# INTERVIEW

## Where is the Outrage?

**The Rev. Jon Seda is the acting pastor of Ames' St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church. He is active in the pro-life movement and recently expressed his views in an Iowa State Daily letter to the editor. In his letter, Seda stated that there are similarities to the abortion controversy and the recent public outrage over Susan Smith's alleged murder of her two young children. The letter prompted many replies from Iowa State students.**

**e: You've based your reasoning for the comparison between abortion and the Smith children murders on the (Catholic) Church's stance that life begins at the moment of conception. Whereas, the pro-choice advocates assert that the fetus is only tissue mass until a few months before a woman's term is complete. What problems do you see with that assumption?**

JS: If (the fetus) is not alive, why do you have to kill it? The fetus is portrayed as a mass of tissue. We've never been able to kill another human being without dehumanizing them. We had trouble killing men during war so we called the enemy things like the "Japs" to distance ourselves from the taking of another human life.

**e: Society dehumanizes, you've said, as a matter of convenience so that we aren't burdened by our "mistakes." That argument, it would appear, is generally more accepted than other justifications for laws prohibiting abortions. But what about the notion that it's a woman's choice what is done with her body and that government has no right to interfere with a private decision?**

JS: First of all, we regulate what people consider private decisions all the time. We wouldn't say it's acceptable to physically abuse children because that's an individual's choice. Some argue that abortion has the ability to make women as sexually irresponsible as men, and I can understand women not wanting to be left holding the bag. But our freedom is limited to protect those, like the unborn, who can't protect themselves.

**e: Should Susan Smith be condemned for the premeditation of the murders of her two young children, or were her actions no worse than those of the millions of Americans who terminate unwanted pregnancies through abortion?**

JS: The only difference is the fact that we got to see video tape of (Michael and Alex) at a birthday party, and they were cute. I'm not judging Susan Smith, but I think you can judge her actions.

**e: Obviously, you're not condoning the murder of two children. But the public outrage over Smith's actions did surprise you. You've said that the termination of unwanted pregnancies or "killing fetuses" is an equally grotesque destruction of human life. Is there an overriding issue here?**

JS: (Smith's) personal history does not excuse that action, but it's part of a greater mentality that people have become disposable. I was, frankly, amazed at the strong outpouring of outrage over this. It's no different than having a parent in a nursing home and disposing of that life through Dr. Kavorkian. We not only accept it, we advocate it.

**e: Those who recognize abortion as a viable birth-control option argue that the best interests of the unborn child may be what's at stake. The simplest solution, some argue, may be to abort the fetus so that the child could be protected from the burdens of a disadvantaged life.**

JS: I think laws ought to protect human life. Abortions are not a quick fix. It all comes crashing down. I deal with so many students where the abortion promise was freedom and the result was long-term devastation. I've seen it up to 40 years later.

**e: Given the similarities you've found between the Smith children murders and the abortion debate, what conclusions can you draw from the "greater attitude of violence" that may have given Smith the notion that society would accept her actions?**

JS: I'd actually like to have had a chance to meet with Susan Smith. If she would have walked into my office . . . I'm a teddy bear, and anybody who knows me would tell you that. Michael and Alex were needlessly killed, and that is a tragedy, but abortion happens far more frequently. Where's the outrage when an unborn child is killed?

**- Chris Miller**