

'Siege' ends at clinic

Week marked by prayerful protest

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Pro-life activists' weeklong "siege" of Planned Parenthood's University Avenue headquarters — the site of its recently opened abortion clinic — concluded peacefully Oct. 16.

During the campaign, which ran from Oct. 11-16, approximately 150 pro-life activists picketed, prayed and distributed literature during business hours. In addition, demonstrators offered pregnancy tests, counseling and information about alternative services to people entering the offices at 114 University Ave.

Meanwhile, pro-choice groups and Planned Parenthood's supporters organized counterprotests and arranged escorts for individuals and couples seeking to enter the building.

Pro-choice activists, who often outnumbered their pro-life counterparts, were sometimes seen mocking, insulting or swearing at pro-life activists who were praying, distributing literature, or talking with passers-by.

The idea behind the protest was not to promote violence or to block the entrance to Planned Parenthood, noted Jerry Crawford, associate director of Rescue Rochester, which organized the demonstration.

"The reason we called it a 'siege' was because we wanted to have a siege in the spiritual realm," Crawford said. "Our number one priority was to have spiritual warfare."

Crawford reported that pro-life activists performed or provided 25 to 30 pregnancy tests and distributed 200 to

250 pieces of literature throughout the week.

One incident of physical violence took place during the week.

On the evening of Oct. 12, a pro-choice activist allegedly punched the Rev. Mike Warren, pastor of Brockport's Christ Church and the associate director of Rescue Rochester.

Warren said he had been attempting to write down the license plate number of the car driven by the woman, who, he claimed, had kept circling and shouting near the recreational vehicle in which pro-life activists were offering pregnancy tests and counseling.

Warren said he had filed a criminal complaint against the woman. "Our concern was that she would incite some of her friends to criminal actions," he explained.

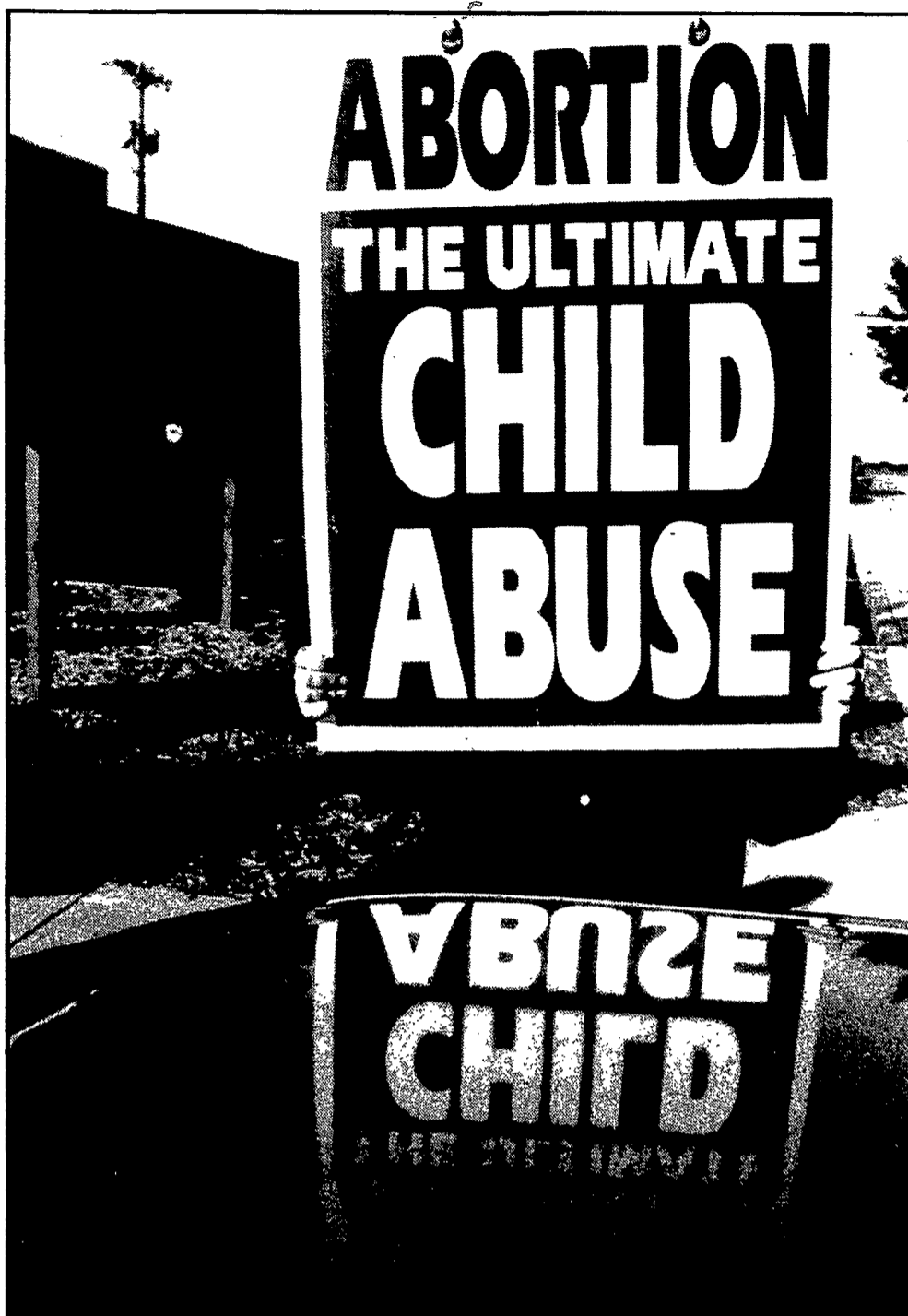
According to Gregory Soehner, executive director of Planned Parenthood, the protest was surprisingly controlled considering the strong feelings on both sides of the issue.

"I think people on both sides showed a lot of restraint," Soehner said. But, he added, "The potential for (violence) to escalate exists. It's a real time bomb."

Soehner noted that while there was reportedly only one incident of physical violence, Planned Parenthood's clients were subjected to harassment — either directly from pro-life activists who approached them or from their mere presence.

Crawford acknowledged that some people may have felt harassed. But, he added, sometimes that is what is needed to save lives.

"It's necessary when there's a life at stake that we do what we can," Crawford said. "Maybe something we say will reach them, and they will change their minds."



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
A pro-life activist stands outside Planned Parenthood in Rochester Oct. 13. Activists handed out literature, prayed, picketed and offered alternatives to abortion during the Oct. 11-16 'siege.'

Meeting focuses on Divine Office and its potential use in parishes

ROCHESTER — Liturgical leaders attending the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions' 24th annual meeting will return to their respective dioceses intending to promote the Liturgy of the Hours, according to Sister Mary Louise Heffernan, SSJ, the convention's local chairwoman.

The meeting, which drew 232 participants from around the country, was held at the Stouffer Rochester Plaza Hotel, 70 State St., from Oct. 14-18. It comprised diocesan liturgical commission members, directors of offices of liturgy, musicians and other liturgists.

The Liturgy of the Hours — also known as the Divine Office — served as the meeting's theme. Sister Heffernan said speakers at the meeting all stressed the necessity of promoting the Liturgy of Hours, a daily communal prayer featuring the recitation of various psalms.

"I think everyone left here feeling there was hope that this rite will come alive even though it was 30 years since (Vatican II's) document on sacred liturgy was promulgated," said Sister

Heffernan, who also coordinates the diocesan Office of Liturgy.

The Second Vatican Council issued *The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy*, which stated that: "The laity, too, are encouraged to recite the divine office, either with the priests, or among themselves, or individually."

Sister Heffernan noted that for the Liturgy of the Hours to become a regular feature of Catholics' liturgical life, parishes will have to educate the faithful in the practice. She added that her own office will seek ways of using the recently concluded Diocesan General Synod's first priority, which recommended lifelong religious education, as a springboard for promoting the liturgical practice.

Ginny Miller, director of music at St. Louis Parish in Pittsford, attended the meeting. Miller said she is hoping her parish eventually offers the Liturgy of the Hours once a week. She noted that the parish currently offers the Divine Office only during special seasons such as Advent.

— Rob Cullivan

SBI president to discuss moral traditions and sexuality

AUBURN — Sister Patricia A. Schoelles, SSJ, president of St. Bernard's Institute, will talk about "Catholic Moral Traditions and Sexuality" this Wednesday, Oct. 27, at Sacred Heart Parish Center, 90 Melrose Road.

Sponsored by the Sacred Heart/St. Ann Adult Committee, the 7:30-9 p.m.

talk will explore the relationship between Catholic moral teachings and such sexuality issues as contraception, premarital sex and conscience formation.

For information about the program, contact Sacred Heart/St. Ann's Office of Religious Education at 315/252-7271.

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