

# Abortion fight won't end with a legal victory

What would happen if tomorrow the Supreme Court overturned *Roe vs. Wade*, and legislatures throughout the 50 United States outlawed abortion?

Would those of us who harangued legislators, endured weary bus trips to Washington and took a weekly turn in front of "abortuaries" consider our duty done?

Would anything really change?

Before *Roe vs. Wade* legalized abortion, many women sought and obtained the procedure in spite of legal consequences. Other women, dissuaded by the power of law from seeking abortions, gave birth to their offspring, and then gave them little else. Still others endured unwanted pregnancies and learned to care for the children they bore — sometimes for a lifetime, sometimes only for as long as it took to place the children for adoption.

Nearly 20 years ago, abortion-rights advocates hailed *Roe vs. Wade* as a triumph for both women and children, predicting that widespread access to legal abortion and artificial contraception would make every child a wanted child. But changing the law did not fundamentally change the options for women struggling to cope with unwanted pregnancies.

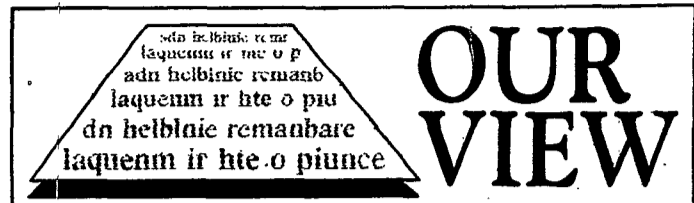
Ironically, we in the pro-life camp — just like abor-

tion-rights advocates of the early 1970s — have staked our hopes on a belief that changing the law will change the world. For nearly two decades, we have bent our backs to the task of erecting legislative, judicial and societal roadblocks to abortion.

Too few of us, meanwhile, have tried to understand the fears that can cause a woman to consider the child within her an enemy: the fear of a woman who believes pregnancy threatens her job, her marriage or her health; the fear of a teenager who would rather endure personal agony than disappoint her parents, be ridiculed by her peers or get kicked out of her home.

Outlawing abortion might cause some women to omit the procedure from their short list of options, but no law proposes radically improving the options available to those facing unwanted pregnancies. Nor is law capable of producing a mother's change of heart — which is what most of us who call ourselves pro-life really advocate.

Is the prophetic voice of the Catholic Church speaking to the hearts of these women? And what vision are we — who champion the right of every human being to be born — prepared to offer for life? Do we have the will and the means to protect and nurture the children whose lives today are ending in abor-



tion — to reach out to their parents and encourage a change of heart?

Or once we achieve our legal goal, will we wash our hands of the matter, leaving the responsibility to enforce laws against abortion and child abuse in the hands of "the authorities," as we would with any other crimes?

We cannot confine our pro-life battle to the halls of justice and of state. While we continue to fight for legislative and judicial change, let us also take up the challenge of opening the hearts and minds of scared, pregnant women; of listening at least as much as we lecture about sexual morality; and of ensuring that our activism doesn't run dry on that long-hoped-for day when the law is once again on our side.

— The Editors

## War against drugs suffers from neighborhood apathy

To the editor:

Last night (June 19) I heard very interesting and informative testimony about the drug situation in the City of Rochester. Sergeant Tom Alessi was kind enough to speak to our parent group about what we can do to help combat the problem. Many good questions were raised and answered during the evening.

The meeting was organized six weeks ago at the request of the parents of this 19th Ward ecumenical youth group. ... For the seven people who came, I am sure the program was quite informative. None of those attending were from the group of parents who requested the meeting. Although I am grateful to the people who did come, I am disturbed by what appears to be a great deal of apathy surrounding drug awareness and prevention in our neighborhood.

At first glance, it might seem that the low attendance was due to the time of year: Graduations, parties, exams all cut into into normal schedules. On the other hand, I was duly warned that I should not expect a high turnout; that no matter when these meetings occurred, the attendance was always minimal. What went wrong?

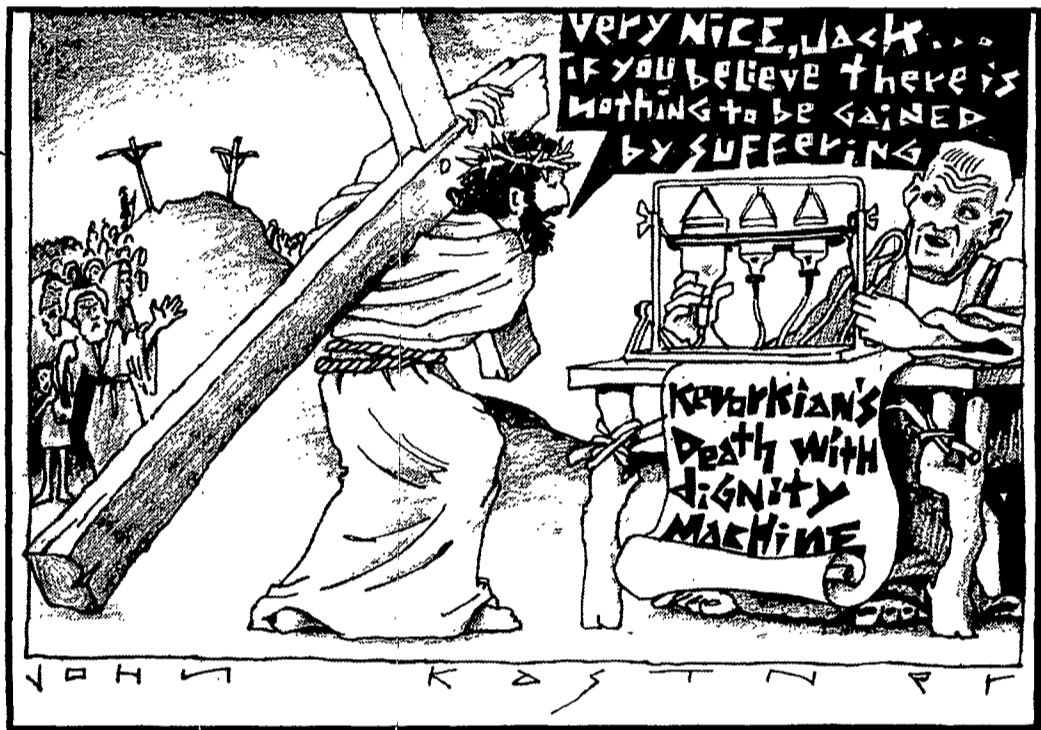
Too many people seem to think that drugs and the violence incurred by drugs are not their problem. If their street or their family is not involved, then drugs are not a reality for that person. Unfortunately, drugs are everyone's problem. Drugs are the problem of all parents: Once their child leaves the house, he or she is in foreign territory and can be approached to buy. Drugs are the problem of the consumer: Drug usage on the job may result in poor workmanship. On another level, consumers pay inflated prices when stores have to cover the cost of merchandise which is stolen to buy drugs. Drugs are the problem of taxpayers who pay for the incarceration of convicted drug sellers and social assistance for the addicted. ... Drugs are the problem of anyone who has ever walked or driven on a city street: They have put themselves in an endangered position where anyone or anything can be the victim of someone else's drug usage. Drugs are a problem for all races, all creeds, all classes. ...

Everyone agrees that there is a drug problem in America. Statistics show that the problem is worsening and that as a society we are not prepared to fight this plague. Simultaneously, there is a gross inconsistency with what the people want and what they are willing to do to get what they

want. The problem is not with the police. They are doing more than their share to alleviate the problem. As Alessi said: "We are just garbage men. We can take it away, but there's going to be more on the curb tomorrow morning." ...

What we are called to do is very simple: Unite with our neighbors, cooperate with and help the police, educate our youth. And yet, when given the opportunity to do that, very few take the chance. It is as if we are fighting two battles. The first one is drugs. The second is apathy. Until we recognize the need and work together to change the situation, we will not see an improvement. ...

Virginia S. Collins youth minister  
St. Augustine's Church



## Most Catholics avoid skirmishes between left, right

To the editor:

In the *Courier* recently there has been a lot of discussion on "liberal" "orthodox" "conservative" or whatever type Catholics. Father McBrien is the most famous label flinger, staunch in his feeling that every Catholic fits neatly in some preset slot. Then we have the other side of the great label debate, the "vindictive avengers," who in their own opinion are God's watchdogs making sure that those poor unfortunates who — in the "avenger's" own opinion — sin, are run out of town straight into the eternal fiery abyss.

Well, I have news for both ends of the great spectrum. There are not as many of you as you'd like to believe. Contrary to

narrowly held beliefs on both sides of the "my way is right" debate, most of us Catholics do very well without aligning to either end of this escalating monkey business! In fact, we are careful to keep a good distance from either pole. In my own way, I'd like to try to explain how I and a few of my "somewhere-in-the-middle Catholic" friends feel about all of this.

I find that I like most liberals because they admit they are sinners. Being a sinner myself, I can relate to admitting to weakness. But far-end liberals pick and choose from the Ten Commandments and treat them more like, as (columnist) Cal Thomas calls them, "the Ten Suggestions." A sin is a sin if you believe it is a sin, so it makes it hard to really know if

you have sinned or not.

The far-end conservatives make knowing when you sin easy. They tell you. They know because they see all sins as black and white and they know all about sin, but they don't sin. If everything is cut-and-dried, and you know sin, you don't have to commit sin and thus have lots of time to let those who don't see things as clear know when they have sinned. ...

Liberals find traditional church practices, services and beliefs embarrassing. Bring up the pope, the Blessed Mother, Mother Teresa, the teaching on contraception and abortion, the rosary, and find out how it feels to be plunged into deep freeze in seconds. ...

Next time you're with your conservative friends, just say how much you enjoyed a talk by an anti-nuclear activist who made sense about the immorality of stockpiling nuclear warheads at a cost of millions while mothers and their children are starving as their WIC payments are cut. Be prepared for the old tar-and-feathers routine!

So while the far ends fight, bicker, fling insults, build egos in the guise of saving the church, we in the "fair to middlin" middle will be moving along hopefully toward salvation, praying that the far ends will abandon the blood, bitterness and dust of the battle they both so relish, and put on their spiritual jogging shoes so that the revitalization of a loving, unified church becomes a reality, not just a pipe dream.

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