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## Latin liturgy

As the Catholic Courier went to press May 11, Bishop Matthew H. Clark announced that he will allow the return of the Tridentine Mass on a weekly basis at Rochester's St. Stanislaus Church, beginning June 6. More on that story next week.

## Spring of Life

By Lee Strong, Senior staff writer

# Then... and Now



File photo Holding a condom package in his hand, a pro-choice demonstrator (center) taunts a pro-life activist reading the Bible. The confrontation took place during Operation Rescue's Spring of Life protests on April 25, 1992. The protests' ninth day brought the total number of pro-life activists arrested to more than 410.

## Results remain muddy one year after protests

ROCHESTER — The battle lines were drawn early for the 1992 "Spring of Life" rescues in Buffalo.

Pro-life and pro-choice forces began a battle of words months before the Operation Rescue-sponsored protests actually began on April 20, 1992.

And by the time protests concluded on May 3, thousands of people on both sides of the abortion debate had confronted each other in front of Buffalo-area clinics. More than 600 people — mostly pro-lifers — were arrested.

But even after the protests subsided, the verbal jabbing continued — as it does to this day — as both sides claimed success.

"All scheduled abortions took place" during the protests, reported Marilyn Buckham, director of Buffalo GYN Womenservices, one of the clinics targeted during the rescues. "All the patients were seen."

A year after the protests, Buckham told the *Catholic Courier* that the clinic has experienced no drop-off in the number of women obtaining abortions.

On the other hand, pro-life activists claim that a number of women changed their minds as a result of the demonstrations.

"We have women who have babies right now who were scheduled to have abortions,"

observed Karen Swallow Prior, who served as a spokeswoman during Spring of Life and who remains active in Buffalo's pro-life movement.

Prior estimated that as many as 50 women changed their minds about having abortions as a result of the protests.

But Prior was unable to arrange for any of the women to speak with the *Courier* to support her claims.

Meanwhile, Buckham acknowledged that even though all the scheduled abortions took place during the rescues, the actual number of abortions performed at the targeted clinics decreased on days when protests occurred.

She contended that women who might have had abortions at the clinics went elsewhere for abortions. Thus, she argued, abortions did occur, just not necessarily at the time or place originally planned.

One statistical measure that might help sort out these conflicting claims would be to compare the number of abortions recorded in Erie County during the protests — or at least during 1992 — with the figures from previous years.

Unfortunately, the most recent figures the County of Erie Department of Health could provide were from 1990. And the State of New York's Department of Health could

***'It's time, certainly, to sit back, reevaluate the situation, shed the old wine skins and take on the new.'***

**Karen Swallow Prior  
Spring of Life spokeswoman.**

only offer figures from 1991.

Thus, the ability to objectively measure the Buffalo protests — at least in terms of their effect or non-effect on the number of abortions performed — remains difficult even a year after the Spring of Life's conclusion.

What is clear however, is that pro-choice forces and much of the mainstream media viewed the protests as a defeat for the pro-life movement. Indeed, many pro-choice activists predicted that the rescues' failure effectively ended large-scale, pro-life protests.

"It's been called 'Operation Fizzle,'" Buckham said, noting that even the media picked up on that title to describe the Buffalo protests. "I think because nationally and locally it was such a poor showing it kind of took the wind out of large protests."

Continued on page 18