

Society of St. Sebastian



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Person of the Year Award – Mark Lee Dickson & Honorable Mentions

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December 18th of each year marks the Feast Day of Saint Sebastian in the Eastern Catholic Rites and the Eastern Orthodox Traditions. Many have remarked on the bravery of Saint Sebastian concerning his double martyrdom. Still, most people recognize him as the early Christian martyr who was shot with arrows for refusing to rebuke his Christian faith before the Roman Emperor Diocletian. Yet, there is another important part of Sebastian's bravery, and that is he survived this initial attempt on his life. After his miraculous recovery, he publicly sought out the Roman Emperor and urged him to change his public policy of persecuting Christians. For his efforts, he was martyred again. In many ways, he is the first Christian lobbyist in his second act of bravery. Many pro-life activists also must face authority figures who refuse to acknowledge the dignity of the human person. In their own ways, they too suffer a sort of martyrdom.

It is in the spirit of the second act of St. Sebastian's that the Society of St. Sebastian seeks out its Person of the Year. Just as Sebastian went before governmental authority to lobby on behalf of the legally voiceless, our Person of the Year must also advocate bravely before public officials as well. Just as Sebastian sought a Culture of Life advocating for the lives of his fellow Christians, our Person of the Year must advocate for a Culture of Life. The Society of St. Sebastian Person of the Year must be not only exceptional in their duties of legislative activism but must also be exceptional in their voice for the voiceless.

In this regard, it is with great pleasure that the Person of Year Committee for the Society of St. Sebastian awards **Mark Lee Dickson** as Person of the Year. Pastor Dickson is the Director of Right to Life East Texas and Founder of the Sanctuary Cities for the Unborn Initiative. This year, Mark has been prolific in his lobbying efforts to pass these local pro-life ordinances. This year alone, Mark has helped pass 25 ordinances. A phenomenal feat for one pro-life lobbyist to accomplish within 365 days. Mr. Dickson has traveled to many states, worked with many localities, pro-life activists, and organizations to help get these initiatives passed. "Without a doubt, Mark has been a tremendous asset to the pro-life community. Not only has it been a record-setting year for pro-life legislation within the state legislature, but Pastor Mark has also shown us that much can be accomplished at the most local level as well," stated Joe Kral, president of the Society of St. Sebastian.

These ordinances have become vitally important for communities to show how much they care for a Culture of Life. By passing these ordinances, not only does the local community reject the idea of abortion, but it also seeks the common good of both the born and unborn. Justice is meant for all human beings regardless of their developmental stage, and these ordinances help establish that very virtue. In many ways, these ordinances helped set up the groundbreaking Texas Fetal Heartbeat Law as well, which has become a model for other states to emulate. The private enforcement mechanism found in the Texas law is originally found in the Sanctuary City for the Unborn ordinances.

It is also with great pleasure to name the following honorable mentions: Jerry Cox of Family Council, Steven Ertelt of LifeNews.Com, Rose Mimms of Arkansas Right to Life, and Jonathan Saenz, JD, of Texas Values. They have each brought a voice to the voiceless in their own way. Both Jerry Cox and Rose Mimms were pivotal in Arkansas passing the most pro-life legislation than any other state. Steven Ertelt has been on the front lines reporting on breaking news events, not just on pro-life public policy issues but on all pro-life issues. And Jonathan Saenz was pivotal in his work for the Texas Fetal Heartbeat Law, which is the only Heartbeat Law in the US that is in effect. It is still saving unborn lives every day.

In many ways, those who help lobby and advocate for legislation are unsung heroes. Not only do we thank Mark Lee Dickson, Jerry Cox, Steven Ertelt, Rose Mimms, and Jonathan Saenz for their hard work, but the Society of St. Sebastian would like to thank all those who lobby and write on pro-life public policy issues.

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