

Abp. Hughes: Pray, do penance to end abortion

By Beth Donze
Clarion Herald

Heartened by declining public acceptance of abortion, Archbishop Alfred Hughes called for continued prayer and penance to end the practice altogether.

"Public support for legal abortion, in all or most cases, has dropped in the last 15 years from almost 60 percent to 46 percent," said Archbishop Hughes, thanking leaders of the local pro-life movement for their tireless, and in many cases effective, efforts on behalf of the unborn.

Speaking during the homily of the annual pro-life Mass at St. Angela Merici Church on Jan. 16, Archbishop Hughes urged congregants to continue to pray for the conversion of civil leaders who "have misused their authority" by denying unborn children their right to life.

"God created everything in his image and likeness. He has endowed them with a sacred dignity in offering his Son on Calvary to redeem them," Archbishop Hughes said. "This intrinsic, God-given human dignity is the basis for all inalienable human rights. Without the right to life there can be no basis for any other human rights. If government can sanction the killing of innocent life, then the right to freedom of worship, or speech, or education, or healthcare or livelihood, is meaningless."

Satan is the enemy

The primary enemy of the unborn "is not other human beings, but Satan, who has deceived them and led them to sanction terrible violence," Archbishop Hughes said, reminding congregants that as Jesus himself pointed out, "the devil is driven out primarily by prayer and penance."

The battle to keep abortion legal, said Archbishop Hughes, is the "precise place" where people who harbor a selective vision of "human rights" have been planting their flag in recent years.



Marchers dodge the rain as they make their Jan. 16 pilgrimage from St. Angela Merici Church to the Causeway Medical Clinic in Metairie. They were led in prayer down Veterans Memorial Boulevard by Archbishop Alfred Hughes.

"In another time, that place was slavery or racism or anti-Semitism," Archbishop Hughes said. "In each of these cases, the truth is the same: deny dignity and respect to any class of people and you ultimately deny protection to all," he said, noting how easily the cavalier and cynical denial of life to unwanted babies is being "morally expanded" to other vulnerable groups such as unwanted born children, the sick and the elderly.

The Mass, which kicked off "Every Child Brings Us God's Smile: A Day of Prayer and Penance for Life," was followed by a rosary march, led by Archbishop Hughes, to the Causeway Medical Clinic in Metairie, the state's largest abortion clinic and the site of about half its abortions.

Teens speak out

March participant Sam McGrew, a senior at Archbishop Rummel, lamented that many of his peers are afraid to speak out on pro-life issues for fear of being labeled "the weird kid."

"There is a lot of persecution of people who try to live their faith," noted McGrew, a member of "Life Guards," Rummel's pro-life group. "The unborn don't have a voice. In today's culture, it's really sad

how there is no respect for life. I'm just trying to provide an example to others that life is sacred."

John Bernius, another Rummel senior, described abortion as "the ultimate exploitation of women – and not just the unborn – because it promises healing when it actually causes more pain."

St. Angela Merici parishioner Mary Margaret Martina goes to the Ridgeland clinic twice a week to offer sidewalk counseling to women considering terminating their pregnancies.

"It's just amazing what these young people think," Martina said. "They do not think this is a baby. I don't know what they're told in (the clinic), but we try to give them information that tells them exactly what happens at each stage of their pregnancy," said Martina, recalling how one of the young women she counseled recently insisted that her baby did not have a heartbeat.

"I said, 'You don't know that! If you would go and watch an ultrasound you could probably see a heartbeat.' But most of them don't want to hear that," Martina said. "There is still a lot of ignorance and denial."

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