

‘It is wrong to look the other way and remain silent’

written by Katie Zakrzewski |



More than 225 Catholics gathered at the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Little Rock on the morning of Oct. 6 for adoration and to pray the rosary before participating in a eucharistic procession through the street of the capital city to the Shrine of Divine Mercy at St. Edward Church in Little Rock.

While the Mass and March for Life are held each year in January to focus primarily on the importance of protecting the unborn, Respect Life Month provides an opportunity for Catholics to examine all life issues.

Catherine Phillips, diocesan respect life director, said Respect Life Sunday is full of events, such as Mass and times of prayer and confessions and the procession and sharing of food, to reinforce the importance of issues impacting the entire spectrum of life.

“We’re really trying to promote Respect Life Month, kicking off with Respect Life Sunday on Oct. 6,” Phillips said. “... To call our attention to the gift of life, the sanctity and dignity of each person’s life but also to give thanks to God for what he’s done here specifically in Arkansas, helping us to keep abortion out of our state, which wouldn’t have happened without divine intervention. We’re very grateful that we’re not fighting the battle of abortion on the ballot right now. ... It’s really a great time to give public witness to our firm belief that every life is a gift, that every life is precious, that every human person has equal dignity in the eyes of the Lord.”

Phillips said Respect Life Month calls attention to other issues that impact life, such as suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, caring for individuals with disabilities and reaffirming that “every life is precious and valuable.”

The one-mile eucharistic procession was a new feature of this year’s Respect Life Sunday.

Seminarians, bell ringers, the Knights of Columbus and other Catholic lay organizations led the half-mile procession down Seventh Street and Sherman Street, followed by a crowd of Catholics. Curious onlookers enjoying the sunny weather spontaneously joined the procession as well as others watched from their porches and balconies.

Since the overturning of Roe v. Wade in 2022, and with abortion not on the ballot in Arkansas, many Catholics have shifted their sights to other social issues that they consider more pressing. Phillips reaffirmed that work is still needed on these issues, whether they’re on the ballot or not.

“Yes, I’m breathing a sigh of relief today, but a lot of us who worked on the Decline to Sign campaign so abortion wouldn’t be on the ballot feel ... like it was so close to having abortion on our ballot,” Phillips said. “Now, I firmly believe that most of the good people in Arkansas do not want abortion in Arkansas, but it’s very clear that some people do.

“It’s also very clear that people don’t understand everything about this issue. That education is very important, and that increasing an understanding of what an abortion is and what an abortion isn’t is very important. That increasing an understanding about what the sanctity of life really means, when life truly begins, that it really is precious. And again, it’s not just abortion. It’s through all of life.

“... If you think abortion’s gone away, it hasn’t. Yes, thanks be to God, it’s illegal in Arkansas. But the factors and difficult circumstances that cause people to think that abortion is needed have not gone away. Women still face difficult decisions when they’re diagnosed or often misdiagnosed with an apparent fetal anomaly.”

In his homily during the Respect Life Mass at St. Edward Church, Bishop Anthony B. Taylor said women still face challenges contemplating abortion.

“Overturning Roe v. Wade may have reduced the number of abortions, but it did not put an end to abortions,” Bishop Taylor said. “The issue has now fallen to the states, and many women now travel to other states to get abortions. Merely changing laws will not put an end to abortion. The only lasting solution is to change hearts. And we will only change hearts when we begin to embrace a consistent ethic of life.”

Bishop Taylor echoed Pope Francis’ call for a consistent ethic of life.

“Pope Francis insisted that everything was connected, thus bridging the American political divide between those who are passionate about abortion but weak when it comes to social justice, and those who are passionate about social justice but weak when it comes to abortion,” he said. “Abortion is clearly the most depraved expression of what Pope Francis calls our throwaway culture ... but abortion is not a standalone issue. ... Pope Francis said the innocent victims of abortion, children who die from hunger or from bombings, immigrants who drown in search of a better tomorrow, the elderly or sick who are considered a burden, the victims of wars, terrorism, violence and drug trafficking, the environment devastated by man’s predatory

relationship with nature ... at stake in all of this is the gift from God, of which we are all noble stewards, but not masters.

“It is wrong to look the other way and remain silent. We are here today because we are not willing to look away or remain silent when it comes to abortion. Pope Francis is challenging us not to remain silent on any of these other areas either.”

Dale Flamand, Culture of Life chairman for the state Knights of Columbus, stood guard throughout the day’s events. He said when doing pro-life work, it’s important to keep Christ at the center. “Today, Jesus led us through the streets of Little Rock,” Flamand told *Arkansas Catholic*. “We walked as a family, we prayed as a family, and we shared in the gift of true life — his body and blood. Today was a good day. Bishop Taylor’s homily reminded us that the act of abortion is just one of the many respect life issues we must remember and work toward ending. We can’t do it alone — we need God’s help.”



Bishop Taylor presents the monstrance at the end of the eucharistic procession at St. Edward Church in Little Rock Oct. 6 (Katie Zakrzewski)



Deacon Matt Glover and several seminarians make a stop during the eucharistic procession Oct. 6. (Katie Zakrzewski)



Seminarians surround Deacon Matt Glover as he holds the monstrance during the Eucharistic procession in downtown Little Rock Oct. 6 (Katie Zakrzewski)



Little Rock Police Department blocked off traffic downtown as onlookers and pedestrians spontaneously joined the eucharistic procession Oct. 6 (Katie Zakrzewski)



The Knights of Columbus remain vigilant throughout adoration at the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Little Rock Oct. 6 (Katie Zakrzewski)



Knights of Columbus stand guard beside the monstrance during adoration Oct. 6. (Katie Zakrzewski)



Hundreds of Catholics, clergy, seminarians and Catholic organizations joined the eucharistic procession downtown October 6. (Katie Zakrzewski)