

Respect Life group holds afternoon dedicated to chastity

When mothers and daughters gathered together for a fashion show at St. John's Portico, they were just as concerned with inner beauty as outer beauty.

The Feb. 17 show, part of a chastity tea sponsored by the Westminster parish's Respect Life Committee, encouraged nearly 200 women and girls to live chastely and dress modestly.

"I think it's so important because I am a mother of two girls and a son, and the message needs to get out there early and often that the culture is going one way, and we as Catholics need to stand up and say this is not appropriate," said Patti Spaar, a member of the Respect Life Committee and the chair for the event.

She first came across the idea for a chastity tea and fashion show last year when she was looking for pro-life activities in different parishes.

Chastity and modesty play a part in the pro-life message.

"We have to have dignity for our own bodies," she said, adding that girls may not get themselves into certain situations if they receive the message of chastity and modesty early.

As the mothers, daughters, aunts, grandmas and friends enjoyed punch and munched on goodies, they listened to the keynote speech given by Mary Worthington, a high school coordinator from Generation Life. The organization is "a movement of young people committed to building a culture of life by spreading the messages of life and love to other young people," according to its Web site.

Ms. Worthington touched on topics such as dressing reverently for Mass, and she had the girls fill out questionnaires. She also took questions, such as how to spread this message to friends who may not be dressing modestly.

“It was helpful for us to hear the speaker that was there,” said Kathy Forst, a parishioner of St. John who took her two youngest daughters - Lyuda and Anna, both 13 - to the event. She said it had a greater impact on the girls to see someone close to their own age spreading the message.

Sometimes it can be a touchy issue for some people, explained Mrs. Forst, but coming together for fashion, food and companionship is a nice way to bring up the subject.

“It was nice to see the other moms and their daughters in terms of feeling supported in our quest to raise modest young ladies,” said Mrs. Forst.

The girls were able to see principles of modest clothing in action during the fashion show. Although some may find it hard to believe that there is modest clothing for young women out there, the eight models proved just that.

“We picked out things that were appropriate for the age,” said Mrs. Spaar.

Boscov’s donated the clothes, and a Boscov’s employee helped the girls pick modest outfits - meaning nothing tight, no belly and no back.

Mrs. Forst, a mother of eight, said it is possible to find clothes that are both cute and modest. Sometimes a few adjustments - like adding a tank top underneath a shirt - make the difference, she explained.

“It’s fun to dress nice and feel good about how you look,” she said. “You’d rather have people looking at your daughter or yourself as a person first.”

Mrs. Spaar hopes the event encourages conversation between the mothers and daughters, who included home-schooled students and public and Catholic school students.

“It planted a seed for conversation that they may want to have with their daughters but may not have gotten there yet,” she said.

For more information about Generation Life, visit <http://www.generationlife.org/>.