

# Girl, 14, begins cross campaign

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Though she's only 14 years old, Chelsea O'Connor promotes her platform with a fervor reminiscent of recent presidential hopefuls.

In a flyer detailing the "Lift High the Cross" campaign that she has begun, Chelsea notes that towns are getting sued for displaying Nativity scenes while the Pledge of Allegiance is under attack for containing the words "under God." And yet, she points out, these religious rituals are questioned while legalized abortion continues.

"Will we stand by as others try to take all meaning out of Christmas and Easter?" Chelsea asks in her flyer. "Will we stand by as others tell us that an unborn baby is disposable? No! We must take a stand to publicly show our faith. We must take a stand to show people that Jesus is our supreme commander and remind other Christians of the obligation they have to live their

## Youth

faith! We must stand with Jesus!"

To promote this message, the Brockport teen is advocating for all Christian homes in the United States to have crosses erected on their front lawns. They would go up on Good Friday, April 9, and remain on display until Easter Sunday. Each cross would ideally stand about 6 feet high and be illuminated by a spotlight.

"I've been hearing lately how Christian values are going down the drain. Really, it's just up to us," Chelsea told the *Courier*. "Faith is important to a lot of people in this country, and it should be to everybody. Maybe this will help people realize they should take a stand to teach the faith to their kids, go to church on Sunday and vote with their faith — just make it a bigger part of their lives."

Chelsea said she thought up the campaign after hearing of a local Knights of Columbus' effort this past Christmas, in which Knights asked homeowners to display Nativity scenes in their yards. Chelsea then brought her idea to Sherri Bryant, youth minister at Brockport's Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, where Chelsea's family belongs. Youth-group members have subsequently joined the cause, and are meeting on a couple



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Fourteen-year-old Chelsea O'Connor, a parishioner of Brockport's Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, has been leading a campaign to encourage Christians nationwide to adorn their yards with a cross on Good Friday. She has helped assemble about 80 crosses, which she keeps in her family's barn.

of Saturdays during Lent at Chelsea's home to make crosses for anyone who requests them. Chelsea said the group is only charging \$3 per cross — enough to cover the cost of lumber and other supplies.

She promoted her campaign by speaking at some weekend Masses at Nativity earlier this winter. Chelsea is also spreading the word far outside parish boundaries, distributing letters and flyers to Rochester diocesan youth groups as well as most Catholic dioceses in the United States. She reports positive feedback from a number of teens and youth ministers — and even a letter from Bishop Michael Warfel, head of the Diocese of Juneau, Alaska, stating that he would undertake a similar cam-

paign in his diocese.

Chelsea has long been interested in political topics, especially those related to her faith. "I've been listening to the news since I was very young," she said, adding that in January she traveled with family to the March for Life in Washington, D.C. Although she wants to pursue a career as a veterinarian, Chelsea also foresees her activist nature lasting well into adulthood.

"I always want to be very into the issues that are going on in the church," she said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Those interested in ordering crosses from Chelsea, or learning more about the Lift High the Cross campaign, can e-mail her at [lhtc@rochester.rr.com](mailto:lhtc@rochester.rr.com).

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