



Michael Hoyt

In addition to exploring society's drift toward becoming a nation of self-interested strangers, the 1994-95 Respect Life Program reaffirms the vision of a society that welcomes all.

## Abortion

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Sandra Day O'Connor and David Souter really said in *Casey*, knowingly or not, is that democracy is merely an ensemble of procedures by which we regulate the pursuit of our purely personal meanings and satisfactions. The goal of the American experiment has become the satisfaction of the unencumbered, autonomous, self-constituting, Imperial Self.

The logic of the Imperial Self that has driven the movement for abortion-on-demand is that we are, ultimately, a nation of strangers. We form no communities of real consequence: whether communities of husband and wife, parents and children, or any other community of common memory and mutual aid. We are only autonomous selves, strangers,

maybe even enemies; and the state's job is to prevent others from interfering with "my" autonomy.

The abortion license is most especially about abortion, and about our obligations to the weakest and most helpless among us. But the abortion license is also about America. The license is doing, and indeed has done, terrible damage to individual lives. The license's logic is doing, and indeed already has done, terrible damage to our society's fabric. We are a morally coarser people because we have accustomed ourselves to the annual slaughter of 1.6 million innocents. We are a society with a weaker grasp on the cause to which our ancestors pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, because we have emptied "freedom" of its moral content and filled the vacuum with a radical individualism that is a sure prescription for endless personal and civic strife.

## Life ethic

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ic witness," Father Mugavero said. Thus the proposed pastoral plan — which is to be considered at 11 gatherings around the diocese Oct. 1, before the final five-year plan is released later this year — calls for information sessions about the meaning of the consistent-life ethic; a convocation devoted to the ethic to take place during the next year; creation of the position of diocesan consistent-life ethic coordinator; fostering service projects; and providing training and education to parishes on the legislative process and such consistent-life-ethic issues as the death penalty, abortion and euthanasia.

Meanwhile, opportunities already exist for education and service.

On Oct. 2, from 2 to 3 p.m., people from across the diocese will gather to form nonviolent life chains. Among other sites, chains will form along East Avenue in Rochester, Routes 5 and 20 in Geneva, and in downtown Owego. Participants will line streets holding signs bearing such messages as "Abortion kills Children."

In addition, Judie Brown, president of the American Life League, is scheduled to deliver the 11 a.m. keynote address Oct. 8 at the Beacon of Women's Unity Conference, Oct. 7-9, at the Women's Rights National Historical Park, 136 Fall St., in Seneca Falls.

On Oct. 14, Bishop Clark and Kathleen Gallagher, associate director for pro-life activities of the New York State Catholic Conference, are scheduled to speak about the consistent-life

ethic at a dinner at the Wishing Well Party House, 1190 Chili Ave. The dinner, which will benefit the Problem Pregnancy Help Center, Inc., costs \$15 per person, and tickets may be purchased by writing the Parish Pro-life Network, 118 Aspen Drive, Rochester, N.Y. 14625.

And on Nov. 14, Feminists for Life and the Rochester office of the American Civil Liberties Union will sponsor a talk by Nat Hentoff, a noted defender of First Amendment rights and of the consistent-life ethic. Hentoff's lecture will take place at the Rochester Museum and Science Center's Eisenhart Auditorium, 657 East Ave. Crossed, who is among the organizers for the talk, said details such as time and cost have yet to be worked out.

Interested people can also become involved with the activities of the Parish Pro-life Network or of the Problem Pregnancy Help Center, which provides counseling and support to women from pregnancy through after the birth of their children as an alternative to abortion.

Father Mugavero pointed out that the consistent-life ethic is not a comfortable topic — and that the diocese has it as one of its goals in itself a message.

"It's calling us from our complacency," Father Mugavero said. "Our world is in need of so much. I think the life issues are going to become more prevalent in our discussions as a society, as a people, as a world."

That's why we need, the consistent-life ethic," Father Mugavero continued, "to understand from a moral perspective the issues."



# We Respect Life!

As a part of its mission, the Catholic Church seeks to safeguard life from the moment of conception through natural death. Here, in the Diocese of Rochester, the second Synod priority is the Consistent Life Ethic, indicating the importance of life to Catholics in upstate New York. As businesses and organizations, we support the stance of the Catholic Church and the Diocese of Rochester on life issues.

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