

# Webster decision woke pro-choice support

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated Columnist

Those who applauded the July 3 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* may have popped their champagne corks too quickly.

It seems clear that the decision, supporting the restriction of abortions by state law, has politically awakened the pro-choice side.

Until this past summer, the anti-abortion advocates have largely dominated the national debate. Many politicians since the late 1970s have bitten the dust in a blaze of single-issue voting.

The political wind seems to have shifted. Politicians who at one time gave unequivocal, hard-line support to the pro-life cause are now scurrying for cover closer to the center of the political spectrum.

Representative James Courter, a conservative Republican candidate for governor in New Jersey and a specific target of the National Abortion Rights League, is a case in point.

During the primary campaign, Courter stressed his opposition to abortion and won, but lately he has been assuring audiences that he would not recommend changes in New Jersey's liberal abortion law unless a consensus for modification developed — which is highly unlikely.

In New York City, Republican candidate for mayor, Rudolf Giuliani, has had to tone down his opposition to abortion by promising that — despite his personal opposition — he would not restrict abortions and would permit the city to continue to pay for them.

This turn seems to be particularly dis-

turbing to New York's Cardinal John O'Connor, but Giuliani knows that he can't be elected on the basis of Chancery votes alone.

In Florida, Republican Governor Bob Martinez encountered resistance to his post-Webster pledge to call a special session of the state legislature to pass a broad anti-abortion package. A statewide poll showed that 62 percent of Floridians want to keep the law as it is.

Even the White House has been touched by the reaction to Webster. A recent "Perspective" item in *Newsweek* magazine (October 2 issue) must have been particularly galling to conservatives who last fall hailed George Bush as their pro-life champion.

"The Bush administration has made a politically calculated decision to, in effect, dodge the 'no win' issue of rolling back abortion rights," the article said. "Senior Bush aides told *Newsweek* that after analyzing poll after poll the White House has concluded that the public does not support dramatic changes in abortion laws and that, therefore, there is no political advantage to the president getting out front on the issue."

"The issue is a loser," one senior Bush aide admitted. "Administration officials are even considering not having the solicitor general argue for a reversal of *Roe vs. Wade* when the U.S. Supreme Court hears three new abortion cases this term," *Newsweek* reported.

Some pro-life leaders may try to explain away these poll results on the grounds that the pollsters' questions have been formulated in such a way as to evoke a particular answer. Consequently, the polls don't ac-

curately reflect the public's thinking.

But that explanation won't wash.

First, it presupposes a pro-choice bias on the part of the polling organizations and their sponsoring institutions (for example, CBS News and *The New York Times*). That has not been established.

And, secondly, it insults the practical intelligence of the politicians themselves — Republicans as well as Democrats — who are reacting to the surveys as if they really do reflect what their constituents are thinking.

Instead of rushing to deny the evidence, therefore, it would be better for everyone concerned about the sacredness of life to see what can be learned from it.

It seems clear, first of all, that most Americans favor some legal restrictions on abortion (the requirement, for example, that young women under the age of 18 get their parents' consent before having an abortion), but they remain otherwise uneasy about governmental interference with a woman's decision on the matter.

## King Solomon builds a temple planned in his father's dreams

By Cindy Bassett  
Courier columnist

In the fourth year of Solomon's reign as king of Israel, he sent a message to King Hiram of Tyre.

"My Father, King David, was never able to build a temple to God because, while he ruled, Israel was always at war," King Solomon said. "Today, there is peace on all of our borders. It is time to build the temple. If you are willing, please send your own skilled men to Lebanon to cut down cedar trees. My men will go there and help them. I will also pay you whatever you think is fair."

King Hiram had always been a good friend of King David, so he sent this message in reply: "It would be my pleasure to help David's son! I have already sent my men to Lebanon. They will float these cedar logs down to a place where your own men can take charge of them. All I ask in return is food for my men."

As soon as this wood was ready, King Solomon drafted a huge labor force from all over Israel to begin construction on the temple. While one group worked at preparing the wood, another group cut large stones for the foundation. The building proceeded according to the exact plans given to King David by God in his lifetime.

The foundation of the temple was set on Mount Moriah at the place where the Lord had appeared to King David. Once the stone walls were up, they were covered inside with cedar panels. Skilled craftsmen decorated the wood with carvings.

The huge temple was divided into a main room, side rooms and inner courts. In the rear of the building, a room called the Most Holy Place was built to house the Lord's



### ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

Therefore, political realism is in order. Half-a-loaf, even a quarter-of-a-loaf, is better than none. All-or-nothing extremist politics are simply counterproductive.

The polls show, secondly, that the "negatives" of the anti-abortion lobby are higher than those of the pro-choice people.

Even many pro-life Americans are disturbed by the civil-disobedience approach of Operation Rescue and of similar groups.

If the pro-life agenda is to succeed even partially, its most visible advocates will have to look less like political reactionaries and more like reasonable citizens trying to balance conflicting claims and values.

The U.S. Catholic bishops' consistent ethic-of-life, or seamless garment, approach remains the model.

If the wind has indeed shifted, it will do no good merely to spit into it.



### THE BIBLE CORNER

covenant box. This box symbolized the Lord's presence among the people when they left their slavery in Egypt and wandered through the desert of the Promised Land many years ago.

An altar of pure gold was constructed in the Most Holy Place and even the walls in this room were covered with gold.

The temple was completed seven years later, during the 11th year of King Solomon's reign. As soon as the interior had been furnished with finely crafted articles, all of the people in Israel assembled for the dedication of the temple.

The priests, carrying the Lord's covenant box, came forward. Inside the box were the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses.

Only the priests were allowed to enter the Most Holy Place. As soon as they had done so, the people who were waiting outside could see a dazzling light.

When the priest emerged, King Solomon prayed aloud to God on behalf of the people of Israel:

"O God, long ago you promised to live among your people if they were faithful to you. How can this temple be your home when even heaven cannot hold all of your glory?"

He continued, "You, Lord, have kept all of your promises to us from the time we left our slavery in Egypt 500 years ago. Today another promise has been fulfilled. You promised my father that someday his son would build this temple. Watch over and guide us as we come before you to pray here. May we always be as true to you as you have been to us. If we sin against you and come before you in sorrow, please show us mercy and forgive us."

He concluded, "May all of the other nations know by our behavior that you are the one true God. Let us never turn away from you to worship false gods and in so doing bring disaster on ourselves."

When King Solomon finished praying, all of the people pledged their loyalty to God and they entered the temple praising him.

Scripture reference: 1 Kings: 5-8.

Meditation: "Jesus answered him, 'Whoever loves Me will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and my Father and I will come to him and live with him.'" (John 14:23).

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH

### HUMBLE AND EXALT

Gospel for Sunday, October 29, 1989

Luke 9:9-14

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for Sunday, October 29, 1989, a story about prayer. The word clues appear in the order in which they appear in the reading.

TWO MEN	AM NOT	BEAT
WENT UP	LIKE	BREAST
TEMPLE	FAST	MERCIFUL
PHARISEE	TWICE	SINNER
OTHER	WEEK	JUSTIFIED
TAX	TITHES	EXALTS
COLLECTOR	ALL	HIMSELF
PRAYED	HEAVEN	HUMBLED

T W O M E N D E Y A R P  
A D E I F I T S U J H U  
X H I M S E L F A A K T  
C H A M M I A S R E A N  
H O L P K S E I E L E E  
U R L E T H S W U V X W  
M E M L T E T F A X A O  
B N E I E S I E Y E L T  
L N T X A C H R E H T O  
E I A E R A T A E B S N  
D S R E X A L O S I N M  
C B M T W I C E R P H A



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