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the lamb that ROARS

“Woe to you in New York,” Oblates of Wisdom Father Norman U. Weslin admonished some 120 people at Gates’ St. Jude the Apostles Church Sept. 12.

“You have big mills working steady, killing my babies,” he warned the congregation, which had gathered for Mass to launch the Knights of Columbus drive for a memorial to the unborn.

“You have spilled the blood of my babies all over your land,” he intoned more loudly. “Better for you to have a millstone tied around your neck and to be thrown into the sea than to harm one of my little ones.

“Woe to you in New York,” he repeated. “You are fast becoming the Sodom and Gomorrah of the modern world.”

A controversial figure in the national pro-life movement — and an increasingly present one in the Diocese of Rochester — Father Weslin held the congregation spellbound, varying his tone of voice and accent, even periodically imitating the voices of Pope John Paul II, God, and an unborn baby.

“We come home to our spouse in the evening and our wife says to us, ‘Honey, they’re killing a million and a half of our babies every year,’” he said. “And we say to them, ‘That’s terrible. What’s for supper?’”

He said, “The baby is in the womb saying to you and me, ‘Is anyone out there? Does anyone care?’”

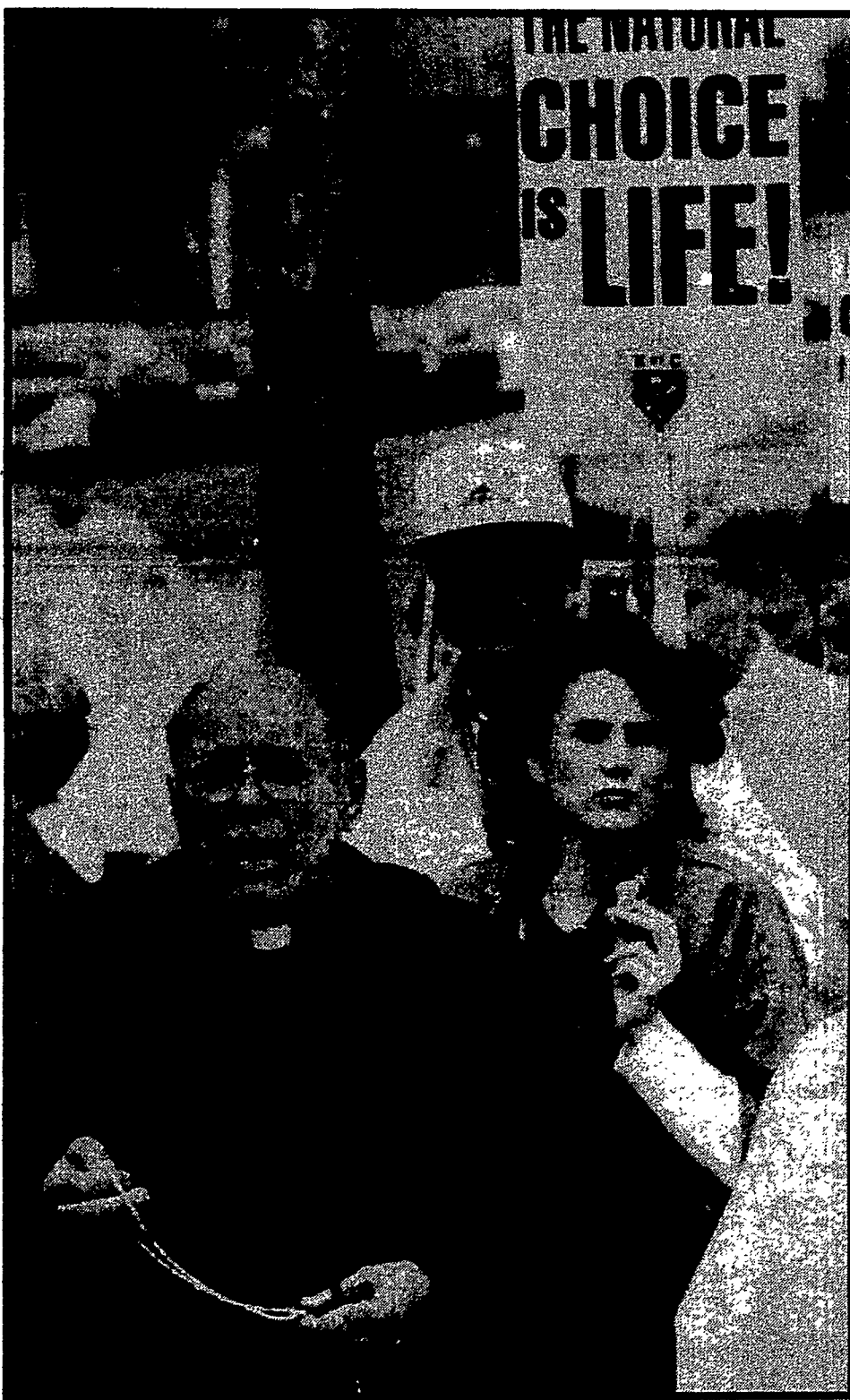
Continuing his plea in the baby’s “voice,” he said, “Mommy, please don’t kill me, Mommy ... M ...”

Critics of the itinerant priest and his followers in the Lambs of Christ accuse them also of assuming voices of harassment and intimidation in their abortion protests.

During 1991 alone, newspaper accounts from Fargo, N.D., to Asheville, N.C., detail organization members’ arrests arrested on such charges as criminal trespassing and obstructing police. According to the accounts — and to Father Weslin himself — Lambs have repeatedly entered clinics, and even chained themselves together and to doors to slow their removal.

Father Weslin acknowledges that he has been arrested 60 to 70 times on such charges as trespassing and resisting arrest in connection with pro-life demonstrations. He said he was even arrested on his 66th birthday, Aug. 29, during the Democratic National Convention for blocking what he described as a “killing center” in Chicago.

Ordained just 10 years ago as a priest of the Diocese of Ponce, Puerto Rico, Father Weslin — a native of Michigan — has in recent months focused his interests on western and northern New York state. A widower with two adult children, he brings to the pro-life movement organizational skills gained during 20 years of military service — as a paratrooper, artillery commander, chief of a war-plans division and an operations officer responsible for nuclear-tipped missile



S. John Wilkin

Father Weslin, OS, protests May 18 in front of Rochester’s Planned Parenthood.

defenses.

Now he sees his mission as organizing pro-life forces in the Syracuse, Ogdensburg, Buffalo, Rochester and Albany dioceses in prayerful protests, such as the one he will lead Oct. 19 from Rochester’s Old St. Joseph’s Church Park to the offices of Planned Parenthood. He is also promoting participation in an Oct. 4 procession Bishop James Moynihan plans to lead to Syracuse’s Planned Parenthood offices.

In addition, Father Weslin is scheduled to speak at the St. Thomas More Lawyers’ Guild Red Mass Sept. 27 at Our Lady of Victory Church and at Masses at St. Christopher Church in North Chili the weekend of Sept. 28-29. In recent months, he has protested in Rochester outside Planned Parenthood and the office of Dr. Morris Wortman, a frequent target of pro-life protests.

The priest said his role often is “getting something started.”

During an interview at the Webster home where he was staying, Father Weslin told the *Catholic Courier* that he founded the Lambs of Christ “movement” in 1988 after working with Randall Terry at an Operation Rescue protest in Atlanta. He estimated that 4,000 people are supporters of the Lambs, and that about 600 of them protest publicly. He said 20 to 40 Lambs are available for any particular gathering.

He said he created the group after becoming convinced that stopping abortion would require protesters to follow the “mystical theology of the Victim Soul,” so that Christ could work through them to transform hearts.

“As soon as we turn ourselves over to God in total abandonment to Jesus through Mary, then Satan is not working against us anymore; he is confronting God himself,” explained Father Weslin, who converted to Catholicism from Lutheranism at age 21.

Father Weslin said he’s been active in the pro-life movement since 1969 — long before his ordination and while he was living in Colorado Springs — when he

read a church bulletin announcement that a visiting physician would talk about abortion.

“I didn’t know what abortion was,” the priest acknowledged.

He attended the talk, and soon he and other pro-lifers began taking action. Among their early efforts, he recalled, was the day they “packed the galleries” at the Colorado statehouse for a final reading of a bill that would have liberalized abortion.

“Suddenly,” he said, “a baby cried in the gallery. You could hear a pin drop. We beat the whole bill by a baby crying. We think the Blessed Mother went over and pinched the baby and said, ‘Cry a little bit now.’”

Father Weslin clearly ties his efforts to Gospel stories of Jesus’ defiance of certain elements of Jewish law. “It’s very important to know, what we’re trying to

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Story by Kathleen Schwar