

Manhattan Declaration Comes to New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS (RNS) Nearly 200 pastors, policymakers and other New Orleans-area Christians were urged to sign a declaration circulating nationally in support of traditional marriage, protection of life and freedom of religious conscience, three values said to be under threat in American culture.

The so-called Manhattan Declaration, unveiled in late 2009, is an ecumenical manifesto in support of those principles, endorsed by Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox religious leaders.

It has gathered almost half a million online signatures, and gathering more was part of the reason for the conference Tuesday (Aug. 2) at Celebration Church, jointly sponsored by the Louisiana Family Forum, the American Legislative Exchange Council, an association of conservative legislators, and the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, a new enterprise for the evangelical thinker and writer Chuck Colson.

Robert George, a Catholic conservative intellectual, and Timothy George, the evangelical academic, appeared live while Colson participated by Skype. Their program in New Orleans on behalf of the declaration was one of several they have held, including sessions in Denver, Minneapolis and Birmingham.

Their themes, generally, were that in debates over abortion, assisted suicide, same-sex marriage and related issues, the culture is becoming unmoored from values that protect the weakest individuals and nourish the family, the basic structure of civil society.

Robert George noted that New York recently became the sixth and largest state to approve same-sex marriage, which he said is being redefined to mean only a "sexualized romantic relationship."

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