

COURT WILL HEAR ROE V. WADE CASE

NEW ORLEANS (CNS) — The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will hear arguments March 2 in a case brought by the original "Jane Roe" seeking to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision that removed most state restrictions on abortion.

Norma McCorvey of Dallas, who in 1980 revealed that she was the "Jane Roe" of the case, said in an affidavit that *Roe v. Wade* "was wrongfully decided and has caused great harm to the women and children of our nation."

More than 1,000 women filed affidavits in connection with the new case.

U.S. BISHOPS PREPARE FOR REPORT'S RELEASE

WASHINGTON (CNS) — "We're preparing for the truth," the head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said a week before the release of two major national reports on clergy sexual abuse of minors in the U.S. Catholic Church.

In a phone teleconference with several national media representatives Feb. 20, USCCB president Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., said the reports to be released Feb. 27 marked another phase in the bishops' efforts to "be sure the steps that we've taken will prevent this problem from ever occurring again."

One of the reports is to present data on the nature and scope of the sexual abuse of minors by priests or deacons from 1950 through 2002.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Sun., Feb. 29: Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Psalms 91:1-2, 10-15; Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13.

Mon., Mar. 1: Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Psalms 19:8-10, 15; Matthew 25:31-46.

Tue., Mar. 2: Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalms 34:4-7, 16-19; Matthew 6:7-15.

Wed., Mar. 3: Jonah 3:1-10; Psalms 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19; Luke 11:29-32.

Thu., Mar. 4: Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Psalms 138:1-3, 7C-8; Matthew 7:7-12.

Fri., Mar. 5: Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalms 130:1-8; Matthew 5:20-26.

Sat., Mar. 6: Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalms 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8; Matthew 5:43-48.

Leaders speak out on film

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Rochester-area religious leaders — including Bishop Matthew H. Clark — have issued a cautionary message to moviegoers regarding Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," which opened locally and nationwide Feb. 25.

"It is our mutual hope that this film will be understood as an artistic rendering of events as seen through the lens of one filmmaker's interpretation of the Christian scriptures," the leaders said in a joint statement released Sunday, Feb. 24. "Because it is ultimately one artist's cinematic vision of events, it should not be viewed as 'documentary' film footage or as representing the authoritative teaching of Christianity, Judaism or Islam."

The leaders expressed concern about the movie's potential for generating ill will toward individuals or groups over religious differences. "Instead, we pray that it will evoke in those who see it a desire to study for themselves and within their own religious tradition the (Passion) period's complex political, historical and religious contexts," the statement said. "And we also hope that, if the film does raise questions or concerns, it will prompt intelligent and respectful dialogue and help further build a community of harmony."

The statement was signed by Bishop Clark as well as Violet L. Fisher, resident bishop of the United Methodist Church's New York West Area; Edie Gause, interim executive presbyter, Presbytery of the Genesee Valley; Marie C. Jerge, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Upstate New York Synod; Rabbi Laurence Kotok, leader of Temple B'rith Kodesh in Brighton;



Icon Productions/CNS

Mel Gibson directs Jim Caviezel as Jesus in the movie "The Passion."

Jack M. McKelvey, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester; and Dr. Muhammad Shafiq, imam of the Islamic Center of Rochester.

Doug Mandelaro, spokesman for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, said Bishop Clark felt it was important to join other religious leaders "to offer the hope that no one would react to the film's highly charged portrayal of Jesus' Passion with negative feelings toward the Jewish people, a real concern among many people here and elsewhere." Mandelaro also observed that the diocese has been a national leader in promoting Judeo-Christian relations, and that Bishop Clark considers it important "that we continue to build on the years of interfaith harmony in our community."

Based on the extreme violence contained in trailers and other advance publicity materials for "The Passion," Rabbi Kotok told the *Courier* he fears that harmony may be disrupted.

"All of the fine and blessed work that religious communities have been doing, to gain understanding and reconciliation and mutuality in the modern age, could be thrown back to the Middle Ages," Rabbi Kotok said of the film's effects.

Similar concern was voiced by Canon Carolyn Lumbard, spokesperson at the Rochester Episcopal Diocese.

"I know that Bishop McKelvey's been very concerned about the hype that's been present on the TV and the news about the nature of the violence and the anti-Semitism," she said.

Imam Shafiq said controversy over "The Passion" has also raised considerable discussion among the Muslim community, and for that reason he felt it was important to join Christian and Jewish leaders in their joint statement.

"Whenever there is concern for anyone in the religious community, we must say we stand for peaceful coexistence," he said.

Venue changes for Feb. 26 'Passion' discussion

Due to overwhelming demand, organizers of a Feb. 26 interfaith discussion of Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the Christ" have announced that the event is moving from St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry to the Church of the Transfiguration, 50 W. Bloomfield Road, Pittsford. The starting time also has been pushed back a half-hour to 7:30 p.m.

As an intermediary measure, organizers last week had arranged to transmit the St. Bernard's proceedings via teleconferencing to the Hickey Conference Center at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Gates. That teleconference has been cancelled in light of the additional seating available at Transfiguration.

Event sponsors — St. Bernard's, Temple B'rith Kodesh and the *Catholic Courier* — also have scheduled a second evening of discussion on the film for 7-8:30 p.m. Thursday, March 11, at the Burgundy Basin Inn.

Panelists for the March 11 follow-up discussion will be Rabbi Laurence A. Kotok, senior rabbi at Temple B'rith Kodesh; Rabbi Alison B. Kobey, associate rabbi and director of lifelong Jewish learning at Temple B'rith Kodesh; Father Joseph Brennan, a leader in area Christian-Jewish relations and former adjunct professor of religious studies at the University of Rochester; Deacon Driscoll; film critic Jack Garner; and the Rev. Richard Myers, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church and presi-

dent of the Greater Rochester Community of Churches. After making brief remarks about their reactions to the film, the panelists will respond to questions from audience members and *Courier* Staff Writer Rob Cullivan, who will serve as moderator.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Feb. 26 and March 11 discussions are free and open to the public. Due to intense interest in these programs, preregistration is required. For more information or to pre-register, contact Deacon Tom Driscoll at tdriscoll@st-bernards.edu or 585/271-3657, ext. 292. A suggested donation of \$5 will support Jewish-Christian lifelong learning through the Rochester Kotel and St. Bernard's.