

Teacher's words offer insight amid abortion debate

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier Columnist

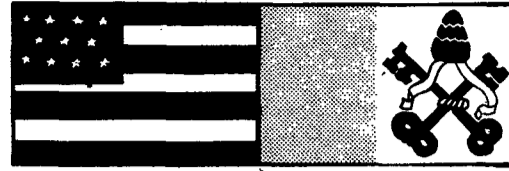
Q.: What do you think of the term "pro-choice?"

A.: I admire the choice of the word for its adroitness. It disarms people who think carelessly. It sounds softer than the reality, which is to choose to let a baby live or to kill it.

In my seminary days, Dr. Edward Byrne, professor of Scripture, used to say often: "Gentlemen, learn the value of words." We seminarians used to chuckle as we watched him with his elongated nose and tilted head poised, enunciating so often, like a verse from the psalms, "Learn the value of words."

Few of his students have ever forgotten the value of that admonition.

When pro-choice advocates use the term, careless thinking drifts into a quite false "thought-land." Choice is good. Everyone is entitled to make the choices he or she wants. Choose vanilla ice cream over chocolate; the pink dress over the blue;



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Lulabelle over Cindy; an hour of reading the choices that are morally neutral.

But what does one say about free-choice between such choices as the following: to burn down a neighbor's home or leave it alone; to rape a woman or leave her inviolate; to sell cocaine to children or to stymie the seller; to shoplift a dress from a store or to pay for it; to kill an unborn child or let it live? Except for the choice of letting a child live or be destroyed, nearly everyone agrees in the morality of these examples.

When pro-choice people claim the right of a woman over her body, they mean that the mother of the child within her womb

has the right to give life, or to destroy the child. Whether they claim that to be a God-given right I have never heard discussed. Dr. Byrne would declare clearly, "Learn the value of words."

As persons of free will, we can and do make free choices. Reason as well as religion demands that we choose good and reject evil. To choose to destroy a little baby is the greatest evil. Lovely words do not make it less so.

Q.: But don't pro-choice people consider the baby only a fetus?

A.: As Dr. Byrne insisted: "Learn the value of words."

When Our Blessed Mother went to visit St. Elizabeth, her kinswoman, Elizabeth — who was six months pregnant — said to her, "The moment your greeting sounded in my ears the baby leapt in my womb for joy." (Luke 1:44).

It is difficult to understand how any Christian can be "pro-death" to an unborn child, and at the same time acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Q.: Haven't you said "Hitler was pro-choice"?

A.: Many times. He was pro-choice for the life and expansion of an Aryan race, and pro-choice for the death and extermination of all Jews, as well as many other "inferior" people. How any Jew can decry the horror of the Holocaust and simultaneously accept the destruction of little unborn babies boggles the mind. Words do have their value as they manifest reality.

While the pro-choice world condemns the church and Pope John Paul II for their adamant defense of the unborn babies, much of the world admires the church, the pope, and our bishops for their unshakable reverence for morality.

And thanks be to God, millions of non-Catholics — especially the fundamentalists, Protestants and Orthodox Jews — stand with us in knowing "the value of words."

Pro-choice is a smooth word to mean "give the baby life or death." What a choice!

Gospel teaches that each individual leaves an imprint on the world

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier Columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 5:13-16; (R1) Isaiah 58:7-10; (R2) I Corinthians 2:1-5.

Has this happened to you? You give to a charity and you end up on every charity list. Appeals start coming in with flyers of starving babies, provoking sympathy or guilt. The oversaturation desensitizes you. Soon the appeals end up in the wastebasket and the checkbook stays in the desk drawer. It happened to me — until I read Isaiah.

There, God says: "Share-shelter-clothe the naked. Do this. It will be good for you. The wounds of your own soul will be healed. Your prayers will be heard. You will become a light for a darkened world."

In the gospel, Jesus calls us "salt of the earth" and "light of the world." What a compliment! Once He called Himself the light of the world. Now He says we are. Light scatters darkness and enables one to walk without bumping into things.

In February, we usually battle snow with salt. Salt melts snow. These images tell us how good we are. In the beginning, God saw that everything was good. But that is not enough.

"What if salt goes flat?" What if we waste talents, time, our lives — as not a few do — on alcohol, drugs or illicit sex? Often a teacher will say to a student, "If you had applied yourself, you could have done so much better."

Likewise with light. In our Lord's day, the source of light was a lamp. You do four things with a lamp.

First, you set it on a lamp stand. To put it

under a bushel basket would douse the light. So, each one of us was carried to the church to be baptized; baptism is the door into the church. Baptism made us a Catholic, put us on a lamp stand.

Secondly, you light a lamp from another light. A lamp cannot light itself. At baptism this is symbolized by lighting a small candle from the Paschal Candle. This also symbolizes God the Holy Spirit giving the fire of divine life to the baptized.

Then the small candle is given to the baptized, to teach that the light of divine life is to be shared. That's the meaning of birthday candles.

Thirdly, you feed a lamp daily with oil. The Catholic too must be fed by daily prayer, weekly Mass and monthly confession.

Lastly, you trim a lamp to keep the flame bright and steady. So the vine grower prunes the branch ingrafted by baptism on the vine, Christ. The daily cross is the pruning necessary in order to bear more fruit.

The last sentence of the gospel tells why we must be salt and light: to give praise to

our heavenly Father. Whenever we do what we do, not for the glory of God, but for our own glory, the salt loses its flavor and the light is snuffed out.

Michelangelo was careful always to place his candle in such a position in his pasteboard cap that his own shadow might not fall upon his work. We must never let self get in the way of our work for God.

A movie often seen at Christmas — which seems to be upstaging Dickens' A Christmas Carol — is Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life," with Donna Reed and Jimmy Stewart. Stewart plays George Bailey in the small town of Bedford Falls. His father leaves him a building and loan company. George gets into money troubles and thinks his life is a failure. Greatly depressed and distressed, he plans to commit suicide by drowning himself.

As he stands on a bridge, ready to jump in, his guardian angel, Clarence, shows up and plunges into the river before George does. George forgets all about suicide and dives in to rescue Clarence. Clarence then shows George what Bedford Falls would



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

have been like had he never lived. George discovers that his dogged adherence to the right, to duty, to loyalty, to compassion has made Bedford Falls a better place and its townfolk a better and happier people.

So it is with all of you. You matter. You are important. You can make a difference in the quality of life around you. And you do for the better, when you adhere to the right, when you love and give and serve and are kind and compassionate — in a word, when you are salt and light. Then you will learn that "It's a wonderful life!"

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Grief...
Is help available?

Grief is the name of a complex combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences. It occurs when we lose someone or something very important to us.

It is a natural reaction to the realization that we are not all powerful, that we ourselves are mortal.

Everyone deals with grief in a different way.

GRIEF RESOURCE INFORMATION FORUM and the PASTORAL CARE CENTER at Rochester General Hospital jointly sponsor a monthly bereavement group called **WORKING THROUGH LOSS**.

The group provides information, education and peer support for adults recovering from the death of a significant person in their lives.

The group meets the second Tuesday of each month from 7:30-9:30 p.m. in the E-5 conference room at Rochester General Hospital.

Easy-to-follow signs are posted upon entering the hospital from the parking ramp.

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