

Pro-lifer says abortion is leading cause of death in black community

ALEXANDRIA, Va. - As she held an umbrella to protect her from the blazing sun, Beverly Anderson clutched her rosary beads and prayed on the sidewalk near an abortion clinic on Duke Street in Alexandria June 21.

She was joined by about 15 others who prayed for an end to abortion. It's something she does every week. However, for her as a black woman June has been particularly poignant because it is abortion awareness month in the black community.

For the last seven years the New York-based National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life, headed by Franciscan Father James Goode, has declared June to be "Abortion and All Acts of Violence Awareness Month in the African-American Community."

"Abortion is the leading cause of death in the black community," said Anderson. "People are not aware of that."

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's abortion surveillance report, 35 percent of abortions in the United States are performed on African-American women, who make up 12 percent of the U.S. population. Since the legalization of abortion in 1973, more than 14 million black children have been aborted.

"Being a black woman I have to be a witness," Anderson told the Arlington Catholic Herald, newspaper of the Diocese of Arlington.

While she prays to stop any woman from having an abortion, she hopes that her presence may cause a black woman contemplating abortion to think twice.

“That’s the generation we need,” said Anderson, a parishioner of St. Joseph Church in Alexandria, where Arlington Bishop Paul S. Loverde celebrated Mass June 21 before joining the group to pray.

“If we can’t respect life in the beginning, there is no life to defend at any other stage,” the bishop said during his homily. Every month the bishop celebrates a respect-for-life Mass at a different parish in the diocese and prays with pro-lifers outside an abortion clinic.

“All of us, whatever our nationality or ethnicity, we must remain committed to upholding life from conception to natural death,” the bishop said to a small congregation that gathered for the Mass.

He called upon them to be “heralds of life and defenders of life,” to build a “new culture of life because that is who we are, a people of life and for life.”

While June is abortion awareness month in the black community, it is necessary to foster awareness year-round, said Day Gardner, director and founder of the National Black Pro-Life Union. “This should be personal for all of us,” she said.

The founder of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Margaret Sanger, supported sterilization and said that it should be “imposed on many people, especially African-Americans,” said Gardner.

Sanger was a staunch advocate of birth control and eugenics.

Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the United States, “is continuing to limit the number of African-Americans even to this day,” said Gardner.

“It’s a true crisis ... that there are more African-American babies being aborted than born,” said Sister Clare Hunter, a Franciscan Sister of the Eucharist and director of

the Arlington diocesan Respect Life Office. She was at the Mass and the abortion clinic.

“There’s a real need to minister to these families. This should concern everybody,” she said.