



A Rochester banner passes the Capitol during the March for Life.

Rochester Parish in Fairport held a banner aloft urging, "Give Rights to the Unborn." One man helping to hold the banner was Earl Knab, a parishioner at St. John's.

"We just needed to speak out for the unborn because they have no one to speak for them," he said. He noted that he welcomed any legislative efforts to restrict abortion.

"After 30 years, I think we're starting to make headway and starting to see results," he said.

As the marchers progressed down Madison Avenue toward the Supreme Court, the air was festive. Young women sang "He's got the unborn babies in his hands," and young men chanted anti-abortion slogans as if they were cheering at a football game. One young man blew a horn repeatedly, while others prayed quietly or carried religious icons and statues. The energy and spirituality of the young people impressed Marvin Mich, director of social policy and research for Catholic Family Center in Rochester. He noted that both he and Armantrout were struck by the numbers of young people at the march.

"These are the children who have seen their own ultrasounds," Mich said he and Armantrout had observed. "The ultrasounds verify the church's teachings."

On that note, Kathy Peters, a pro-life activist from St. Mary's Parish in Waterloo, said young people are increasingly "disgusted" by the immoral culture in which they have grown up. Peters, whose husband, Don, serves as a vice chairman of the Right to Life Party in New York state, said she herself was pro-choice at one time.

"Once I got pregnant and had a baby, I realized what a horrendous thing (abortion) was," she said. "It's wrong. I don't care what anyone says."

As a woman, she added that she

understands how hard it is for women to bring unplanned pregnancies to term. However, she said, the sacrifices they must make to give their children life are worth it.

"It's a harder road, but it is a better road," she said.

At the head of the march was a group of youths wearing red ponchos. Some carried a March for Life banner, others carried large placards listing the death toll for each one of the 30 years abortion has been legal. A large silver bell, pulled by a car, tolled every few seconds.

By the time the bell reached the Supreme Court, marchers sprawled out along the route. Some prayed the rosary as they marched. Others chanted. One marcher led a dog wearing a blanket and sign stating: "Save the baby humans."

One Catholic group from New York City was making its way to the Supreme Court and held a banner protesting both abortion and the looming war with Iraq. "One is the killing of the innocent baby, and the other is the killing of the baby who is already in the world," one man said.

A group of priests leading the rosary stood vigil in front of the court's steps. The marchers' arrival drove away the two dozen counter-protesters, who wore "Roe at 30: Behind every choice is a story" stickers, or waved circular signs with pink backgrounds and blue coat hangers that read "Keep Abortion Legal Now!"

Between the demonstration and the Supreme Court, a dozen police officers wearing riot gear stood silently with nightsticks at the ready, just in case.

"Pregnancy is not a disease and abortion is not a cure," someone shouted. "You're not fixing anything."

Contains reporting by Catholic News Service.

# Hearing focuses on M.D.'s office

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — Carol Crossed has traveled many times to Washington, D.C., for the annual March for Life. She didn't participate this Jan. 22 because she was busy with another anti-abortion initiative at home.

On the same day activists marched on the nation's capital to mark the 30th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, Crossed was in state Supreme Court regarding an ongoing local dispute over a gynecological office where abortions are performed. Five appellate justices heard arguments Jan. 22 from attorneys representing the Town of Brighton, Dr. Morris Wortman and Brighton Residents Against Violence (BRAVE), of which Crossed is president.

"It's extremely appropriate. (The abortion issue is) global, it's national and it's in our community," said Crossed, acknowledging the coincidence of the dates.

The dispute centers on a September 2001 order by state Supreme Court Justice William P. Polito that Wortman's office, located at 2020 S. Clinton Ave., cease to operate as an abortion facility. Polito also ordered the removal of a 60-foot-long, 10-foot-high concrete wall, covered by dirt and grass, that separates Wortman's office from a parking lot, offices and a child-care facility. BRAVE had petitioned the court in January 2001, saying the wall behind Wortman's office wasn't part of the building's architectural plan and did not meet with Brighton's planning and zoning guidelines.

Both Wortman and the town subsequently appealed Polito's decision, and the stay effect of Polito's ruling has allowed the status of Wortman's practice and the wall to remain unchanged until the appeal is settled. The court was expected to render its decision within one to two months following the Jan. 22 hearing.

Paul Leclair, Brighton's town attorney, argued Jan. 22 that BRAVE should not have been allowed to file its January 2001 suit that led to Polito's decision because the filing did not come within 30 days after the town approved

the site plan in 1999. Yet Alan Knauf, the attorney representing BRAVE, maintained that the nature of Wortman's office had not been disclosed in 1999, making a timely appeal impossible.

Also at issue is the wall, which Wortman has said was constructed in case of a possible bomb attack by anti-abortion activists. Polito's 2001 ruling determined that the wall does not serve the function of a berm according to Brighton's town code. In addition, Knauf maintained that the wall was not on the original site plan and did not get an appropriate environmental review.

Crossed told the *Catholic Courier* that the Town of Brighton should be held accountable because it has not taken decisive steps against Wortman on either the nature of his office or the wall.

"Their inaction states whose side they're on. We really feel (Wortman was) given special treatment," said Crossed, a parishioner at Brighton's Our Lady Queen of Peace Church. "The town of Brighton treated Dr. Wortman differently than anyone else."

Another contentious point raised Jan. 22 was whether Polito acted with bias because he was an anti-abortion activist prior to being elected to state Supreme Court in 1996. Crossed said that a citizens' group had filed a petition with the Commission on Judicial Conduct following Polito's 2001 decision, but that the commission dismissed the allegations. John Postel, chief attorney for the commission's Rochester office, said the commission does not comment on complaints made to the office.

This dispute is the latest in a long-standing struggle between Wortman and anti-abortion groups. In 1996 Crossed was arrested for trespassing at Wortman's former office after she attempted to talk a young woman out of having an abortion. Wortman moved to his present location after 13 years at an office on White Spruce Boulevard. He was forced to move in 1999 after his landlord did not renew his lease due to the fact he performed abortions.