

Abortions a sign of 'failure'

Nancy Frazier O'Brien/CNS

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Cathy Cleaver was in grade school when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned most state restrictions on abortion in its Jan. 22, 1973, twin decisions — *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*.

But if the experiences of her generation have taught her anything, it's that women deserve better than the "choice" abortion offers them.

As the director of planning and information for the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities looked back on 30 years of legal abortion in the United States, she said the more than 40 million abortions since 1973 are "not a measure of our society's success in meeting the needs of women, but of its failure."

In "A Matter of the Heart," their statement marking the 30th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. bishops said legal abortion "promised what it could not give," when its supporters in 1973 said it would bring an end to poverty and abuse.

This is also the first year that U.S. Catholic dioceses are obliged to observe Jan. 22 liturgically as a "day of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life."

As in other years, much of the pro-life activity on Jan. 22 will focus on the March for Life, which aims to influence Congress and the president about the size and determination of the movement to overturn *Roe v.*



Bob Roller/CNS

Pro-life advocates gather in Washington, D.C., Jan. 22, 2002, for the annual March for Life. This year's march will mark the 30th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

Wade.

But in 2003 pro-lifers will find a decidedly more rosy picture in Washington, after the 2002 elections brought in new pro-life members of the House and Senate and removed from Senate leadership Democratic Sen. Tom Daschle of South Dakota — a major roadblock last year to efforts to bring pro-life legislation to the Senate floor.

The new Senate majority leader, Republican Sen. Bill Frist of Tennessee, said in a 1998 letter to constituents, "As a physician, my professional ethics are grounded in

preserving life, and I am opposed to abortion."

President Bush has promised to sign legislation banning partial-birth abortions. Bush also has indicated his support for bills that would punish those who kill or injure unborn children in attacks on pregnant women, make it a federal crime to take a minor out of state to circumvent the state's laws requiring parental notification before an abortion, and allow health-care providers and institutions to refuse to perform, pay for or counsel for abortion on grounds of conscience.

GOVERNOR COMMUTES 167 DEATH SENTENCES

CHICAGO (CNS) — The Illinois Catholic Conference and a nationwide Catholic group that opposes the death penalty praised a decision by outgoing Illinois Gov. George Ryan to commute all the state's death sentences.

Just two days before he left office, Ryan commuted the death sentences of the 167 people on Illinois' death row. All but three received alternate sentences of life in prison without possibility of parole. The remaining three had their sentences commuted to 40-year terms.

A day earlier, Ryan issued pardons for four death-row inmates who he said were wrongly convicted on the basis of coerced false confessions.

POLL SHOWS DECLINE IN RELIGIOUS CONFIDENCE

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pollster George H. Gallup Jr. said a 30-point plunge last year in American religious attitudes and practices plainly reflected the 2002 Catholic sexual-abuse scandals.

In a Jan. 7 column Gallup said, "In 2002, 52 percent of Americans gave very high or high ratings to ethical standards of clergy versus the 64 percent who did so in 2001. Americans' confidence in organized religion declined significantly as well: 45 percent of Americans had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in organized religion in 2002, versus 60 percent in 2001."

USCCB OFFICIAL PUSHES CLONING BAN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Congress must pass the Human Cloning Prohibition Act and send it to President Bush for his signature, an official of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said in a statement Jan. 9.

Citing the urgency of the proposed legislation, Cathleen Cleaver, director of planning and information at the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, said unless Congress acts soon, maverick cloning groups such as the Raelians, which claims to have successfully cloned a baby, "can pursue their bizarre goals in our country."

March to include 300 from diocese

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

About 300 Catholics from the Diocese of Rochester will join thousands of pro-life activists in the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 22, according to diocesan pro-life activists.

The annual march commemorates the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decisions legalizing abortion.

Diocesan Catholics will join other activists from around the country at a liturgy at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception; will hear speeches by national figures; lobby Congress on pro-life bills; and participate in a march, according to Jann Armantrout, life issues coordinator for diocesan Catholic Charities.

A large portion of this year's delegation to the march is young people, Armantrout said. On a related note, Michael Theisen, diocesan director of youth ministry, pointed out that

the diocese has sent out information to youth ministry personnel promoting "Witness For Life Week" from Jan. 19-25. Designed for high-school seniors and juniors, the materials detail various approaches to teaching young people about the sanctity of unborn life, and calls for youth groups to discuss such issues as sexuality and procreation in a Catholic context.

"We wanted to equip them with some helpful tips and resources to commemorate *Roe v. Wade* even if they weren't going to Washington to participate in the march," Theisen said.

Theisen added that the materials contain a "Prayer of Solidarity for Life" that the diocese is urging all Catholics to pray at noon on Jan. 22 as an act of solidarity with the march. The diocese has asked parishes to print the prayer in their bulletins, he added.

"Give us a love so great/That we recognize your Presence/in every human being," the prayer reads in part.

Armantrout noted that diocesan activists attended political strategy sessions about the march Jan. 11. A session at St. John of Rochester featured Loretta Fleming, field organizer for the Washington-based National Committee for a Human Life Amendment, which is funded by the U.S. bishops. In an interview, Fleming said the pro-life community is focusing this year on getting Congress to ban human cloning as well as partial-birth or late-term abortions. The activists want Congress as well to enshrine legal protections for hospitals that are opposed to, and health-care workers who do not wish to perform, abortions, she said.

For information on the march, call Armantrout at 585/328-3210, ext. 204.