

## **Clergy Laity Collaboration**

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“Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers, so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort.” *Dei verbum*.

Bishop McManus opened his comments after the film *Fatal Flaws* by saying that the laity has been a disappointment since the Vatican II call to be more active in the Church. He could safely make those comments before a room filled mostly of people very active in the pro-life movement, and several deacons, people like myself that share his frustration. One thing the room had few of were priests, whom Bishop McManus is also calling to task at the end of June regarding physician-assisted suicide (PAS).

Far too many complicated reasons exist for the general lethargy among the laity and pastors to even list. Instead, I offer a very successful collaboration that occurred at Christ the King parish between the clergy and the laity, including the bishop himself, for the Fatal Flaws event, and in combatting the legalization of PAS in general.

Witness for Life (WFL) started in 2012 after the narrow defeat of legalized PAS by Roger and Joyce Dubuque, parishioners at Christ the King, knowing we would face the issue again; Bishop McManus gave them the seed money to start. At the same time, Msgr. Thomas Sullivan began the well-attended Novena to St. Joseph to pray for the seriously and terminally ill, and to stop PAS. Initially, Msgr. Sullivan went to the meetings, but no longer needs to; during our current meeting times, he is offering Mass at the Jewish Healthcare Center. Both our deacons, Michael Chase and Joseph Baniukiewicz, are on the board. He reads and responds to board and mailing list emails, giving advice and help.

Meanwhile, the laity, with help from Fr. Donato Infante and Fr. James Boland, carry out the work of engaging the world. Since 2012, we have organized 4 forums, developed the St. Joseph Initiative to contact legislators, designed banners for outdoor display, developed a Holy Hour, created a website, mailing list, and social media with various print, audio, and video resources, formed collaborations with other organizations, and held one of the first showings of *Fatal Flaws*. As pastor, Msgr. Sullivan has implemented everything WFL has initiated.

The efficacy of this collaboration was best demonstrated for the *Fatal Flaws* event. WFL organized it with Emmanuel Radio. Bishop McManus accepted our invitation to speak. Msgr. Sullivan let WFL display posters throughout the parish, placed an announcement prominently in the weekly bulletin for 3 weeks, noting that he was going; he announced it after all the weekend Masses, inviting parishioners to join him. As a result, 20% of the 200 who pre-registered for the event were from Christ the King, far surpassing any other parish. More remarkable is that many of them would not otherwise have gone. They were impressed with both the film and the panel. They will remember the message and tell it to others in the next legalization attempt.

Witness for Life has its successes because of the Holy Spirit. This manifests itself in this multi-faceted collaboration between our spiritual leaders and those of us for whom they care, “so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort.” All in accord with His will for the salvation of souls.