

Civil rights league honours priest for 30-year pro-life protest on Parliament Hill

The Catholic Civil Rights League presented its annual Archbishop Adam Exner Award for Catholic Excellence in Public Life to Father Tony Van Hee at its annual award dinner in Toronto.

The national Catholic lay association honoured the Jesuit priest for his 30 years spent protesting on Parliament Hill against the Supreme Court of Canada's 1988 decision to strike down laws that made providing an abortion outside a hospital a crime.

Van Hee currently faces charges under the *Safe Access to Abortion Services Act*, better known as the bubble zone law, for protesting within the prohibited zone outside an Ottawa abortion clinic.

Van Hee appeared within 50 metres of the clinic in downtown Ottawa with a sign reading, "The primacy of free speech, cornerstone of Western civilization" and on the reverse side, "Without free speech the state is a corpse."



For three decades, Father Tony Van Hee has been a visible presence on Parliament Hill for his opposition to abortion. Canadian Catholic News

His silent protest made no mention of abortion.

Van Hee has been arrested dozens of times since he began protesting.

Phil Horgan, president of Catholic Civil Rights League, honoured Van Hee's persistence in the face of powerful opposition.

"These are actions that require courage, trust and great faith," he said.

In accepting the award, Van Hee condemned the "toxic media" that has vilified pro-life protest and praised the Catholic Civil Rights League for its steadfast opposition to abortion.

He encouraged the group to "bring about that great, great good from this great, great evil."

More than 100 people attended the Nov. 25 dinner. Guests also heard from guest speaker Deborah Gyapong, who recently stepped down as Ottawa correspondent for Canadian Catholic News.