

Why we march!

Every Jan. 22 for the last 35 years, pro-life Americans from all over the country and pro-life representatives from all over the world have been coming in massive numbers to the March for Life in Washington, D.C.

This March was first conceived in Oct. 1973. Grassroots prolife leaders became concerned that Jan. 22, 1974, might come and go without properly memorializing the first anniversary of the Supreme Court's infamous court decisions, Roe v. Wade and its companion ruling, Doe v. Bolton. Both decisions made elective abortion legal during the full nine months of pregnancy in America. About 30 dedicated leaders formed a committee and began making plans for the first March for Life.

The numbers who attend this awe-inspiring March have steadily been growing every year. Twenty thousand people were estimated to attend the first March in 1974, and more than 200,000 people were estimated to attend the March in 2008!

Why do good folks - the young, the elderly and college students, men, women and religious leaders from many faiths - take off work or school to flock to D.C. annually in the middle of January? There are many good reasons for this!

We march because we can! Of all our freedoms in America, the First Amendment spells out some of the most precious. It includes " ... the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." For centuries many Americans have fought for these rights, dedicating not only their time here on earth to this battle, but also dying for it. We honor these heroic ancestors by standing up for our beliefs in the public forum! As with all our actions, we have set a valuable example for the next generation - our children and grandchildren. As a result, more and more young people attend the March for Life each year, and now outnumber the adults! This is a tremendous sign of hope for our nation.

We march because we must! We must speak for those who cannot: the unborn, the incapacitated, the old and infirm - and we must challenge mistaken policies of our government. If abortion continues to be legal, we must make sure it does not do

so unopposed. We proudly and peacefully march to give witness to the fact that a policy that allows the killing of thousands of innocent children a day cannot, will not and must never be accepted passively by the people of any civilized country.

We march to give voice to pro-life Americans! Surveys show that most Americans oppose 99 percent of the abortions that actually occur. Our voice must represent the conscience of our nation. Yet most Americans will never be aware of the annual March for Life in Washington, before or after it occurs. After all, the mainstream media is very careful to black out the March and keep our ever-growing presence a non-media event.

We march to encourage each other. The March for Life is like an annual pro-life family reunion. For pro-life activists who often only see the people in their own community, the March affords an opportunity to interact with other pro-lifers from around the nation and beyond. For our political leaders who support the right-to-life in Congress, we are a great encouragement. They must see that we are out there in large numbers so that they are encouraged to continue their courageous and often uphill work fighting abortion. The March is a well-needed “shot in the arm” for all of us.

We march to be faithful to God. One day we will come face to face with The Creator of all life and proudly proclaim; “I did speak out; I was not passive in the face of the greatest injustice of our day!”

If you would like to participate in the March for Life in Washington D.C. on Jan. 22, check The Catholic Review’s Jan. 15 issue, for a listing of buses leaving from parishes in the archdiocese. The Web site for more information on the March is marchforlife.org. If you cannot attend, you can watch it on the Catholic TV cable channel, EWTN -The Eternal Word Network, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. You can also be a participant by praying for the March and all involved in any way with it!

Cookie Harris is a member of Archdiocese Respect Life Committee.