



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Protesters Betty Ann Cordero (left) and her aunt, Phyllis Burruto, attempt to block traffic while chanting as the congregation and priests leave St. Francis of Assisi in Rochester after the last Mass on Aug. 15.

Church says goodbye

Protesters block bishop's vehicle

By Rob Cullivan
Staff Writer

ROCHESTER — A final Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Church, 77 Whitney St., saw more than 200 people inside praying, singing and bidding farewell — and more than a score of people outside, protesting loudly throughout the service. Protesters' chants were audible inside the church at certain points.

After the Mass a handful of the protesters even briefly risked arrest by Rochester City Police who twice ordered them to stop

blocking vehicles — including that of Bishop Matthew H. Clark — attempting to leave parish grounds.

The Aug. 15 evening Mass featured hymns and readings in both English and Spanish, highlighting the fact that the parish had been home to speakers of both languages, including more than 70 Spanish-speakers. A choir comprising members from St. Francis of Assisi and Holy Apostles Church, located on nearby Lyell Avenue, performed bilingual music as well.

Most members of St. Francis have designated Holy Apostles as their new parish, according to Father Paul Tomasso, pastor of both churches. A Spanish Mass will be available at Holy Apostles, he said, and St. Francis' sacramental records have been transferred there.

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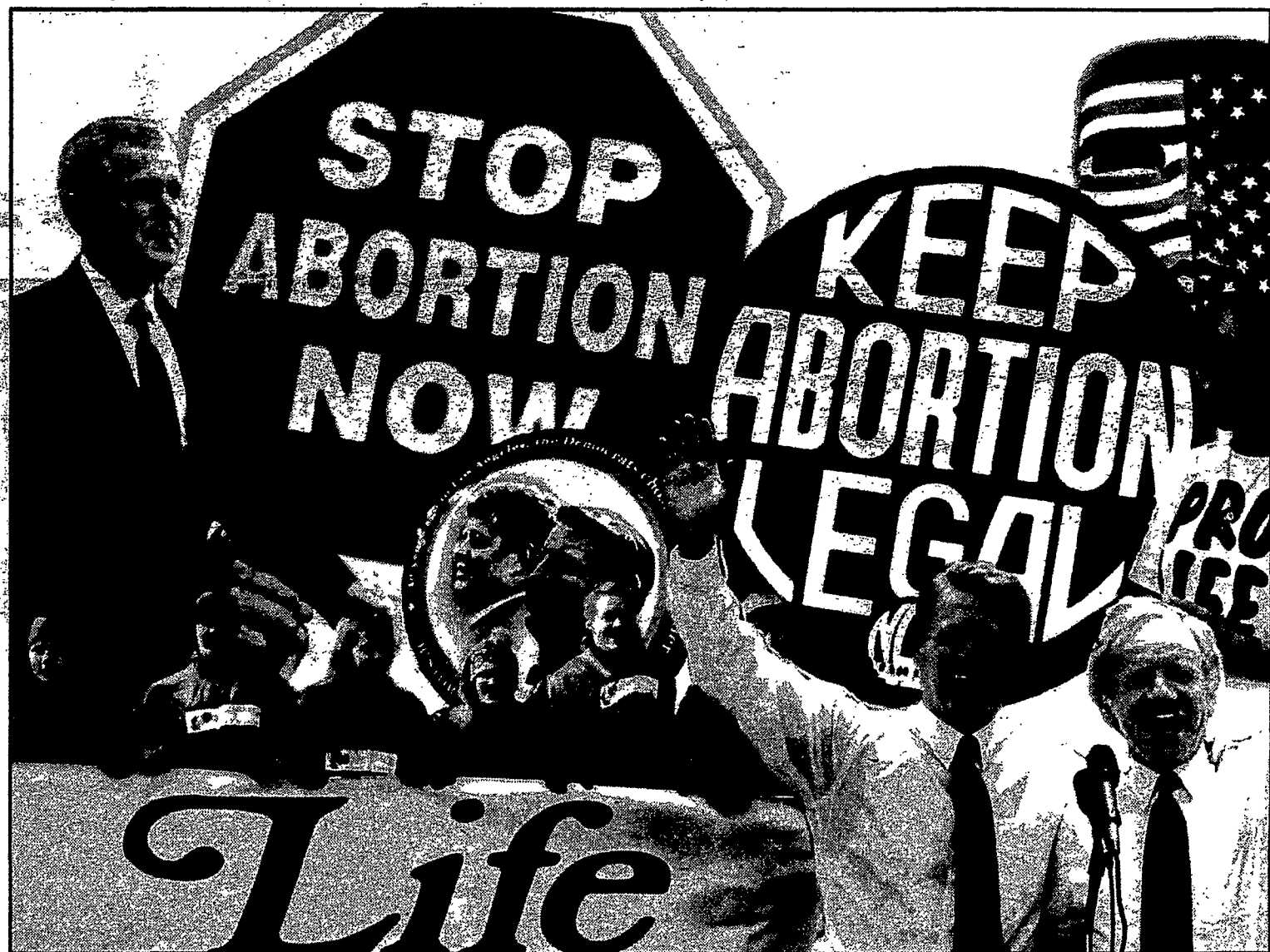
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Will abortion count in 2000 vote?

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — In an election year when much has been made of how to woo the amorphous "Catholic vote," one area of attention is whether Vice President Al Gore's abortion positions matter to enough people to make a difference.

As Democrat Gore runs for president against Republican Texas Gov. George W. Bush, political observers predict that neither candidate will risk irritating those in the middle ground on abortion, where most American voters dwell. Polls consistently show that most Americans believe abortion should be legal, but support some limits, such as waiting periods and parental notification requirements.

Gore's stance on abortion essentially mirrors that of President Clinton, who won with a majority of Catholic votes in both 1992 and 1996.

Gore's campaign Web site emphasizes his support for keeping abortion legal and his opposition to efforts to limit access to abortion for Medicaid recipients or in international family planning

programs.

By executive order, President Clinton reversed the so-called Mexico City policy, which prohibits the use of U.S. funds by international family planning programs that provide abortions or referrals for abortions. Congressional attempts to reinstate that policy have been unsuccessful.

The Gore campaign site highlights his endorsement by the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League and his receiving the "Reproductive Freedom Award" from Voters for Choice.

Clyde Wilcox, professor of government at Georgetown University, pointed to the mild reference to abortion in Bush's nomination acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention Aug. 3 as a sign the issue isn't going to be a hot one for most people this fall.

Bush's only references to abortion were that he would lead the nation "toward a culture that values life ... including the life of the unborn," and to say he would sign legislation to ban partial-birth abortions.

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