

Pro-life, pro-choice find common ground

The 30th anniversary of the historic *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in the United States provides an occasion to step back and reflect on where the often acrimonious and sometimes violent debate has brought us today. For many of those 30 years, it has been a dialogue — the result of much shouting and screaming at one another.

A hopeful sign in the current situation is the effort of some on both sides of the issue to find some common ground and a civil way of disagreeing about the rest.

On the anniversary itself, *The New York Times* published a column co-authored by Cristina Page, the program director of the New York affiliate of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, and Amanda Peterman, the media director of Right to Life of Michigan ("The Right to Agree," 01/22/03).

Although still committed to the work of their predecessors, Ms. Page and Ms. Peterman believe that traditional tactics adopted by pro-life and pro-choice advocates alike need to be re-examined. "Instead of just focusing on our differences, we need to acknowledge the surprising number of important issues on which we agree," they write.

Among these is a commitment to reduce the number of unintended



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

pregnancies and abortions. The writers point out that over the last seven years the rate of abortions in the United States has dropped by 11 percent, thanks to efforts on both sides of the debate.

But there also have been missed common-ground opportunities; for example, the Florida Adoption Act that requires a woman who wants to place a child for adoption to publish newspaper ads to try to find the father. In those ads, the woman must disclose her name, sexual history and a description of every potential father as well as the dates on which they had sexual relations.

The law is an attack on women (a central concern of pro-choice advocates) and discourages adoption (a major concern of pro-life activists). The op-ed columnists argue that if the two sides had collaborated in opposition to that law, it might have been defeated.

A few days later, an equally thoughtful column by Cathy Young, contributing editor at *Reason* magazine, appeared in *The Boston Globe* ("A matter of extremes," 01/27/03). The au-

thor strongly criticized a pro-choice colleague for an earlier op-ed piece in *The New York Times* in which pro-choice organizations were excoriated for adopting a less militant stance on issues such as public funding for abortions, the need for waiting periods and parental consent.

Young points out that most Americans who consider themselves pro-choice are nonetheless uncomfortable with abortion. They want to see the number of abortions reduced, if not eliminated entirely, and are disturbed when the issue is treated too lightly or casually, as if it were simply a form of elective surgery.

On the other hand, many pro-life activists make no secret of their desire to outlaw abortion altogether. "If they come close to achieving that goal," Ms. Young writes, "public opinion will be quick to turn against them."

Young concludes that "an absolutist stance on abortion rights is not a winning tactic for the pro-choice movement."

In their pre-sexual-abuse-crisis days, when the U.S. Catholic bishops were under the leadership of such pastoral giants as the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, they promoted a consistent-ethic-of-life approach that challenged the absolutists on both sides.

Would that they could do so again.

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

Stop falling for tricks of Saddam

To the editor:

Why is the world so eager to come to the rescue of an individual who has used chemical weapons on his own people and other countries? An individual who has murdered his own family members and members of his government. An individual who cares more about developing and obtaining chemical, biological and nuclear weapons than helping his own people with the necessities of life.

Why is the world trying to save Saddam Hussein? The Pope has even sent representatives from the Catholic Church to try and tell Saddam Hussein to give up his weapons. I applaud the effort, but he has deceived the world for 12 years. What makes anyone think he is going to have a change of heart now? The world leaders, except for the United States and Britain, continually fall for his tricks and deception.

Enough is enough. How much proof does the world need? Look at his history. He invaded Kuwait and sent missiles into Israel during the Gulf War. Israel did not attack Iraq. Wake up. Saddam Hussein is an evil dictator and must be removed from power for the sake of the Iraqi people and the world. Why make a resolution and then when he does not abide by the resolution, the world leaders say, "Let's make another resolution because that one did not work and he did

not abide by it."

The United Nations has failed in its duty with Iraq and I applaud President Bush for stepping up to the plate and saying enough is enough. There are times when war is justified. We liberated Afghanistan and the people now live in freedom from ruthless dictators. It is time to liberate the Iraqi people so they too can live in the freedom that they deserve. Let's support and pray for our troops, President Bush and the Iraqi people.

Daniel Giancurcio
 Crows Nest Lane
 Macedon

Weigh pros, cons of war

To the editor:

War causes death and injury to our youth. War causes death and injury to civilians, women, men and children. War causes damage to the environment. War causes mistrust and suspicion among the nations of this earth. War causes hatred and revenge which leads to more violence.

On the other hand ... Peace causes the youth of this earth to pursue their dreams. Peace causes greater understanding among the peoples of this earth. Peace causes cooperation among the nations of this earth. Peace causes the people of this earth to learn to love one another.

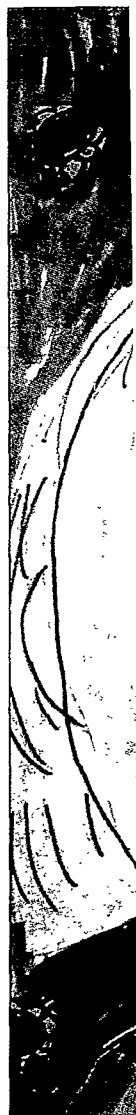
If we are to consider logic — why choose war?

Deacon Vic Yanaitis
 Harpington Drive
 Rochester

Sees need for practical information

To the editor:

In the (February 20) letter from Donna Carson I saw nothing I would disagree with until it got very near the end. There she touched lightly on the guilt of "those who cover-up this crime." Anecdotal evidence indicates to me that



St. John of the Cross artwork at Fairport's P...

the cover-up problem Catholics current sca

We have that the biblical leader and today's paper says the diocese that a certain preaching — the diocese Come on! W difficult for a p the diocese sion for a g

The teach also promp ment. The fi leaves too individual d the norms f fession. Dar that some p lazy to hear confessions their interes is for all pra nonexistent.

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