

Events in Washington, around U.S. to mark 38th anniversary of Roe v. Wade

WASHINGTON - Tens of thousands of pro-lifers from all over the United States are expected to travel to the nation's capital for events marking the Jan. 22 anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion.

The same day the high court ruled on the Roe case, it also handed down the companion decision Doe v. Bolton. Together, Roe and Doe defined abortion as a constitutional right and overturned most state laws banning the procedure.

This year's March for Life in Washington will be Jan. 24. The theme is: "Thou shalt protect the equal right to life of each innocent born and pre-born human in existence at fertilization - no exception, no compromise."

The event falls on the Monday after the official Roe anniversary to allow participants to visit their representatives on Capitol Hill after a noon rally on the National Mall and a march along Constitution Avenue to the Supreme Court. On the eve of the main event, March for Life organizers plan to hold a mini-rally in Lafayette Park across from the White House.

Across the country, for the seventh year in a row, the West Coast Walk for Life will draw pro-life supporters to San Francisco Jan. 22. Thousands more people around the country will attend local events sponsored by their dioceses and pro-life organizations.

Among the Roe anniversary events planned in Washington will be an afternoon Pro-Life Leadership Mass Jan. 23 in the St. Vincent de Paul Chapel on the campus of The Catholic University of America. The main celebrant and homilist will be Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The Mass "will enable Catholic leaders who work to advance the culture of life to

join in prayer for an end to the evil of abortion and other attacks against human life,” said Tom Grenchik, executive director of the U.S. bishops’ pro-life secretariat.

“In joining together for this eucharistic celebration, we will witness to our unwavering commitment to the inherent dignity of all human life,” Grenchik added in a Jan. 4 letter inviting pro-life leaders around the country to attend the Mass.

The National Prayer Vigil for Life will be held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception Jan. 23-24. It opens with a 6:30 p.m. Mass in the shrine’s upper church; Cardinal DiNardo will be the celebrant and homilist. There will be time set aside for confession.

A rosary for life will be held in the shrine’s Crypt Church, as will “Holy Hours for Life.” On Jan. 24, morning prayer and Benediction will be followed by a 7:30 a.m. closing Mass.

For the 15th year the Archdiocese of Washington will sponsor its annual pro-life youth Mass and rally the morning of Jan. 24. According to the archdiocese, the success of last year’s event, attended by more than 17,000 young people, has prompted the archdiocese to hold a Mass and rally in two venues this year to accommodate the crowd. One location will be the Verizon Center, Washington’s largest sports arena.

After the March for Life, several pro-life organizations will hold the National Pro-Life Youth Rally near the Supreme Court. The event’s founding sponsors are Students for Life of America, Rock for Life, 40 Days for Life and Human Life Alliance. Other sponsors include Family Research Council, Pro-Life Action League, Human Life International and the Susan B. Anthony List.

Other Washington events related to the Roe anniversary include the Cardinal O’Connor Conference on Life at Jesuit-run Georgetown University for college and high school students; the American Life League’s Personhood Conference; a Rock for Life concert; a witness event sponsored by the Silent No More Awareness Campaign; and a Mass sponsored by the Ignatian Pro-Life Network, a union of pro-life groups from Jesuit high schools, colleges universities and parishes.

In addition, the Gerard Health Foundation is sponsoring an invitation-only awards ceremony and reception Jan. 22 to honor the 2011 winners of its Life Prizes. The foundation is a private organization that had given away millions to fund pro-life causes, abstinence education, and efforts to end the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

This year's winners include the Rev. Alveda King, who is the niece of the Rev. Martin Luther King and a prominent leader in the African-American community's pro-life movement; Doug Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee; and the Terri Schiavo Life & Hope Network.