

Speaker warns of 'civil war' over abortion

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The United States may soon break out in civil war over abortion, according to Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for a Free Choice.

"I am very much concerned that we are on the verge of a new civil war in this country," Kissling declared in a Sept. 11 address at Third Presbyterian Church on Rochester's Meigs Street.

"I am extremely concerned for the safety and sanity of our society should *Roe vs. Wade* (be completely overturned)," Kissling said, referring to the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in the United States.

Kissling cited the Operation Rescue demonstrations in Atlanta, Ga., and Wichita, Kan., as instances of increasing violence in the conflict.

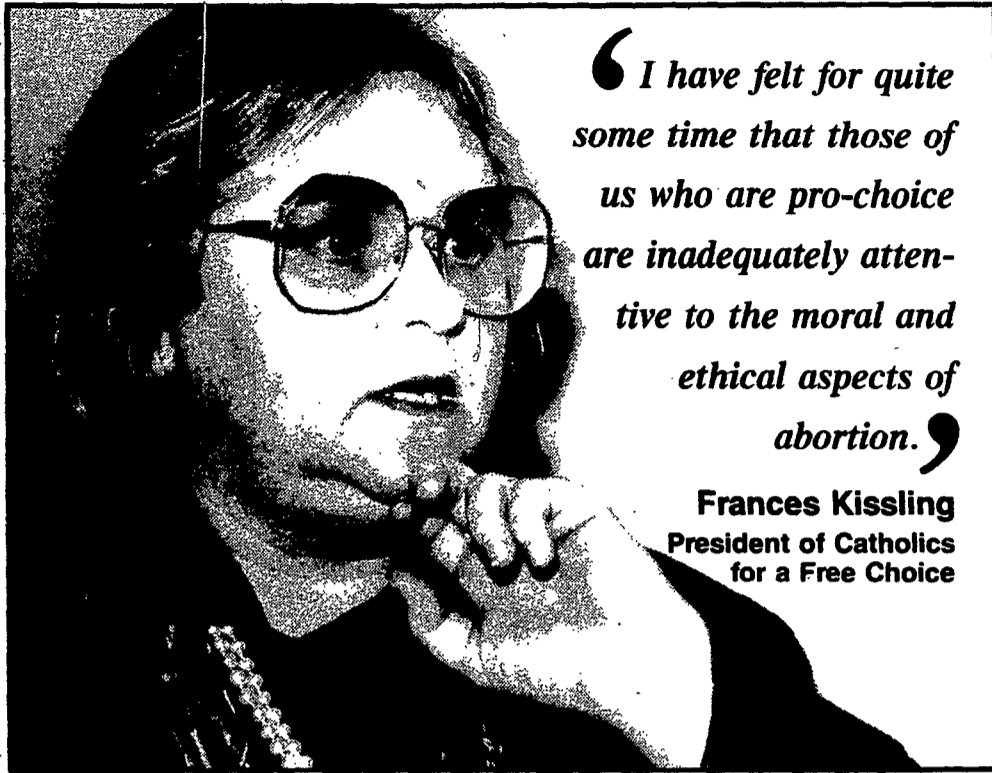
"And I know without a doubt there are those who are pro-choice who are capable of equal fervor in defense of women's right to choose," Kissling said.

But she said such conflict could be avoided if the two opposing factions were willing to talk and genuinely listen to each other.

"It's time for us to take a hard look about whether there is some way to move the issue forward," without "hatred and polarization," she said.

Bringing about dialogue between the pro-life and pro-choice camps was the theme of Kissling's talk, "Abortion: Finding the Middle Ground." In the speech, Kissling called each side in the abortion debate to seek out what can be learned from its opponents.

Those opposed to Kissling's point of view were represented by three pro-life ac-



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Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for a Free Choice, spoke at the Third Presbyterian Church, Sept. 11. Her topic was "Abortion: Finding the Middle Ground."

tivists who demonstrated outside the church before her talk. In addition, a number of pro-life activists attended the lecture.

Among those in attendance was Father Anthony Mugavero, parochial vicar at Rochester's St. Theodore's Parish.

"I felt that she was a person who would take more of a unique approach to the issue," Father Mugavero explained. "I just wanted to know for my own sake just what was going to be said."

Kissling acknowledged from the outset that she planned to present views that others in the pro-choice camp might dislike. Since abortion became legal in the United States in 1973, she said, some pro-choicers have adopted an attitude of "pro-choice triumphalism," and refused "to engage in any kind of discussion with our opponents."

"I have felt for quite some time that those of us who are pro-choice are inadequately attentive to the moral and ethical aspects of abortion," Kissling said.

Her lecture presented an opportunity for such dialogue to begin, Father Mugavero observed.

"There were a number of pro-life people there who normally would not be able to interact with pro-choice people in that way," the priest noted.

Among Kissling's points with which Father Mugavero agreed is that most U.S. citizens fall into overlapping yet conflicting majorities about abortion.

Kissling asserted that most people in this country "believe the government should not be interfering in intimate, personal matters," and that they therefore support a woman's right to choose an abortion.

At the same time, she added, most American people are deeply upset about the number of abortions being performed in the United States.

Although pro-choice herself, Kissling said she does not consider abortion to be

morally good.

In an interview prior to her talk, Kissling remarked, "I believe there is always some tragedy involved with abortion. There is a great social evil associated with abortion."

She explained that society fails to provide adequate support and health care for women who become pregnant, nor for the children they are carrying. In addition, she said, U.S. society lacks a healthy attitude toward sexuality and birth control.

In such countries as the Netherlands or Sweden, which provide care and support for women and encourage a healthier attitude toward sex, the abortion rate is far lower than that of the United States, she observed.

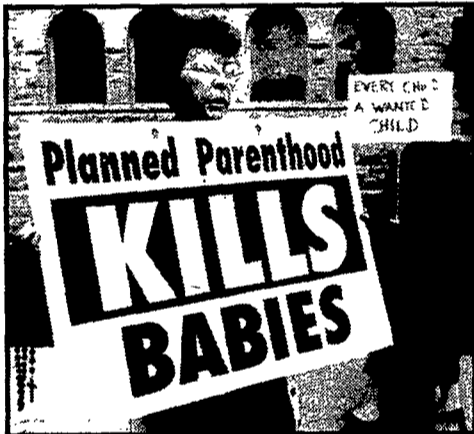
Meanwhile, the debate over abortion is entering a new phase in the United States, Kissling said.

During her talk, she declared that the U.S. Supreme Court effectively has already overturned *Roe vs. Wade* through decisions in such cases as the 1989 *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services, Inc.* That decision upheld a Missouri law stating that life begins at conception, and imposing restrictions on when and where abortions may be performed.

During her interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Kissling predicted that *Roe vs. Wade* itself soon will be overturned.

She said such a reversal would lead to further polarization of the abortion debate. To advance their respective views, both sides in the conflict will spend millions of dollars — money that would be better spent on social needs, Kissling argued.

"I think the politicization of the abortion issue is one of the great tragedies of our time," Kissling declared. "And the amount of money to be spent to keep abortion legal or to restrict abortion is going to be enormous."



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Mary Burke was among the pro-life activists who picketed prior to Kissling's talk.

DIOCESAN APPOINTMENTS

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following diocesan appointments.

Father Daniel J. Condon, from parochial vicar at St. Cecilia Church in Irondequoit, to administrator of St. Patrick Church in Mt. Morris, effective Sept. 23, 1991.

Father Norbert L. Nolan, pastor of St. Patrick Church in Mt. Morris, to administrative leave with residence at St. Christopher rectory in North Chili, effective Sept. 13, 1991.

Father Leo J. Reinhardt, parochial vicar at St. Stephen Church in Geneva, to temporary administrator of St. Patrick Church in Mt. Morris, effective Sept. 13-22, 1991.

Father Dennis M. Bonsignore, from parochial vicar at Holy Family and St. Aloysius Churches in Auburn, to parochial vicar at St. Cecilia Church in Irondequoit, effective Sept. 27, 1991.

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