

Cardinal O'Brien March for Life

The Catholic Review

A year ago I was named by the Holy Father a member of the Congregation for Catholic Education (and Seminaries), surely an honor and a privilege.

The next full session of that Congregation will be held at the Vatican this month, January 20, 21, and 22. As a result, I regrettably will miss the activities in Washington marking the 34th anniversary of the Supreme Court's Roe vs. Wade decision. This infamous decision, now questioned even by a number of jurists who tend to be "pro-choice", has resulted in the destruction of many millions of babies' lives before and during birth.

There are three very powerful events occurring in our nation's capital to mark this sad anniversary. Over the years, those of us who have participated in these have invariably returned home energized and encouraged, especially by the involvement of tens of thousands of predominantly Catholic young people.

Young Catholics will fill Washington's Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception for Mass on Monday evening, January 21. Every square foot of the cavernous Basilica will fill with enthusiastic middle, high school and college students from all over the nation in a most prayerful and hope-filled witness to the sanctity of human life at every stage. For those who are unable to attend the Mass in person, I encourage you to do so via television. The Mass begins at 7 p.m. and is televised live (along with the next day's morning rally and march) on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN).

Recent years have also seen the inception of a morning Mass on the 22nd, the actual anniversary of the decision, followed by a pre-march rally. Last year over 20,000 people filled the MCI Center, with the overflow, thousands more - young people again! -gathering in auxiliary locations.

Finally, the March itself with hundreds of thousands pouring into the streets of Washington funneling toward the Supreme Court building peacefully protesting an

ongoing slaughter of the innocents and prayerfully pleading for courageous action on the part of our nation's leaders to reverse this unwarranted and unjust death sentence. (On a personal note, my first meeting with Cardinal Keeler occurred some years ago on a post-blizzard Jan. 22, when I joined then-Bishop William Keeler of Harrisburg for the length of the March.)

Because it occurs in January, the March takes place in unpredictable weather. While I will not attempt to forecast the weather for this year's March, I do feel safe in making the following predictions:

- Seminarians will be well represented, as usual;
- The Knights of Columbus will be everywhere during the March, a real backbone of the pro-life movement;
- The secular media will be virtually invisible.
- Whatever little media coverage there is, will result in a photo buried on page 16 or thereabouts and with "equal space" given to the very few pro-abortion protestors present.

I am pleased and proud to note that our Archdiocese of Baltimore will once again be well represented! More than 20 parishes will have hundreds of marchers on hand as will half a dozen of our high schools. Because it is exam week in some of our schools, many students are unable to attend the march. From Cumberland to Hickory to Annapolis, Catholics in the Archdiocese of Baltimore will come out to enthusiastically support God's greatest and most precious gift.

Though far distant from Washington on this year's anniversary, my thoughts and prayers will be there. May the memorial strengthen the resolve of all of us to help those in crisis pregnancies and to do whatever else possible to end such wanton killings.

To locate a Catholic church or school organizing buses to attend the March for Life, visit www.archbalt.org/respect-life.