

Students examine abortion

By Sean McNamara
Freelance writer

Sixteen-year-old Nikki Zaleski has twice marched for life in Washington. A sophomore, she takes part in a pro-life discussion group at Bishop Kearney High School.

Yet she believes she would stop short of telling a friend what to do about an unwanted pregnancy. "I'd tell her there's always someone there to help you," she said. Though she'd suggest adoption, along with her friend's other options and choices, Zaleski would not advise that friend what to decide upon. "I have a compassion for a girl in that situation," she said.

Inside the classroom, life issues seem clear-cut. But the choices grow a lot more complex face-to-face. For that reason, Zaleski and fellow students asked religion teacher Kevin Mannara to coordinate a group in which they could discuss life-related issues outside the classroom.

With the approval of Kearney's administration, Mannara started such a group last semester. Its discussions are informal, and Mannara is careful to point out that "it is not a club, and I am not its moderator."

What the group does offer students is an opportunity to "discuss issues and experiences, share compassion for those facing difficult decisions and seek to come to a better understanding of the complex nature of abortion and euthanasia," according to Mannara.

In future discussions, he said, the group may discuss the death penalty, along with other human life issues.

While the group is open to students who hold varying viewpoints, Mannara explained that so far, only pro-life advocates have attended the discussions. The group does

not formally participate in pro-life rallies or demonstrations, although many students have taken part individually in pro-life activities.

Mannara, like Zaleski, has marched in Washington. Other members of the group have participated in anti-abortion demonstrations at Highland Hospital. Those experiences enrich the group, Mannara said.

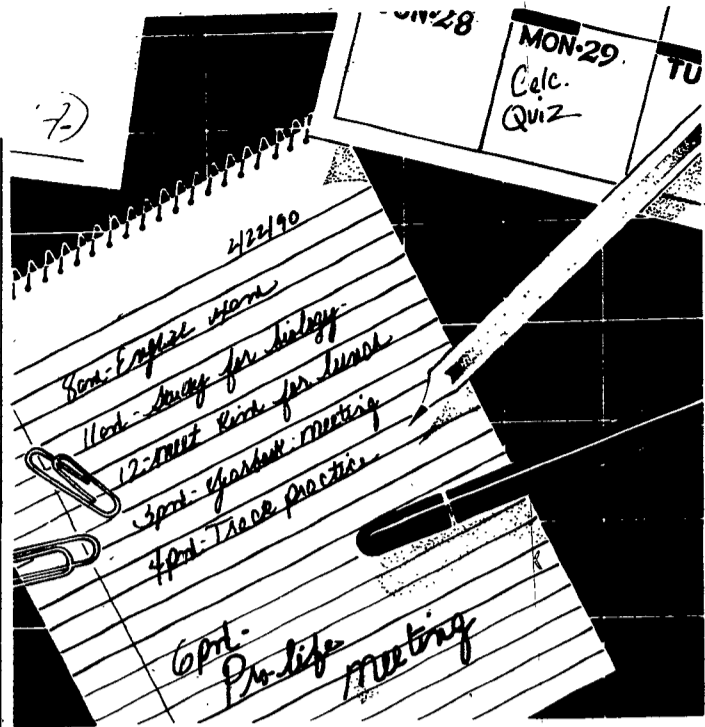
For Zaleski, who first attended the March for Life in Washington while she was still in elementary school, the experience was eye-opening. "It moved me a lot," she said. "There are a lot of people out there who care about the same thing."

She was particularly impressed by the number of other teenagers who demonstrated, contrary to their stereotyped image as self-centered and complacent about moral issues. "There are lots of teens because (abortion) involves lots of teens. With teenage pregnancy being what it is, it's something that concerns teens," she said. "Teens care more than they say they do, or more than the public thinks they do."

Despite the strong feelings teens may have about abortion, Mannara believes that many lack understanding of the issue. Consequently, the group's discussions have focused on such basic questions as: "What is abortion?" and "Why is abortion wrong?"

"They quote what's in the press, but they don't understand it," Mannara said. "They think if it's legal, it's okay."

The message he tries to convey is "the advocacy of life and how precious it is and that it's not supposed to be destroyed." He also tries to explain the distinction between



the moral and legal issues involved.

While Mannara recognizes the importance of the Catholic Church's stance against abortion, he notes that it is not the only justification for his own pro-life stance. "On my own, the church doesn't figure, although I'm glad my church does feel the same way I do," he explained. "(Abortion is) not wrong because the church says it's wrong. It's wrong because it is wrong."

Mannara's convictions also stem from a personal bit of history — he is adopted. "I think that if in 1963 abortion was legal, I would not be here," he said.

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GENEVA — DeSales High School's next bottle-and-can drive is scheduled for March 3, from 9 a.m.-noon.

A door-to-door drive will be staged in part of the city during that time, and drop offs may be made at the school, 90 Pulteney St.

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To arrange for pick-ups, call the school, the Lamson's at 789-0979, or Kathy Peters at 539-8860.

St. Christopher, N. Chili Should people protest abortion by blocking abortion clinics?

CHRISTINE MAIER, 14

No, they shouldn't. It's more than just protesting. It's more like bullying.



BILL BRABANT, 16

I believe they should be able to have their own opinion, but it gets violent, and that's not right. No, they shouldn't protest.



AS TEENS SEE

MICHELLE RAS, 15

I think they should because they're killing someone. The baby won't have the chance to see the world. I think (women) shouldn't have an abortion.



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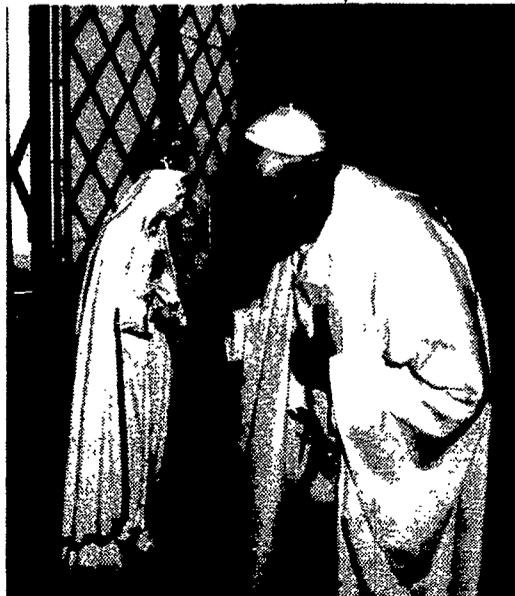
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