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A mother reaches out to unborn



Photo by Christine Bordelon | CLARION HERALD

On May 9, Ann Gleason Stevens of St. Catherine of Siena Parish will receive the Regina Matrum Award, symbolic of outstanding Catholic motherhood in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Stevens is the mother of seven and has advocated for the unborn for many years.

By Christine Bordelon
Clarion Herald

When God wants you to do something, he'll let you know.

For Ann Stevens, this year's Regina Matrum honoree, God has led her spiritual life journey, beginning with a strong childhood Catholic faith in Braithwaite, marrying a man with a strong faith, having children, working in the pro-life movement and ministering to children and mothers in various Catholic ministries at her parish.

Stevens said God was always patient, putting people in her path until she awakened to do his will as a crusader for life.

Phone calls got through

She said she was a busy mother of four of her seven children in 1984 when phone calls from women seeking information on abortion began ringing at her home. (Her phone number happened to be one digit different than the number of a local abortion clinic.)

"Why are these women calling me?" she kept asking.

A short time later, a priest at the Divine Word Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Miss., gave her a Ligourian magazine with an article about sibling rivalry, thinking it would be helpful for her girls. She glanced at that, but found another article by Dr. Bernard Nathanson, an ex-abortionist with a change of heart who founded the National Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Laws (NARAL) in the United States in 1968.

"That's when God ripped my heart open," Stevens said. "He did a number on me. I was so remorseful about my attitude toward abortion. I had four beautiful daughters. It changed my mind, and I knew I had to do something."

She began volunteering with New Orleans Right to Life, sat on its board and was involved in the ACCESS Pregnancy Center.

"It was a dramatic change," Stevens said of her pro-life involvement. "Just reading

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Woman's cure could aid Seelos cause

By Peter Finney Jr.
Clarion Herald

The Archdiocese of Baltimore will open a formal investigation May 19 into the cure of a Maryland woman from esophageal cancer, which the Redemptorist Fathers hope will lead to the canonization of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, the Redemptorist missionary priest who died in New Orleans of yellow fever in 1867 and who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2000.

Redemptorist Father Byron Miller, director of the

Blessed Seelos Center in the Irish Channel, said Baltimore Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien would celebrate the opening of an official diocesan inquiry with a special Mass May 19 at 12:10 p.m. at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore.

Following the Mass, Father Gilbert J. Seitz of the Baltimore Archdiocese's Metropolitan Tribunal will depose key witnesses with knowledge of the medical case of Mary Ellen Heibel of St. Mary's (Redemptorist) Church in Annapolis, Md.

Heibel, now 71, attributes her healing from metastasized esophageal cancer to the intercession of Blessed Seelos.

If the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints eventually accepts the medical testimony as proof that Heibel's cure was miraculous, the way would be open for Blessed Seelos to be canonized. There is no timetable for when that might occur, Father Miller said.

"We hope this is a good case," said Father Miller, who directs the Seelos Center and oversees Blessed Seelos' relics,

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Photo by Frank J. Methe | CLARION HERALD

A formal inquiry by the Archdiocese of Baltimore into the cure of a Maryland woman from esophageal cancer could lead to the canonization of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos.