for families in buying homes and in educating their children.

If the truth be told, there are many in the pro-choice movement who simply aren't

interested in family issues. "The focus on family," one of them told *The New York Times* recently, "runs the danger of denying women's individuality."

"The women's movement," she continued, "struggled against the idea of defining women solely in terms of their role in the family as mothers."

That may well have been the case at one time, but many who are otherwise sympathetic to the pro-choice side are disturbed by an apparent trend now in the opposite direction. Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly (D-Connecticut) is one who worries about this. The abortion issue, she told *The New York Times*, threatens to overwhelm other pressing issues, like day care.

On the opposite side of the line, those who are otherwise sympathetic with the moral arguments of the pro-life side — that abortion involves the unjust taking of a separate, innocent human life — are profoundly concerned about the pro-life movement's neglect of other important life issues, of the sort listed by the U.S. Catholic bishops.

Indeed, many in the pro-life movement are in favor of capital punishment, which the bishops have rejected on moral grounds. Others are rejected on effective gun-control legislation. Still others uncritically support military interventions in foreign countries such as Grenada, Libya and Nicaragua, while others oppose the use of tax dollars for the poor, or "welfare cheaters" as they call them.

Many who oppose abortion on moral grounds are indeed appalled by the strident rhetoric and moral obtuseness of vocal segments of the pro-choice movement. But they are reluctant to join the anti-abortion battle because they don't wish to be identified with elements they find equally disagreeable.



ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

And so those in the center allow the abortion debate to be defined almost entirely by the two extremes, even though the vast majority of U.S. citizens reject those extremes.

The extreme pro-choicers want abortion legal under any and all circumstances, but the American people have rejected this option again and again. A recent *Newsweek* poll indicates that only 27 percent favor legalized abortion in any and all circumstances.

The American people have also rejected the position of the extreme pro-lifers who want abortion outlawed in any and all circumstances.

The same *Newsweek* survey indicates

that only 18 percent would support such an option.

That leaves the majority of Americans in favor of legalized abortion under certain limited conditions, like rape, incest, danger to the mother's life, or radical deformation of the fetus. Why do most Americans feel this way? Probably because they recognize, as many in the pro-choice movement apparently do not, that abortion is a moral as well as a constitutional and civil-rights issue.

But these Americans also recognize, as many in the pro-life movement apparently do not, that abortion raises constitutional and political questions as well as moral ones. For such Americans, it is not only a matter of right and wrong, but of adjusting to the stresses and strains of a pluralistic society.

Those who stand on this middle ground can be certain of attack from both the right and the left. But they should not forget that the vast majority of their fellow citizens, inside and outside the church, stand there with them.

Spirituality Institute set for St. Bernard's

The fourth annual Spirituality Institute at St. Bernard's Institute, is scheduled July 10-14.

Entitled "Spirituality and Partnership," this year's program will feature Rosemarie Freeney Harding and Father Virgil P. Elizondo. Among other things, Harding has served on the staff of the Family Crisis Center in Denver and is a practitioner of nutritional healing, as well as a personal and family counselor.

Father Elizondo is the founding president of the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) and rector of San Anton-

io's San Fernando Cathedral.

Sharing as partners in leadership of this year's program — consisting of both day and evening sessions — will be Sister Maureen Servas, RSM, and Sister Peg Ganley, SSI.

Registration will be limited to 200 people. No registration will be accepted after June 30. Call 716/271-1320, ext. 290, for information.

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