

A life with little hope ends without options

Dorothy J. Keeler's long, slow slide into oblivion is over now.

Last Thursday, the Monroe County medical examiner identified as hers the skeletal remains found Oct. 21, 1989, on an island in the Genesee River.

Police had suspected the body was Keeler's since the Jan. 4 arrest of Arthur J. Shawcross, who identified the body. Shawcross is charged with the serial slayings of Keeler and eight other women, and faces possible indictment in two more women's deaths.

Although Dorothy lived on Rochester's streets for years, details about her life are sketchy. She would have been 60 this May 16. She came from Syracuse, was estranged from her family, and was probably Roman Catholic.

A short, slight woman whose shoulder-length, graying hair was usually tied back with a rubber band, she typically wore jeans and an oversized man's sweater. Her face was weathered, eyes narrowed by the wind and the cynicism of someone for whom the world didn't seem to hold a place.

For almost five years, Blessed Sacrament Church's Overnight Shelter was the closest thing to a home that

Dorothy knew. Many nights, she slept in the same room with Rosalie "Angela" Oppel, whose body was found in March, 1989, near railroad tracks north of the city. Oppel's killing remains unsolved.

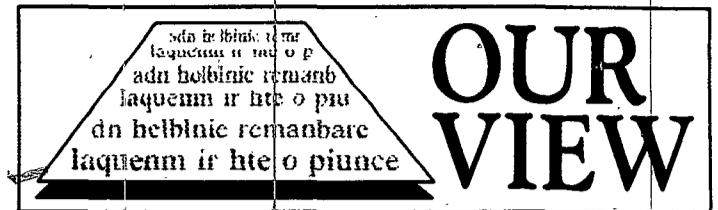
Violence against both women was a fact of their lives. Sometimes they found protectors on the street, but all too often they were men who fell prey to the same addictions that plagued Dorothy and Angela.

Tough and suspicious as she was, Dorothy sometimes arrived at the shelter bruised and bloody, but seldom would she reveal why or how she'd been injured.

She didn't grant confidence or gratitude easily. Shelter cook Doris Cohen set aside cigarettes for her. Other shelter volunteers brought her warm clothes or boots — seldom acknowledged.

"She didn't want people handing her things," Cohen said. "She tried to give back. ... Once, she even brought me a pack of generic cigarettes. She said, 'I can't afford your brand, but here.'"

What must life have been like for Dorothy, walking endlessly around the city to keep warm, searching for



the next cigarette, the next bottle of wine? What kept her going? Was there any hope in her street-corner existence?

Too much prying only elicited a withering blast of sarcasm, and yet her lonely death leaves people who knew her — particularly those at Blessed Sacrament — wondering whether they could have done more.

For years, November through April, the emergency shelter was there for Dorothy. In another year perhaps, Catholic Family Center would have opened the Francis Hospitality Center year-round, 24 hours a day.

But Dorothy had neither option that day last summer or fall, when loneliness may have compelled her to lower her guard and trust the wrong man.

— The Editors

'Inconvenient' lives cannot be terminated

To the Editor:

Abortion advocates regularly occupy the news media with pathetic stories in which an abortion would greatly reduce the consequences. And most of us sincerely empathize with these special situations. It is irrefutable that unwanted pregnancies are a tremendous problem to the individuals involved, and to Society. The pregnancy may be a source of embarrassment, an injustice, — or a great inconvenience in a person's life at that time. Abortion seems a relatively simple solution to an otherwise difficult problem.

Allow me to change topics for a moment. Care of the Aged is an expensive service that society is increasingly called upon to provide. Many people in their 70s or 80s (and often even earlier) are unable to take care of themselves. They are dominant users of medical services, a major consumer of hospital space, and at this stage of their lives they are sometimes a great inconvenience. Often their situation is pitiful. Their children love them, but find it difficult to help them. To put it bluntly, at this time of our lives we often don't have the strength, the time, patience, or the

money to give them the help needed. They too represent a serious social problem and will become even more so in the future. At least one liberal member of our House of Representatives proposed the solution that "our old folks have an obligation to Society to terminate themselves."

If Society's approach to resolving life's problems is simply to choose the solution that causes us the least inconvenience and minimizes our discomfort (and cost), the solutions offered to the scenarios above are appropriate. And remote as it may now seem, involuntary euthanasia meets similar problem-solving criteria, and may not be far away!

But there are less shallow views, more humane and more Christian solutions to these difficulties. Taking the life of another human being, to reduce our discomfort or inconvenience, is a cowardly rejection of the meaning of life. Abortionists' use of the terms embryo or fetus does not change the reality that most abortions involve the destructive dismemberment of human bodies. We are in fact killing tiny humans who have been proclaimed undesirable.

Many of us have learned that LIFE was

never intended to be a Paradise. Rather, it is an opportunity to serve and to prove ourselves before going to a better life. The kindness and compassion we live through efforts to correct our faults, and by unselfish service to others, is testimony to our belief in Christ and the example He set for us. This is contrary to those whose CHOICE is transferral of responsibility for their mistake by taking the life of another.

Since the deliberate taking of human life is a moral issue, why should Christians try to impose their morals on others? Common decency, humanitarianism, the Bible, and "sometimes" the laws of our society — all tell us it is wrong to stand aside without trying to save innocent human lives that are being eliminated. Each of us should be asking ourselves whether we are really doing the right thing — standing by silently — while others "kill babies" under the guise of their right to make a CHOICE! There is a better way.

You will recall that it wasn't slave owners who fought to abolish slavery!

Paul W. Cannon
Sherri Ann Lane
Rochester



Return television Mass to late morning on Sundays

To the editor:

Could you return the Mass on Sunday to 11 a.m. as it used to be? Now you have it at 8 o'clock when the nurses and aides are getting patients in nursing homes up for breakfast or routine care and haven't got the time to turn on the television sets. My friend, Kay, wrote this letter as I can't read or write because my eyesight is bad.

Miss Mary Lynch
St. Ann's Home

Rochester

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Catholic Courier has nothing to do with the televised Mass, but we did do some checking on it. We were told that time change was caused by the switch this fall in network affiliation between WHEC-TV10 and WROC-TV8. Previously, WHEC was the local affiliate for CBS, and WROC carried NBC programming. Whereas CBS allows its affiliates to broadcast local programming instead of the network feed during the 11 a.m. time slot on Sundays, NBC — WHEC's new network — requires affiliates to carry network programming at that time.

Bishops ought to correct erring Catholic politicians

To the editor:

A short time ago, I wrote a letter to Bishop Leo Maher supporting him in making that uneasy decision to bar a Catholic politician from the Eucharist for her stance on abortion or pro-choice. The whole issue is in reality a matter of Justice and not choice. It is justice for the unborn, and a great moral issue to stand up for God's rights and adhere to the teachings of the Holy Father in Rome.

As our late beloved Bishop Sheen stated, "a Justice which sees evil and does not punish it, is not Justice." In reference to

politicians, he also stated, "Some day a politician will arise who will be so devoted to truth that he will follow it, knowing that by doing so, he will go down to defeat. That day will be the restoration of politics as principles, it will also be the rebirth of a nation."

As of yet today, there are so few politicians who are willing to support moral truths at the risk of facing defeat at the ballot box. Now is the time for politicians of the Catholic Faith to support the truth of Christ and be not afraid of the ways of the world. If Catholic Politicians do not face

up to their responsibilities as moral leaders of the truth, it is correct and just for Catholic Bishops to admonish and correct such politicians.

We are all sinners before the face of God, and be subject to correction, and that is why our Bishops should have the moral courage to correct us, if we are following the wrong path towards the truth.

I fully concur with the actions of Bishop Maher.

Stanley Strzpek
Lincoln Street
Elmira

Does Courier have criteria for printed letters?

To the editor:

Do you have any criteria for letters from readers suitable or of sufficient interest to be published — or can just about anything find its way into print? Joanne Rowan's letter, spewing contempt on all who honestly believe, as I do, that there is no valid reason for women to be excluded from the priesthood prompts my question. Her letter is full of hate, and absolute certainty of the rightness of her position; and her ability to speak for God. "Swollen pride" indeed. She needs prayers, and is in mine.

Helen Rubar
Bath

EDITOR'S NOTE: As our Letters Policy

states: "... we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness, and a sense of fair play."

Readers occasionally question our sense of fair play when we print angry letters, such as Ms. Rowan's. Judging by our mail, however, her letter reflects the opinions of at least a significant minority of Catholics.

Although the editorial page may be jarring and sometimes even painful reading, we believe it is important to reflect the whole church as best we can.

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