In his crusade for the nation's toughest anti-abortion law, Rep. Sammy Theriot, a devout Catholic, has seen some highs and some lows.

"I have received the boxes of anti-abortion letters," he says. "I have received envelopes with bloody stories from California. I have received letters telling me they ought to cut off certain parts of my body, or I should be hung by certain parts of my body. I have received calls and letters that said my mother should have aborted me."

Several weeks ago, he also received an invitation to serve as director of a Mass attended by all the Catholic bishops in Louisiana—as well as the archbishop—during the sign of peace, all of them embraced Theriot and offered a job well done, Deacon.

He has lost, he says, a prestigious committee chairmanship in the Legislature because he called Gov. Buddy Roemer a prochoice. He has gained national attention as the leader, with Sen. Allen Bureau of Lafayette, of the passage of the anti-abortion bill that may well be the test of Roe vs. Wade.

Sammy Theriot, a civics and free enterprise teacher at North Vermilion High School, now keeps a growing list of newspapers that have talked to and radio and TV shows he's been on. He's counted up the letters and cards he's received—positive and negative—and the states they're from. He tells the governor a liar and sermonizes on irresponsible sex and the loss of moral values in society.

Whatever happens with the abortion law—which it makes history in the U.S. Supreme Court, gets shot down as violating the Louisiana Constitution, whether it ever actually stops a woman from getting an abortion or sends her doctor to prison—and whatever the Sammy Theriot does in his life, the anti-abortion crusade is what he'll be known for.

He already baptized three babies of three of my students," says Theriot. "Now these are not our students who have flunked out. These are 13-14, 15-16-year-olds. At least they had the babies. Thank God for that."

"You can't get much more extreme in the language of the bill to stop abortion than what we've done."

REP. SAMMY THERIOT'S CHURCH AND STATE ROLES MERGED IN HIS FIGHT FOR LOUISIANA'S ABORTION BAN.

BY JANE NICHOLLS

PHOTOS BY ROBIN MAY
We are the prohibiters of the home. That home was provided for us well-trained and well-fed. It is our business to see that he have gone totally irresponsible when it comes to sexual relationships, whether it's a youngster who doesn't know his place, or an older person, or don't know that they shouldn't even be doing it. Or it's an older person who says to themselves, 'Oh, this is an inconvenience to me,' or 'I can't afford the child,' or whatever reason, so therefore, he's going to be short-changed.

"It's a report to say most or all abortions are committed by trans-age girls who just got pregnant and can't han-dle a child at that age. That's not true. It's not true. There's a lot of abortions being committed by adults who know better and just don't want the inconvenience, and that's why they are doing it.""}

So there's no more abortions among trans-age girls who just got pregnant and can't handle a child at that age. That's not true. It's not true. There's a lot of abortions being committed by adults who know better and just don't want the inconvenience, and that's why they are doing it.

At North Vennel Hall, during a session he was teaching on law studies, a senior girl whom he describes as "batonette pro-choice" wrote a term paper on abortion law. Theriot gave her an A-1, which he said was not "completely diagnosed with her period. And his own daughter, now 4, was unplanned. He refers to her as a "miracle baby." Theriot's wife, Cindy, has two sons and a daughter (from a previous marriage). But until two years ago, Theriot's main activities in the Legislature were financial and environmental issues. Both were topics of prime concern in the Vennel Parish district. His father, the late Ray Theriot, was a well-known politician who served as mayor of Abbeville and state comptroller.

Sam Thieriot, 37, has been a state representative since 1979. Asked to name his most important piece of legislation in the 1983 session, Thieriot cites the creation of the Louisiana Agriculture Finance Authority and the so-called "rigs-to-ready" bill that let oil and gas companies skip abandoned rig offshore to improve fishing grounds and shallow coastal creation.

"All those hands were tied on the abortion issues until the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the Webster case opened the door to state action. In the meantime, Thieriot had been a deacon in the Catholic Church, making him the only ordained minister in the Legislature other than the Rev. Avery Alexander. His own emergence as a leader on the issue, Theriot says, was a slow one.

"I love the way I've been referred to as the voice in the wilderness," he says. "I'm proud of that. They called John the Baptist the voice of the wilderness."

Theriot had preached against abortion and spoken at a rally on the same subject. Someone heard him and mentioned his name to the Louisiana Right to Life organization. When Baran couldn't attend a state-wide abortion legislation sponsored by the national Right to Life organization, Theriot was asked to go instead. When he learned at the conference strengthened his commitment.

That year, the leader of the anti-abortion movement was a local parish Rep. Woody Jenks, who is known for his intransigence in the matter of exceptions to an abortion law. Jenks was there, too. But Baran generally planned to sponsor the so-called "rigs-to-ready" bill, but the Jenks movement was already under way.

Rather than splitting pro-life supporters early in the session, Theriot says the decision was made to support Jenks' "rigs-to-ready" bill. The Legislature was state Rep. Woody Jenks, who is known for his intransigence in the matter of exceptions to an abortion law. Jenks was there, too. But Baran generally planned to sponsor the so-called "rigs-to-ready" bill, but the Jenks movement was already under way.

Planning for another bill may begin another month after that embarrassing session. The bill itself, says Theriot, may be the same as the bill of the National Right to Life group. Narrow exceptions exist in cases of rape, incest and fetal death. Various doctors and people who aid the women getting these abortions charge them with "social engineering.""You can't get much more extreme in the language of the bill to stop abortion than what we've done," says Theriot. "It's the language."