

Area Students, Clergy, Join More Than 700 In March To Give Voice To Voiceless

January 24 2022 10:05 AM





SPRINGFIELD - About 700 came from every corner of our diocese to pray together, worship together, receive the Eucharist together, and march together — all for one purpose: for the protection of human life. The group included clergy, religious, teachers, students, and other lay Catholics from the coverage area and across the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois packed the streets of downtown Springfield to participate in the Springfield March for Life on Jan. 21, raising their voices in prayer for the unborn and most vulnerable and protesting unjust laws that attack the dignity of human life. Marching past the Statehouse, Illinois Supreme Court building, and Governor's Mansion, Bishop Thomas John Paprocki led the group in peacefully praying the rosary for an end to abortion and a greater respect for human life.

This year marked the 49th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the Jan. 22, 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion.

“We are the prolife generation, and I think having a really large turnout for events like these really helps impress upon everyone that we’re going to make sure that we’re going to have a positive impact in getting rid of abortion,” said Rick Wright, a student at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Those attending the Mass and Springfield March for Life came from schools across the diocese including St. Anthony High School in Effingham, Sacred Heart School in

Effingham, Sacred Heart Griffin High School in Springfield (student choir sang at Mass), Christ the King School in Springfield, and Father McGivney Catholic High School in Glen Carbon.

Parishes sending students and/or adult lay Catholics included St. Isidore in Dieterich, Immaculate Conception in Mattoon, Our Lady of Lourdes in Decatur, Blessed Trinity in Brussels, St. Mary in Alton, St. Charles Borromeo in Charleston, Mother of Perpetual Help in Maryville, St. Francis Xavier in Jerseyville, St. Brigid in Liberty, St. Francis Solanus in Quincy, St. Raymond in Raymond, St. Alexius in Beardstown, Our Lady of the Holy Spirit in Mt. Zion, St. Luke in Virginia, St. Paul in Highland, Annunciation in Shumway, St. Joseph the Worker in Chatham, and Mother of Dolors in Vandalia.

The Eastern Illinois University Newman Center also had students participate as well as sisters from the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George in Alton.

“Life begins at conception, so we should protect it and fight for that,” said Audrey Lasarge, a student at Sacred Heart School in Effingham.

“Babies can’t defend themselves,” said Ella Farris, a student at Mattoon High School. “They’re completely defenseless. They need someone to fight for them. That’s us. We’re here to fight for the lives that can’t fight for themselves.”

“Especially with our culture today, they want to really silence us, and they want to make us think that we don’t have a group, and that we don’t have enough numbers,” said Jacob Mizera, a student at Sacred Heart Griffin High School in Springfield. “I think we do. That’s proved in the march as we have 700 people, and it’s really exciting to make our voices heard and show people that this is a popular idea (fighting for life), and this is the truth.”

The day began with Catholics first joining together for a Life Mass at 10 a.m., celebrated by Bishop Paprocki at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield. Concelebrating with the bishop were 14 priests from across the diocese. The Mass was also livestreamed on the diocese’s YouTube and Facebook channels so schools who could not make the trip could participate virtually.

In his homily, Bishop Paprocki reminded the faithful to stay hopeful and continue to act and speak up for life.

“Most mothers and fathers who consider aborting their children do so because they are afraid,” Bishop Paprocki said. “They are afraid they will not be able to care for their children. We in the pro-life movement must expand our already extensive efforts through our women’s centers, our pregnancy centers, and our Catholic Charities

programs to offer life affirming and healing services to women in crisis, either by helping them to have access to the resources they need to care for their babies or if they are not able to do so, to assist them in giving up their children for adoption to the many adoptive parents that are ready, willing, and able to care for them. These are just some of the ways that we are called to end the scourge of abortion with the help of God's grace."

After the Mass, most everyone bundled up but did their best to embrace the below freezing temperatures to participate in the prayer march in downtown Springfield. While praying the rosary, the marchers prayed for vulnerable mothers contemplating having an abortion, those who work in the abortion industry, mothers who are struggling financially or emotionally, for lawmakers to enact laws that defend the sanctity of human life, and for a greater respect for life, including an end to abortion. The march in Springfield passed buildings of each branch of government before returning to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception for *Benediction*.

"I believe in being pro-life, and I want to protect everyone who can't be protected," said Gracie Harman, a student at Sacred Heart School in Effingham said. "It makes me proud that there is a group where we all believe in the same thing."

