

# Pro-life marchers find hope in new Congress

By Patricia Zapor  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — In a rousing kick-off to the annual March for Life, newly elected members of Congress took the stage with their incumbent colleagues in vowing to cut off funding for Planned Parenthood and reverse laws or administrative mandates that make abortions more readily available.

Before a crowd estimated by the National Park Service Police at 45,000, March for Life president Nellie Gray read a letter to the president of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, responding to her request that the march be canceled. "You and I walk on opposite sides," Gray read from her letter. "There is no in-between position."

Supporters of legalized abortion had been apprehensive about the event in light of the December murders of two Massachusetts abortion clinic employees.

According to the Associated Press, some demonstrators blocked traffic, and later about 39 demonstrators were arrested after blocking one of the doors of the Department of Health and Human Services building to demonstrate against fetal research.

Despite the arrests, there apparently were no security problems at the march, although measures such as the use of official access passes were more conspicuous than in previous years.

NARAL president Kate Michelman had asked Gray to cancel the march out of concern that such gatherings posed a danger to well-meaning people on both sides of the abortion debate.

In her response, Gray told Michelman that she empathized with her deep feelings of hurt over the deaths of two Massachusetts abortion clinic employees. But, she said, the violence of abortion brought out such killings, not the overwhelmingly peaceful movement to oppose abortion. "You and I suffer because society suffers," Gray added.

Sharon Pearte, president of Chemung County Right to Life, and a veteran of previous marches in Washington, noted that for the first time in years, she saw no pro-choice counterdemonstrators.

## March FOR Life!

"I did see a large amount of police," Pearte said, "but there were no problems."

Pearte noted that she and other pro-life lobbyists were in Washington to discuss with Congress such abortion-related issues as banning embryo research; mandating parental consent for abortions performed on minors; creating a tax code that rewards unwed parents who marry and keep their children; and the impact any welfare-reform proposals may have on single mothers.

A parishioner at St. Mary's Church in Elmira, Pearte added that last November's Republican takeover of Congress created a far more welcoming atmosphere for pro-life activists who participated in this year's march. Congressional representatives were few and far between at previous marches, she remarked, but this year saw many newly elected members of Congress eager to speak from the pro-life podium.

More than a dozen representatives and senators — part of a freshman class of abortion opponents numbering about 40 — took the microphone at the Jan. 23 rally on the Ellipse that annually precedes the march from the White House to the Supreme Court.

Rep. Linda Smith, R-Wash., said she is one of the growing number of women who are now opposed to abortion after having "bought the lie" in the 1970s that legalizing abortion would be good for women. She said her mind was changed permanently after her own two pregnancies.

Several other speakers reiterated the peaceful emphasis of most organizations fighting abortion.

"We must not ever tolerate terrorism in the pro-life movement," said Rep. Robert K. Dornan, R-Calif. "Bombers and assassins are not part of our movement. Two wrongs do not make a right. We are lovers of life and don't count-

enance terrorism of any kind."

After about a dozen freshman members of Congress spoke briefly about their intention, to fight abortion legislatively, Rep. Christopher Smith, R-N.J., who is co-chairman of the Congressional Pro-Life Caucus, said he had no illusions about the fight ahead being easy just because there are more members on his side.

"This past election was merely a down payment on 1996," said Smith.

Five U.S. cardinals and dozens of bishops were among participants who came from across the country to rally under darkening skies as temperatures hovered in the 30s with a brisk wind.

Los Angeles Cardinal Roger M. Mahony, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said Car-

dinals James A. Hickey of Washington, Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Philadelphia, Bernard F. Law of Boston and John J. O'Connor of New York were there to reiterate the Catholic Church's commitment to peaceful but unwavering opposition to abortion.

In a prayer concluding the rally, Cardinal O'Connor asked God to give everyone the same appreciation for life shared by those who joined the march.

The march commemorates the anniversary of the Supreme Court's Jan. 22, 1973, *Roe vs. Wade* decision legalizing abortion virtually on demand. This year's march was held the day after the anniversary so participants could lobby members of Congress.

Contains reporting by staff writer Rob Cullivan.

## Vigil attracts opposites



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Dorothy Hayes braved the rain and cold with her 4-month-old daughter Dorothy Jan. 20 to join pro-life and pro-choice advocates for a peaceful vigil at the Liberty Pole in downtown Rochester. Members from opposing sides in the abortion debate came together to denounce the violence committed against doctors and other personnel at women's clinics and to remember the victims of recent shootings. The event was sponsored by Feminist for Life of Western New York.

# Protesters sentenced for sit-in at doctors' building

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — A group of pro-life activists convicted on criminal trespass charges related to a sit-in last May received sentences ranging from community service to participation in a work-release program in City Court on Jan. 23.

The activists were arrested on May 21, 1994, after sitting in the hallway that led to Dr. Jerome Glazer's office at 220 Alexander St. The building houses Alexander Women's Group, P.C., which performs abortions, and is located next to The Genesee Hospital, 224 Alexander St.

Seven of 11 activists had pleaded not guilty to charges of criminal trespass, while the remaining four pleaded guilty to simple trespass, a misdemeanor charge comparable to a speeding ticket, according to attorneys for both sides.

Two of the four who pleaded guilty to simple trespass received community service sentences; one received one Saturday in a work-release program; and the remaining defendant was discharged upon condition that she stay away from the hospital for a year.

Following a jury trial that began Nov.

29, the seven who had pleaded not guilty were acquitted on Dec. 1 of resisting arrest charges but convicted of criminal trespass.

On Jan. 23, Tom Morse, the assistant district attorney who prosecuted the case, asked the judge to sentence the seven convicted activists to several dozen hours of community service with the stipulation that they stay away from Genesee Hospital for a year.

Morse noted his belief that, despite the peaceful nature of the May 21 sit-in, abortion-clinic protests lightly punished by the courts create a climate of legal permissiveness that could encourage violent anti-abortion activists to attack clinics.

John M. Regan, defense attorney for several of the activists, dismissed Morse's fears, contending that stopping the ongoing violence of abortion was what motivated the nonviolent activists to break the law in the first place.

Although he did bar most of the activists from the hospital grounds for a year, City Court Judge John R. Schwartz declined Morse's request for community service sentences and sentenced all seven of the activists to participation in a Monroe County work-release program.

The program enables convicts to exchange roughly seven days of jail time for each Saturday in the program. The activists must serve anywhere from one to six Saturdays, depending on the length of jail time to which they were sentenced.

Schwartz told the activists that they must complete their sentences by April 3.

Carol Crossed, a noted Rochester-area Catholic peace and pro-life activist, received a sentence of 45 days in Monroe County Jail that the judge said she could serve as six Saturdays in the work-release program.

Crossed accepted her sentence, but protested the prosecution of pro-life activists in general. During her statement before her sentence was pronounced, she supported her argument by holding up a full-page advertisement placed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the Sunday, Jan. 22 issue of *The New York Times*. (Jan. 22 is the anniversary of the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.)

The ad, titled "Truth Doesn't Kill. Abortion Does," consisted of a series of quotes by pro-choice leaders and groups that revealed their discomfort with sup-

porting legalized abortion.

Crossed read from a quote attributed to an abortionist who spoke at a 1978 meeting of the Association of Planned Parenthood Physicians in San Diego, Calif.

"We have reached a point in this particular technology where there is no possibility of denial of an act of destruction by the operator," the quote read. "It is before one's eyes. The sensations of dismemberment flow through the forceps like an electric current."

Crossed made her own statement to the judge, and said, in part:

"If we change the definition of murder and human being to accommodate the motivations of those who take life, it makes your job, as a representative of the court, to protect life, a falsity."

Most of the activists expressed relief and pleasure at the relatively light sentences that they received because most of them thought they would go to jail due to prior convictions on similar charges.

"You can't attach moral opprobrium to these people the way you do to normal criminal activity, and I think that was reflected in the sentences," Regan commented.