

Love for Life in Aiken

Aiken's Makin celebrated 30 years of festivities this past weekend in the city renown for horseracing and winter vacations. Every year vendors and onlookers gather in the carnivalesque atmosphere to show their wares and to make purchases for loved ones. The festival is just plain fun...festive foods, festive music and skilled demonstrations abound as sightseers stroll along the parkways. St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church engaged the crowd during the festival with its ongoing faith outreach which it presents through the theme of historic church tours and church music. The church's Evangel Team and Pro-Life Core Team with help from our Family Life Office, also collaborated to present a pro-life, pro-family, and pro-marriage witness to the community during the events.

Our Diocese of Charleston's Family Life Office, which assists parishes to be loving communities for families, applauds events like Aiken's Makin because people at such events share their gifts with one another. The Respect Life Ministry, which is part of the larger Family Life Office apostolate is one vehicle used to reach out to the most vulnerable members of society—the unborn, the mentally and physically challenged, the dying, the elderly and those on death row. The Respect Life Ministry celebrates all human life and proclaims that every human person is made in the image and likeness of God and has great dignity in the eyes of the Creator. The ministry works to carry that message to churches, crises pregnancy centers, and other public forums.

The Family Life Office also supports engaged and married couples through Marriage for Life, Pre-Cana, Engaged Encounter, and Marriage Encounter. For married couples who want to explore the truth and meaning of their sexuality and fertility, the diocese offers training in three methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP): Billings, Couple to Couple League, and the Creighton Methods. These methods are not “the rhythm or calendar method” but are medically based with sound research, attesting to their effectiveness. NFP is not only used to space children but to help couples conceive. Certain methods have been successful in diagnosing gynecological health problems and assisting couples with infertility issues.

The Family Life Office promotes the deep need for forgiveness in a family by recognizing that forgiveness begins with oneself. To foster such personal growth, the diocese sponsors Rachel's Vineyard Retreats for women who seek healing and forgiveness after an abortion. The retreats are open to mothers, fathers, grandparents or anyone affected by an abortion.

We believe that we cannot have peace in the world until we have peace within our families. There are so many confusing messages in the world; the Church can be a source of hope and quiet strength for families. As with all ministries, conversion for our families begins with prayer, asking God how all of us can help.

For more information, please contact the Family Life Coordinator Kathy Schmugge at (803)547-5063 or email her at famlifecor@earthlink.net. You can visit the Family Life webpage at <http://www.catholic-doc.org/>. Go to diocesan departments and link to Family Life. Or at the parish level use <http://www.catholic-doc.org/StMaryAiken/> See Family Life.