

Seamless

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nents — their unique character in the political landscape. Many believers in the consistent life ethic have crossed over from the left and the right banks of the political stream to join in steering a political flagship that, as of yet, has found few friendly legislative harbors.

Because so few politicians adhere to the seamless-garment ethic, consistent-life voters are often faced with the dilemma of choosing the candidate who will, as one activist put it, "do the least damage."

Unlike Maher, who prefers writing in seamless-garment candidates to voting for inconsistent politicians, Robert Dorscheid, who has worked against abortion and the arms race, said he always will vote for the anti-abortion candidate.

"I challenge anybody to find anyone who would fit the seamless garment ethic except Jesus — and he's not running this year," joked Dorscheid, a parishioner at St. Joseph's Church in Penfield.

On a more serious note, Dorscheid stressed that he views abortion as the gravest threat to life in the world. He said he would vote for the candidate "who's going to save the most lives, and that's the anti-abortion candidate without a doubt."

In addition, Dorscheid, who recently also has come to oppose the death penalty, sees abortion as the essence of everything that tears at the seamless garment of life.

"If we can't get people to feel sorry for the unborn, how are we going to get them

to feel sorry for the homeless or the murderer on death row?" he asked rhetorically.

Other seamless-garment advocates encounter more difficulty in choosing between a rock and a hard spot at their neighborhood polling sites. Carol Crossed, founder of Common Ground of Upstate New York, laughingly recalled being asked if she was having trouble because she had stayed inside a voting booth for more than five minutes.

"I tell you, I just don't have a formula," said Crossed, a parishioner at Rochester's Corpus Christi Church and a member of the JustLife board of directors. Still, she asserted, "I do know that I will refuse to give money or work on anybody's campaign who wasn't consistent life ethic."

Her colleague, David Medema, JustLife's political action coordinator, noted that the organization endorses only consistent-life-ethic candidates, calling anti-abortion candidates who vote against social spending "pro-birth, not pro-life."

In several races this year, JustLife is supporting anti-abortion liberals who are presented as an alternative to other anti-abortion politicians who vote against parental leave and other family support measures, Medema explained.

He cited polls showing that the bulk of the U.S. public is uncomfortable with unrestricted abortion and unrestricted military spending, and said he saw such disenchantment as the key to building a consistent-life-ethic movement in the 1990s.

"I think for politicians, its an incredibly

appealing idea because so often they are (caught in an) ... either/or situation," Medema said.

Moving from an either/or stance on "life issues" to one that embraces a consistent ethic is an idea whose time has come, proponents claim. Before a Georgetown University audience last March, Cardinal Bernadin observed that the seamless garment is the wave of the future. "(T)he consistent life ethic complements both the signs of our times and the strength of the Catholic tradition ...," Cardinal Bernadin told the crowd.

Several Catholics on both sides of the political fence seem to agree with the cardinal's assessment. Maher explained that he actively opposed the Vietnam War, assisting draft resisters at one point, a lifestyle that throughout the years caused him to work on behalf of various peace and justice issues save one — abortion. Maher said he believed that question was better left to women to decide.

"I came to add abortion to the list of things I really opposed much later than any of the components in the seamless-garment ethic," he said, noting that he changed his mind in 1986 after viewing a public television show on pre-natal development.

"That program really forced me to thinking, in that I had really not lived up to my belief in the value of reverence for all life," he observed, pointing out that his pro-life beliefs include a vegetarian diet.

On the other side of the political fence stood Dorscheid, who founded St. Joseph's pro-life committee with his wife, Amy. An

acknowledged conservative, Dorscheid actively protested abortion since the early 1980s, but had not examined other issues in light of church teachings until encouraged to do so by a friend in the pro-life movement — Father Anthony Mugavero, parochial vicar at St. Theodore's in Gates.

After several discussions with the priest, a noted pro-life activist, Dorscheid said he began to see nuclear weapons — like abortion — as another threat to humanity.

Dorscheid said he could justify using "bombs that would take out military forces, or just the factories that make military equipment, but these (nuclear) devices aren't designed for it." Nuclear weapons would almost certainly devastate civilian population centers, he asserted, and such a prospect would violate church teachings against murdering civilians in wartime.

That a number of Catholic liberals and conservatives are beginning to unite around the consistent life ethic attests to the church's ability to encompass seemingly contradictory or unrelated viewpoints, many seamless garment advocates noted.

One priest who has participated in protests at abortion clinics and at nuclear-weapon storage facilities, traced the consistent life ethic's presence in the Catholic Church to the church's moral basis.

"I think the basis is the dignity of life in all its forms and stages," said Father Robert Werth, pastor of St. Bridget's in Rochester. "And if ever there's a violation of that, we're really taking the goodness of God's creation in our own hands."

Sculptor

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locally to produce the newer types of work needed.

"A lot of styles have changed," Cellura said. "What you find in liturgical art catalogs is that they haven't changed their styles since the 1950s."

Raised as a Catholic, Cellura found himself sympathetic to the demands of producing art for churches. In many ways, he noted, even his non-church related art is spiritual, and he described the artistic process as "the quest for the sacred within the mundane."

Some artists today are leery of working for the church, Cellura acknowledged, because they see it as conservative and limiting. He said he sees the very limits imposed by producing religious works as challenging.

At the same time, Cellura said he sees a

role for art in churches.

"I think (art) should be there because, essentially, it's an example of God's gift to man," Cellura said. "I think art has been used to inspire and ... to somehow bring someone closer to the creator."

In addition to his own Catholic/Christian heritage, Cellura taps into the religious traditions of other cultures for inspiration. "I think if you look in the religious trappings of any culture of any time you'll always glean something about the nature of man and God," he observed.

"I try to express the universal source of design that is in nature," Cellura concluded. "The face of God is everywhere around us if we just want to look at it."

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