



Society of St. Sebastian

For Immediate Release

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Person of the Year Award – Maria Gallagher /Honorable Mention – Dr. Michael New, Ph.D.

December 18 of each year marks the Feast Day of Saint Sebastian in the Eastern Catholic Rites and in the Eastern Orthodox Traditions. Many remark on the bravery of Saint Sebastian with respect to his double martyrdom, but most people recognize him as the early Christian martyr who was shot full of arrows for refusing to rebuke his Christian belief before the Roman Emperor Diocletian. Yet, there is another important part of Sebastian's bravery and that is he survived this initial attempt at 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.

But it is in this second act of bravery that the Society of St. Sebastian seeks out its Person of the Year. Just as Sebastian literally 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 they must also be exceptional in their voice for the voiceless.

It is with great pleasure that the Person of Year Committee for the Society of St. Sebastian announces the award goes to Maria Gallagher, Legislative/Political Action Committee Director of the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation. Ms. Gallagher has been with the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation since 2002 first serving as the Education Director then moving into the Legislative/Political Action Committee Director in 2012. Maria is a prolific pro-life author writing on a variety of pro-life topics. She continues to publish in both *LifeNews.com* and *National Right to Life News*. She also writes for our weekly publication, *Sebastian's Point*. She was also named a 2019 and 2020 Fellow for the Society of St. Sebastian. "Without a doubt, Ms. Gallagher has been a tremendous asset. She constantly shows her love of human life and her ability to reach out to both politician and everyday citizen on these important issues. Maria's hard

work models the very essence of what St. Sebastian inspires us to do today”, stated Joe Kral, president of the Society of St. Sebastian.

Maria has been a lynchpin of this ethic for a number of years, according Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation Executive Director Michael Ciccocioppo. “Prior to joining our staff, Maria honed her pro-life advocacy skills at our sister organization, Ohio Right to Life,” said Ciccocioppo. He continued, “During her 18 years at the Federation she has gained a well-deserved reputation across our state as the ‘go-to’ person on any topic related to the defense of the right to life. She is the tip of the spear when it comes to fighting for good pro-life legislation and stopping any legislation which erodes the right to life. Maria bravely speaks truth to power when human lives are to be sacrificed on the altar political expediency! The Federation commends the Society of St. Sebastian for recognizing Maria’s outstanding sustained contributions to the pro-life movement.”

Steven Ertelt, editor & founder of *LifeNews.com*, had this to say about Ms. Gallagher, "Maria is an amazing writer with a gift for pro-life storytelling. She has an uncanny ability to relate the pro-life message in feature stories and vignettes that touch the heart and soul. Her writing encourages people to consider the pro-life perspective or take action on their existing pro-life beliefs. Millions of people have read Maria's work in *LifeNews.com* -- perhaps even without knowing it. We'll never know how many people Maria has touched through her compelling writing but she is a pro-life treasure."

Dave Andrusko, editor of *National Right to Life News Today*, had high praise for Ms. Gallagher, “Maria Gallagher is as gracious as she is talented and as willing to help at the drop of a hat as any writer I’ve ever had the pleasure to work with. Her life-affirming, upbeat stories for *National Right to Life News Today* (which I often ask her to write at the eleventh hour) invariably receive the most “likes” and “retweets.” She is a gold mine of pro-life information and a instrumental contributor to the Pro-Life Movement.”

The Committee would also like to name Dr. Michael J. New, Ph.D. with an honorable mention. Dr. New is an associate scholar for the Charlotte Lozier Institute and has provided invaluable studies on the effectiveness of pro-life laws. Most recently, his study on the pro-life Hyde Amendment provided a much needed resource for pro-life US House members serving on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. Furthermore, Dr. New has written an open letter to Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker urging him to line item veto language within the recently passed budget bill that contains provisions of the ROE Act which would not only legalize abortion until birth, but would also allow for passive infanticide. In addition to his academic studies on pro-life legislation, Dr. New also leads students on a weekly prayer vigil before the Washington, DC Planned Parenthood. “Dr. New has been a strong voice for the unborn in the world of academics, in the world of legislative advocacy, and in his strong voice of sidewalk prayers and counseling. We certainly commend him for his hard work for a Culture of Life”, stated Kral.

In many ways, those who help lobby and advocate for legislation are unsung heroes. Not only do we thank Ms. Gallagher and Dr. New for their hard efforts, but the Society of St. Sebastian would like to thank all those who lobby and write on pro-life public policy issues.