

Archdiocese to participate in March for Life

Hundreds of Catholics from the Archdiocese of Baltimore will be among the more than 100,000 people expected to converge on Washington, D.C. for the 35th annual March for Life Jan. 22.

The march falls on the anniversary of two Supreme Court decisions that legalized abortion virtually on demand in the United States.

Dozens of parishes and schools throughout the archdiocese are sending buses to the event, and many Catholic schools will incorporate lessons on the sanctity of life along with prayers for a greater respect for life in conjunction with the anniversary.

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington scheduled its annual march vigil Mass Jan. 21 for 7 p.m., with Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, as the principal celebrant and homilist. Confessions, rosaries, holy hours, the Liturgy of the Hours and litanies were to fill the overnight hours until a 7:30 a.m. Mass Jan. 22 to be celebrated by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston.

The Archdiocese of Washington was to host its annual Rally for Life and Youth Mass Jan. 22 at 8:45 a.m. at the Verizon Center, the site of pro basketball and hockey games, followed by a 10 a.m. Mass to be celebrated by Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl of Washington.

Bishop W. Francis Malooly, western vicar, and Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, eastern vicar, will concelebrate the Verizon Center Mass, and Bishop Rozanski will also concelebrate the vigil Mass.

"It's a wonderful time to come together," said Linda Brenegan, respect life program director for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. "It's peaceful, joyful and with the youth who attend, it's energetic at the same time."

About two-thirds of march participants are people under 30 – a big change from the

event's early years, Ms. Brenegan said.

"The increase in youth is amazing," said Ms. Brenegan, who has participated in at least 10 marches in Washington. "I think the youth have lived through having abortion on demand. They are aware of the numbers of their peers who are not with them because of abortion."

Dr. Ronald J. Valenti, superintendent of Catholic schools, said he, too, has noticed an increasing commitment to the pro-life cause among the young. They have a deep concern for a variety of life issues including abortion, the death penalty and care for the poor and vulnerable, he said.

"I think we sometimes underestimate our young people," said Dr. Valenti. "They are very discerning and they are hungry for seeking the truth. We should be proud that they have made that commitment."

Catholic schools throughout the archdiocese have been encouraged to participate in the march by sending buses, Dr. Valenti said. St. Mary's High School in Annapolis, which is sending five busloads of students, will represent one of the largest contingents from Catholic schools in the archdiocese. Many schools will also offer educational programs about pro-life concerns on Jan. 22, Dr. Valenti said.

"So long as we have legalized abortion, we must be the continuing voice of dissent," he said. The superintendent noted that participation in the march helps students feel part of a larger movement.

Catholic News Service contributed to this story.