

Adoption's 'beautiful possibility' focus of annual life march



Members of the "Brothers and Sisters for Life Ministry," based out of St. Joseph, Fullerton, carry a Pro-Life Rosary through the streets of Annapolis as they join others in Maryland March For Life March 10. (Tom McCarthy Jr. | CR Staff)

By Maria Wiering

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ANNAPOLIS – Weaving within the throng of pro-life marchers March 10 was a large homemade rosary, its pink and blue beads papier-mâché by children from St. Joseph, Fullerton. Several marchers held the rosary, spreading it wide in the crowd. Leading the way with the rosary's crucifix was Sherrie Palmateer, a St. Joseph parishioner and head of its growing pro-life outreach.

It was her third Maryland March for Life, held annually in the state's capital. As in previous years, marchers gathered for Mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church or an ecumenical prayer service at St. Mary's School before walking a half-mile to a rally on Lawyers Mall in front of the Maryland State House.

Pro-life activism began early for the 47-year-old Palmateer, who offers sidewalk counseling outside abortion clinics. She gave her senior speech on abortion at her high school in upstate New York, convincing a pregnant classmate not to abort her baby, she said. Later, after struggling to conceive and a miscarriage, she and her husband, Duane, became foster parents and adopted four children, now teenagers. Adopting her children strengthened her pro-life convictions, she said.

"The reason I have them is because their birth mothers chose life," she said.



Pro-Life supporters make their way from St. Mary, Annapolis toward the Lawyers Mall in front of the Maryland State House during the Maryland March for Life in Annapolis March 10. (Tom McCarthy Jr. | CR Staff)

Adoption was at the heart of the message shared by the rally's keynote speaker, Ryan Bomberger. Bomberger was conceived in rape and adopted into a Christian, multi-racial family that grew to 13 children. Now he is married with four children,

two of whom he adopted.

Of his parents, he said, “They adopted us, they loved us, they nurtured us, they fed us, they clothed us, they educated us, and they unleashed beautiful possibility. That’s what happens: Adoption unleashes purpose.”

Not all pro-lifers have to adopt, but “there’s a lot more we can do to embrace a culture of adoption,” he said. “Adoption is a beautiful act of love; it’s an act of justice.”

Bomberger founded the Radiance Foundation in 2009 with his wife, Bethany. The organization, based in northern Virginia, addresses social issues including adoption, parenting, family stability, race and discrimination while focusing on the intrinsic value of human life.

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The organization attracted national attention in 2010 with the launch of the TooManyAborted.com campaign to bring awareness to the disproportionate number of abortions among black women. The first campaign began in Georgia, with 80 billboards bearing the words “Black children are an endangered species.”

Bomberger, who is half-black and half-white, said the Radiance Foundation is fighting a lawsuit from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for calling the Baltimore-based organization “The National Association for the Abortion of Colored People” because of its abortion-supporting policies.

The march and rally attracted a number of local and state elected officials.

Earlier in the day, a bill to ban abortion after the gestational age where a fetus can feel pain was heard by a House of Delegates committee. The Maryland Catholic Conference, which advocates for policy on behalf of the state’s bishops, supports the bill.

Before the rally, Baltimore Auxiliary Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski said in a homily that the Catholics at the march demonstrated care for their state and country by standing up for the “God-given right to life.”

“I urge you not to lose heart in the face of adversity but to restore hope to our fellow citizens that life is a fundamental gift from God to be cherished and esteemed with all our hearts,” he said.

Bishop Rozanski presided at the Mass, with Washington Auxiliary Bishop Martin D. Holley and priests from around the state concelebrating.

Maryland is one of four states that do not report abortion statistics to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. According to the Guttmacher Institute, a research organization with ties to Planned Parenthood, 34,260 women obtained abortions in Maryland in 2011, a rate of 28.6 abortions per 1,000 women of

reproductive age. Maryland has some of most abortion-permissive laws in the country, according to the pro-choice organization NARAL.

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