

Truth lies somewhere in between

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

The November issue of a national magazine will have a special "forum" on abortion. The magazine invited a number of public figures on all sides of the issue to indicate what they might say to a woman contemplating an abortion.

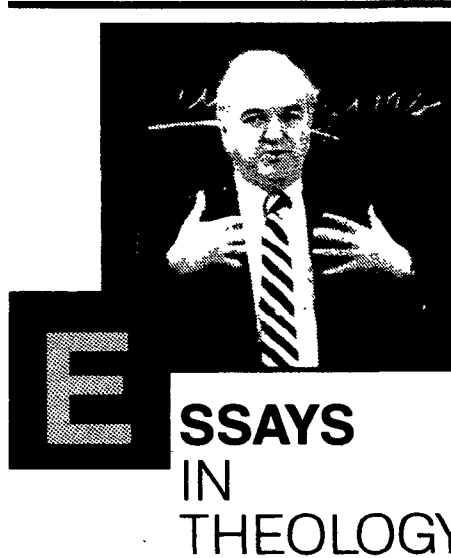
The specific reference is to the Pennsylvania law that imposes several restrictions on abortion, including informed consent.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey*, recently upheld the provision that a physician should provide women with information regarding fetal development, the attendant health risks from an abortion as well as from childbirth, and the assistance available should she decide to carry the pregnancy to full term.

At the same time, the law forbids the physician from trying to talk the woman out of having the abortion. Such a requirement was ruled unconstitutional in 1983 in *City of Akron vs. Akron Center for Reproductive Health, Inc.* and again in 1986 in *Thornburgh vs. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*.

The latter case involved an earlier Pennsylvania law that had been designed to deter women from having abortions.

I was one of those invited to submit a sample of the counseling I might offer were I in the physician's place.



Alas, like the airlines, the magazine claims it "overbooked" the project and my entry would be not published. It follows here:

"So much for the medical considerations. What's left to talk about is by far the most important.

"You know already that an abortion isn't simply a form of elective surgery, like removing a cyst from the back of one's neck. Nevertheless, the pressures and circumstances that have brought you here could easily blunt your sensitivity to the deeper values that are at stake in the choice you are about to make.

"Some would call those values religious. Others would call them moral or ethical, or simply humane. Whatever the label, we know — even those

who regard themselves as pro-choice — that abortion involves something more than the removal of a benign tumor.

What is aborted may not yet be a person, or a baby, or a child — notwithstanding the slogans on those placards we've all seen at anti-abortion rallies and sit-ins.

"But neither is the aborted fetus simply an inanimate mass of tissue, nor some form of plant or animal life. It's human life at some early stage of development.

"At the very least it's potential human life. No one can deny that. Not even the most zealous defender of choice.

"When the pregnancy is allowed to come to term, the fetus becomes a human child. There is never any other outcome.

"We may not want to think much about that, especially when confronted with the agonizing decision you're faced with today and with the personal and domestic circumstances that brought you here in the first place. But there's no avoiding the hard reality of the choice.

"One has only to ask a grief-stricken couple that's had a miscarriage if they've lost nothing more than 'the product of conception,' as the aborted fetus is sometimes euphemistically described. In many instances the couple would have already chosen a name for their unborn offspring.

"To be sure, you have a right under the civil law to decide to have the

abortion, but there are moral considerations here as well. In the final analysis, that moral choice is yours and yours alone, guided by the light of your own conscience. No one can replace the judgment of your conscience. And that includes me.

"I'm not here, therefore, to try to push you in one direction or another. (That would be against the law, in any case.) Whatever my own moral and religious convictions, they are irrelevant to your decision.

"But, under the law, I do want to ensure that your decision is as well-informed and as carefully deliberated as possible.

"I need not remind you, after all, that if you should decide to go forward with the abortion, you can't change your mind later on. With the termination of the pregnancy, the life within you ends.

If you can acknowledge that your choice affects a separate human life, or at the very least a separate potential human life, then I'm satisfied that you appreciate the gravity of that choice. My purpose under the law will have been fulfilled."

To be sure, this line of counseling would please neither the pro-choice activist for whom the only moral issue at stake in an abortion is the woman's right to choose, nor the pro-life militant for whom abortion — at any stage of pregnancy — is murder, purely and simply.

The truth, I am convinced, lies somewhere in between.

PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

Family Values Do Mean Something!



Lisa, Bill Sr., Bill, Marie and Tom Polito

The God-given right of parents to raise their children:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill supports financial assistance for parents to choose parochial schools with vouchers or tax credits. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill Polito supports traditional families, including single parent households. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Louise Slaughter does not. (vote 384; 8/12/92) | <input type="checkbox"/> Louise Slaughter endorsed as "highly recommended" by the Genesee Valley Lesbian and Gay Political Action Committee. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill supports the rights of parents to be involved in all their minor children's major decisions including the surgical operation of abortion. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill supports legal protection for unborn children and their fathers. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Louise Slaughter does not. (sponsored HR 25) | <input type="checkbox"/> Louise Slaughter does not. (sponsored HR25) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill opposed a \$9 million dollar sex survey asking your 10-year-olds about their homosexual actions and identifying other persons involved. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill opposes payment of obscene art with families' taxes. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Louise Slaughter supports the \$9 million dollar sex survey of children. (vote 226 & 227; 7/25/92) | <input type="checkbox"/> Louise Slaughter does not. (vote 309, 341; 10/16/91, 10/24/91) |

Give Our Children A Break!

Real Family Values means a vote for Bill Polito for Congress on November 3, 1992

Paid for by Bill Polito for Congress Committee