



“Be Not Afraid!”

By Archbishop Raymond L. Burke

Marching for Human Life

Introduction

On this past Sunday, I traveled to Washington, D.C., to participate in the Holy Mass celebrated at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception as part of the National Prayer Vigil for Life on Sunday night and to participate in the March for Life on Monday, January 22. Many faithful, especially young people, of the Archdiocese also made the journey to our nation’s capital for the March for Life. Monday marked the thirty-fourth anniversary of the deplorable decisions



of the Supreme Court of the United States in the cases, *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, which legalized procured abortion in our nation at every stage of the development of the infant in the womb

Although we have been battling for thirty-four years for the reversal of those decisions of the Supreme Court and although we now face yet another and horrible development in the culture of death with the work to guarantee to researchers the right to clone human life for the purpose of destroying it, in order to harvest embryonic stem cells, the March for Life gave me many causes for renewed hope. The March for Life showed, in a variety of ways, the new enthusiasm and new energy needed in the teaching and living of the Gospel of Life.

Strong Witness of Youth

One of the greatest signs of hope is the strong witness of youth to the inviolable dignity of innocent human life. At the Mass for the National Prayer Vigil for Life, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, which holds several thousand faithful, was packed to the limit with mostly youth and young adults. There was not an empty space in the Basilica. Many of young people had traveled all

night to arrive on time for the Mass. They slept Sunday night in a sleeping bag in the crypt of the Basilica or in other places of reception, they marched on Monday, and then they boarded their buses to return home. The joy, the enthusiasm and the energy of the youth witnessing to the inviolability of innocent human life is one of the greatest signs of hope for the eventual overturning of the decisions in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*.

On Monday morning, after Holy Mass and before the March, the marchers from Missouri were able to meet with members of the Congress from our State. One of the speakers asked how many present were born after January 22, 1973. The speaker reflected upon the great appreciation which these young people should have for their parents' commitment to life, for their parents, unlike the parents of us who were born before 1973, had access to procured abortion on demand. Children and young people who have been born in the time since January 22, 1973, give a particularly powerful witness to the inviolable dignity of every innocent human life, from the moment of its inception to the moment of natural death.

The Participation of Many Priests and Seminarians

At the Mass for the National Prayer Vigil and throughout the March, I met so many priests and seminarians. If you were blessed to view the Mass on Eternal Word Television Network, you saw the long procession of priests and seminarians. Several priests from our Archdiocese, several Benedictine monks from Saint Louis Abbey, and most of the seminarians from our Kenrick-Glennon Seminary took part in the Vigil Mass and the March for Life.

On Monday morning, at 7 A.M., I celebrated Mass at Holy Rosary Church for the faithful of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis to prepare us all for the March. The Church was filled to capacity. It was especially moving to have so many of our seminarians present, including our three seminarians who are studying philosophy at The Catholic University of America. The seminarians, in a special way, are great teachers of the new enthusiasm and the new energy needed to teach and live the Gospel of Life in our time.

So often, the faithful who have been personally involved with or affected by an abortion tell me about the irreplaceable role of the priest in helping them to accept God's forgiveness which alone can heal them of the deep wounds caused by abortion. The progress of the respect life apostolate depends on good and generous priests who as true shepherds of the flock will teach the Gospel of Life clearly, in its integrity and without compromise, in our society which is so confused and misguided regarding the dignity of human

life. As shepherds, they must also be thoroughly imbued with the compassion of Christ, in order that they may invite those who are suffering from the profound guilt of having cooperated in an abortion may come to know God's forgiveness. The presence of so many priests and seminarians at the March for Life was indeed a great sign of hope.

“Silent No More”

Finally, perhaps the most moving sign of hope for the restoration of the respect for the dignity of all human life in our nation is the growing number of men and women who have been involved in procuring an abortion and now are witnessing publicly to the almost unbearable suffering which abortion has brought into their lives and to the liberation from the heavy burden of their deep guilt through the Church's ministry, especially the Sacrament of Penance. Project Rachel and Rachel's Vineyard, two ministries in the Church which serve directly those who have sinned by procuring an abortion, have accomplished untold good in helping God's mercy and peace reach souls who have suffered for years with the anguishing guilt which comes from participation in an abortion.

A number of individuals and couples, carrying signs which read “I regret my abortion,” took part in the March for Life. At the conclusion of the March, on the steps of the Supreme Court, they gave witness to the truth about abortion and about God's forgiveness and healing in their lives. I was especially proud of a couple from our Archdiocese, who courageously gave witness to the work of God's grace in their lives, bringing them to seek and receive His forgiveness.

Conclusion

There were many other inspirations to hope which I witnessed through the March for Life, for instance, the presence of Eduardo Verastegui, star of the award-winning pro-life film, *Bella*. Let us thank God for the many signs which give us hope in the respect life apostolate. May these wonderful signs of hope inspire in us new enthusiasm and new energy in carrying out the apostolate of respect for all human life, from the moment of inception to the moment of death, without exception and without compromise.

I close by thanking Molly Corcoran Kertz, Director of the Respect Life Apostolate, and her staff, and of all the parish coordinators of the Respect Life Apostolate. May God fill with you hope as you serve Him in our tiniest and most vulnerable brothers and sisters!