

THERE ARE OPTIONS TO ABORTION, PARTICIPANTS STRESS

‘Every life matters’ is message of attendees at Chicago march

BY JOYCE DURIGA
Catholic News Service

CHICAGO (CNS) - Marian Catholic student Chantelle Belcher attended the March for Life Chicago on Jan. 13 to support women who may be considering aborting their child.

“People who do have abortions go through hard times,” the teen said. “Sometimes they have abortions because they can’t support the child, but I want to motivate people to not have abortions. There are other options like adoption or giving the child to a family member. You don’t always have to abort.”

Belcher was one of several thousand people from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa and Missouri who turned out for the annual march in downtown Chicago that began following a rally in Federal Plaza and proceeded around downtown. It is held annually before the national March for Life in Washington D.C., which this year was on Jan. 18.

Marian student Serena Johnson also attended the march with the Marian Catholic group.

“I wanted to come to support everyone and to support the fact that life



Members of the “Crusaders for Life” pro-life youth group from St. John Cantius parish in Chicago react during a rally at the start of the annual March for Life Chicago on Jan. 13. Thousands of people from the Chicago Archdiocese and from across the country, including Northwest Indiana, braved frigid temperatures during the event. (CNS photo/Karen Callaway, Chicago Catholic)

isn’t one of those things you can debate about. It’s one of those things where there’s one answer and it’s pro-life,” Johnson said.

Alex Jones, who runs the youth group at St. Anne parish in Kenosha, Wisconsin, said his parish brought two buses of parishioners, young and old, to the march.

Jones and his wife are expecting their first child and he said that has given

him a new perspective on this issue, especially as it relates to sharing that message with youth.

“It is especially important to show the young people that every life matters,” he said. “I wanted to show them if you choose to have children in the future, there’s never a choice to choose abortion.”

Before the marchers processed through the streets

carrying signs and chanting pro-life messages, they heard from several speakers at a rally, including Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich; Chicago Bears vice president Pat McCaskey; Jeanne Mancini, president of the national March for Life in Washington; and a mother who changed her mind about aborting her daughter through the help of Aid for Women, a local pro-life

women’s organization.

In his remarks, Cardinal Cupich stressed the uniqueness of every human life.

“When a child’s life is taken, we are all touched by this loss, we are robbed of the distinctive interests, skills and talents these little ones might have been able to contribute in myriad ways to our families, communities and the world,” Cardinal Cupich said. “But,

we are also robbed of a sense of wonder and awe about our life in this world, and robbed of the gift of hope about our future, as their futures are taken from them and taken from us.”

Cardinal Cupich also had a message for the many young people at the rally.

“You, young people, give us hope and encourage us as we know that year after year as we march into the future, there will be others who will continue this effort to protect human life and dignity, who will take up the work of providing life-giving alternatives to pregnant women, enabling them to build stable lives amidst sometimes difficult circumstances, who will not be daunted by the challenges, who will look for ways to walk with the poor, the sick, the defenseless, the vulnerable, the sinful and make sure that no one is excluded from the table of the human family,” he said.

“As you gather with friends and appreciate the gift of each person, as you study in your science classes about the unique DNA characteristics of each human being, as you think about your own life and reflect on the plan God has for you, be willing to witness to all that you believe and know from your experience,” he said.

ENGAGING THE SPIRIT

Alpha program finds a home in St. Michael parish synod plan

BY VANESSA NEGRETE
Northwest Indiana Catholic

If there’s food and Jesus, Carol Slager is there.

Slager, a member of St. Michael the Archangel in Schererville, recently took on the role as Alpha administrator at the parish. Alpha is a global program in which small groups of people share a meal and talk about their Christian faith. Implementing Alpha, a series of 11 interactive sessions, is part of the synod plan at St. Michael.

Slager said Father Martin Dobrzynski, pastor,



approached her and asked if she would take the lead on organizing an Alpha program there. She was not familiar with Alpha, but through her involvement in other ministries, including Cursillo, Slager said she knew to trust in what God calls her to do and said “yes” without hesitation.

“When he asked me, I knew it was going to be okay, because if God asked me to do it, then I can do it,” Slager said. “I think there are just some things God calls us to and we don’t have to think about it.”

To prepare, she wanted to learn more about the program.

“How can I lead something if I haven’t been a part of it?” she said.

She reached out for more information to the Alpha administrator at St. John the Evangelist in St. John and was invited to join their program, meeting weekly with a small

group.

“They opened their arms and said, ‘Come on in,’” Slager said.

With a better grasp on Alpha after she experienced it, Slager created a test program—Beta Alpha—with some parishioners at St. Michael. She hosted the meetings at her home, and the feedback was great.

So Slager planned an Alpha kickoff party for the whole parish in January, promising free food, fun, faith, fellowship and no homework. A week before the event, 55 people had already signed up to attend. Fourteen parish-

ioners who were part of Beta Alpha are now members of the Alpha leadership team at St. Michael.

“This is rocking!” she said. “It’s totally God working.”

The Alpha program, which is used in Christian faith communities across the world, is designed for people to gather over food and talk about faith matters.

“No two Alphas look the same, but they generally have three key things in common: food, a talk and good conversation,” the website alphausa.org explains.

The whole key to mak-

ing Alpha work is to welcome people, feed them and respect them, Slager said, adding that is what she experienced at the St. John the Evangelist Alpha program.

“Such gratitude I have to the people of St. John the Evangelist for being so hospitable and welcoming,” she said. “I reached out and they took my hand.”

To tell us how your parish is following the Holy Spirit’s lead in this synod process, contact Vanessa Negrete at vnegrete@dcdgary.org or 769-9292, ext. 246.