

Fathers, sons learn about Christian manhood

What should knights of old and modern Catholic men have in common?

A lot, if you ask the Respect Life Committee of St. John.

Approximately 40 men gathered in the Portico of the Westminster parish Sept. 28 to contemplate authentic Christian manhood in the modern world.

“There is a lack of role models in today’s society for guys,” said Terence McCarthy, a member of the parish’s Respect Life Committee who coordinated the event.

He believes the knights of centuries ago are good role models because they knew their role and understood “God first, family second and country.”

Those in attendance listened to three 20-minute talks. Father D. Patrick Peach, associate pastor of St. John, spoke about the need for authentic Catholic men. Brian Henderson, who has given talks at the Catholic Family Expo, spoke about how to become a modern-day knight, an authentic Catholic man. Mr. McCarthy spoke about challenges facing authentic Catholic men.

They later enjoyed pizza, music, mingling and a movie.

Mr. McCarthy believes the event ties in very well with Respect Life because the “sex-saturated” society of today objectifies people. He said although men may discuss the topic with their sons, teenagers today are bombarded with messages contrary to the faith.

“Through these events, the goal is to fundamentally remember that people are not objects, but children of God,” he said. “As authentic Catholics, we have to respect people as individuals and love them as Christ tried to love them.”

Mr. McCarthy said it’s good for the young men to realize they have support and community behind them and to know “you can be cool and Catholic.”

Brian Backe, a parishioner of St. John in Westminster, attended the event with his 17-year-old son, Ben, who is a senior at Winters Mill High School in Westminster.

"It was a great opportunity for fathers and sons to spend some time together and think about the challenges that we face as men and trying to be Christian men in society," said Mr. Backe, who appreciated having time to talk about Christian values in a somewhat formal setting.

His son Ben also enjoyed the afternoon.

"It was about a return to chivalry, this idea that we're created to be these honorable men of God. Sometimes society has lost sight of that," said Ben, who said his dad has raised him on the ideals of living honorably and well.

Mr. Backe, a father of three, would advise other fathers to go to a similar event if it continues in the future.

"It was very well put together," he said. "I'd love to see it grow."

He may get his wish, as Mr. McCarthy said he hopes to make it an annual event.

"I don't think you can ever hear (the message of chivalry) enough. There are a lot of good influences in the world - I'd say they even outweigh the bad. That said, there are also bad influences in the world," Ben said. "You can never have enough positive influences in the world."