

Pro-life leaders condemn abortion doctor's murder

BUFFALO, N.Y. (CNS) — The Monroe County Coalition for Life has joined the bishop of Buffalo and other Catholic pro-life leaders in condemning the killing of an Amherst doctor who performed abortions.

Dr. Barnett Slepian, 52, who attended Rochester's former Monroe High School for a time, was killed by a single shot from a high-powered rifle fired through a kitchen window at his Amherst home Oct. 23.

Police were investigating whether his death was connected with similar shootings of four other doctors who performed abortions. Three attacks in Canada and a fourth in Rochester, since 1994 all involved gunshots from a high-powered rifle fired through windows at the doctors' homes. None of the other shootings was fatal.

"We are outraged by the murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian," the Monroe Coalition declared in a Oct. 26 statement.

The coalition represents pro-life and consistent life ethic organizations in greater Rochester. Among the members is Suzanne Schnittman, consistent life ethic coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester. "There is absolutely and positively no justification for it," the statement continues. "This violent action represents the opposite of all that the pro-life and consistent life ethic philosophy supports."

The coalition extended its "deepest sympathies" to Slepian's family, noting, "We join the community in offering them our prayers at this terrible time."

Buffalo Bishop Henry J. Mansell said at an Oct. 25 press conference, "I condemn the killing of Dr. Slepian as a barbarous act. As pro-life people, we are committed to life at every stage."

Bishop Mansell said in a later statement that such an act "is totally contradictory to the values and ideals of people truly interested in life, and certainly to the pro-life movement."



Reuters/CNS

Dr. Barnett Slepian (left) argues with an unidentified anti-abortion demonstrator outside a Buffalo abortion clinic in 1992. The doctor was killed in the kitchen of his home in Amherst, N.Y., Oct. 23 by a marksman with a high-powered rifle.

In Philadelphia, Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua said the attack on Slepian has a parallel to the recent beating death of University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard, who was a homosexual.

"These attacks are painful illustrations of what happens when we succumb to what our Holy Father has labeled 'the culture of death,'" Cardinal Bevilacqua said. "There is dignity in every person, and when one

person's dignity is denied, the dignity of each of us is diminished."

He said he finds it "difficult to fathom someone who claims to be pro-life committing such a repugnant anti-life act. The pro-life effort is about love and respect. It is not about hate; it is not about condemnation; it is not about violence." The National Right to Life Committee encouraged the prompt arrest and prosecution of the individual or group responsible for "this senseless act of violence."

David N. O'Steen, executive director of NRLC, said the group, "unequivocally condemns any such acts of violence used by individuals, regardless of their motivation."

The NRLC statement took issue with the suggestion made by some groups and individuals since Slepian's shooting that speaking out against abortion leads to such violence.

"Such a suggestion is like blaming the civil rights movement — and all those who courageously spoke in favor of the rights of African Americans — for the riots or deaths that were a part of that era," said the NRLC.

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Contains additional reporting by Lee Strong.

U.S. bishops to consider social justice statement

WASHINGTON (CNS) — One of Christianity's oldest challenges is connecting Sunday worship and Monday work, says a statement the U.S. Catholic bishops will vote on this November.

Titled "Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice," the statement challenges U.S. Catholics to meet "the demands of discipleship in the pursuit of justice and peace in everyday activity."

Vatican hails agreement

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican newspaper hailed the latest Israeli-Palestinian land-for-peace accord, saying that "the effort for peace prevailed" after nine days of difficult negotiations in Maryland.

"The agreement creates an opening for peaceful coexistence, for mutual recognition founded on the respect for all people's dignity," the newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, said in a front-page story Oct. 24.

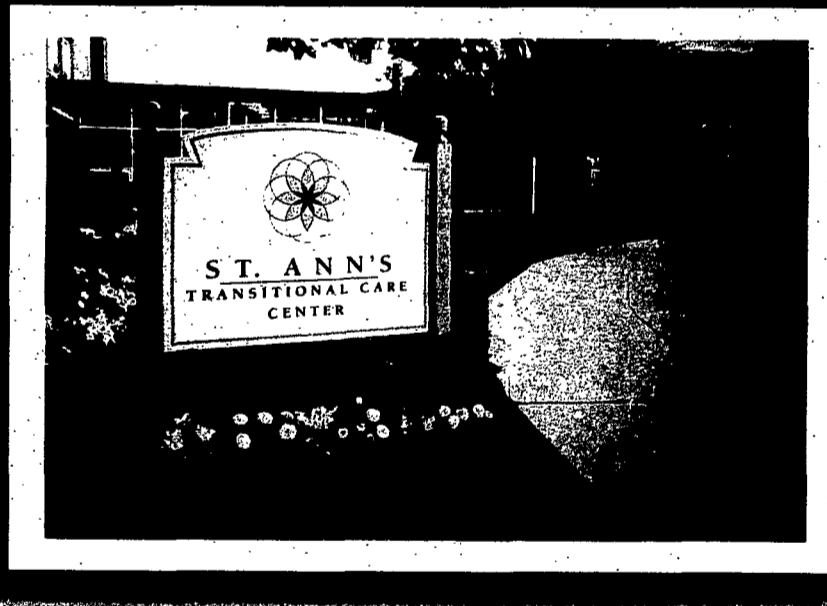
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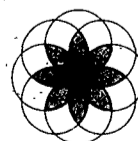
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