

Giving everyone a voice

Dr. Bernard Nathanson was one of the founders of NARAL (an organization from the late '60s that sought to repeal laws that banned abortion). Having himself performed or presided over tens of thousands of abortions after Roe v. Wade legalized the practice in 1973, he was “converted” in the '80s and became a pro-life activist.

Nathanson narrated and helped produce a film showing “in utero” what happened to a fetus during an abortion. The short documentary showed how a 12-week-old pre-born reflexively shied away from pain and opened its mouth in a “Silent Scream.”

Those words became a rallying cry for many to speak for the voiceless. Among the advocates on behalf of the unborn, were people from St. Sebastian's who rallied in the defense of life under the banner of “Respect Life Ministry.”

When they moved into the parish in 1989, Pat Clark-Varga and her husband, Ted, felt, she said recently, “that the Lord wanted us to become more involved in this issue.”

After volunteering to head up several projects, Pat said, she “seemed to become the chairperson by default.” But it's been a labor of love for her since the mid-1990s.

Pat said formal meetings are rare, but she is assisted by a small group of “official” members as well as many “ad hoc volunteers” who can be called on for some of the group's major projects. Those include the Signature and Media Campaign each January; flower sales on Mothers' Day; participation in Life Chain and 40 Days for Life prayer vigil; and the occasional US Bishops postcard campaigns for specific legislation.

“We can always use more people to volunteer—even to develop other projects in support of the right to life from conception to natural death,” Pat added.

Ted, active in the parish Knights of Columbus Council, works with that group on several life-related projects, plus he often fills in where needed on his wife's efforts.

The ministry's work is important, Pat said, because, “Life is God's gift. We live because He called us into being.” She added that those “killed in the womb (over 55,000,000 since 1973) will never be the blessing to our society that God intended at the moment of their conception...At the other end of life, our elders have much practical wisdom and love to share. Their lives are valuable and we are poorer as a society without them.”

Those who would like to work on an existing project, have an idea for a new one or would like to help out occasionally on some basic envelope stuffing at the nearby Right to Life office can contact Pat at 330-873-1475 or email her at patcv1984@yahoo.com.

Coming: More news from the pews