

The Pro Life Generation

The Catholic Review

January 22. It may be just another day for many Americans, but for Catholics and others who value the sanctity of life, it is a once-a-year chance to come together in great numbers and call for an end to legalized abortion and the movement toward a culture of life.

Last Friday, an estimated 300,000 people participated in the March for Life in Washington, D.C. to memorialize the 37th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in our country.

It came as little surprise to many that President Obama did not address those in attendance, given that he chose the day after the March last year to rescind a decades-old policy to allow federal funds for overseas abortions in one of his first acts as President.

But it was not his absence that explains the dearth of coverage of the March by the secular press. They are simply ignoring the growth of the prolife movement because it does not match their plans of where their secular creed should be taking us. Indeed, some recent polls tell us that 56 percent of Americans now consider abortion immoral; if you relied on the secular medium for coverage of the March you might have been left wondering whether it even occurred!

How grateful we should be, therefore, to the Catholic press for their efforts to keep Catholics informed of pro-life, grassroots efforts like the March for Life. Our own Catholic Review was well represented, as Associate Publisher/Editor Chris Gunty, with typical initiative, offered photos and reports throughout the day via Twitter and the paper's website.

There was even a "virtual March" created by Americans United for Life which allowed the countless people who couldn't be there to "march" in virtual spirit.

Without their efforts, the quarter-million people giving voice to the voiceless might

go unnoticed and those we elect to represent the values we hold most dear would be held unaccountable.

It was precisely accountability that motivated a relatively small group of 30 individuals to organize the first March for Life. With an understanding of the magnitude of the Supreme Court's decision and a desire to prevent a culture of death from pervading American society, the March for Life was born after only three months of planning. To the happy surprise of those who labored to create what has become a seminal day each year for those who have embraced the pro-life "movement," an estimated 20,000 people showed up for that first March on January 22, 1974.

Since then, the March for Life has emerged into a multi-day advocacy event and celebration of life.

- The annual Mass for Life occurs the night before the March each year at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. This year an estimated 8,000 people attended and there was a 35-minute procession of the more than 1000 seminarians, deacons, priests, bishops, Archbishops and Cardinals.
- A youth rally at the Verizon Center occurs the morning of the March and this year, as always, the place was packed with about 20,000 enthusiastic youth on fire for their faith. Tickets were in such demand this year that they were gone in 45 minutes and at least two dozen satellite Masses had to be established in churches and schools to accommodate the thousands who couldn't get tickets.

Sadly, the thousands of youth in attendance at these events have never known a United States without Government-sanctioned abortion and the consequences of the Roe v. Wade decision—49,551,703 legal abortions (a killing every 23 seconds they tell me!)—are likely unknown to them. Yet, in spite of living their entire lives in an abortion-permissive society they walk.

Such steadfast and principled faith is worthy of our attention and our admiration.

In his homily at the Mass for Life, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Archbishop of

Galveston-Houston and Chairman of the U.S. Bishops Committee for Pro-Life Activities, praised that enthusiasm. "A new generation is rising that will usher in a culture of life," he said. "We should not underestimate the role of young Catholics...what a wonderful energy they bring!"

I, too, am proud of the more than 5,000 people from our own Archdiocese who attended the March last week. I was privileged to meet and walk alongside many of them. I am especially proud of our young Catholic people. Their faith, though still growing, could be a model for others twice their age, so powerful and so limitless is it. I look forward to walking with them again in Baltimore the week before Easter and to seeing their "outrageous joy of Jesus Christ's kingdom" spread to all who see and hear it.