

## **MARCH for Life '06 in D.C. - by Diane Herman**

Imagine being at a mass celebrated by 565 priests, deacons, and seminarians, 80 Bishops, and 6 Cardinals (all sitting in the sanctuary!) with over 10,000 teens and young adults attending in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The procession for the mass alone took 25 minutes! Imagine a youth rally in the MCI center in D.C. with 25,000 young people singing and praising God, and hearing that over 2,000 people were shut out due to lack of space! Imagine then walking to the Supreme Court building amidst a group of hundreds of thousands of faith-filled people.

Those experiences are truly indescribable unless you are there. With the exception of World Youth Day 2000 in Rome with '2.5 million people' attending and '6,000' priests concelebrating mass with JP II, I have never witnessed any event in my life to connect us more strongly to our Catholic faith. Nothing can compare to being literally surrounded with thousands of people with strong Christian beliefs and values. We walked with Chicago's **Bishop George Rassas** (*newly elect*) who will be announced shortly as a new Bishop in Chicago. Seeing the large number of clergy participating shows the church does put a value on this event, and being with so many young people just pumps everyone up who attends. During the actual March I took a few pictures of banners of other Christian (and Jewish) faiths participating, which so clearly demonstrates that the right to life is respected by many faiths. Everyone has times they doubt their faith, but an event like this is so exhilarating, showing our Catholic Faith is very much alive in the world!

The Chicago Archdiocese had four buses, which included one bus of college students. Additionally, there was a fifth bus from Mundelein filled with seminarians. The Joliet Diocese also had teens and young people from St. Josephs and St. Mary's in Downers Grove on our buses. I found out when we returned home that Marist High school in Chicago had 20 teens and chaperones at the March too. We attended rallies, the large masses I described above, had a magnificent night tour of all the monuments, visited the JP II Cultural Center, had a powerful reconciliation service for the teens, and spent time as group with the Archdiocese. The bus trip was long, but the priests attending gave wonderful mini-sermons for the teens including great vocation talks. Lastly, most importantly to note, was the yearly call by the Bishops to the crowd of 25,000 young people for those discerning a religious vocation. From the Archdiocese of Chicago I counted "nine" young men and "eleven" young women standing up to affirm their statement of discerning the priesthood and religious life.

**Allison Carmen**, with the college student group, visited Senator Obama's secretary and also Senator Durbin's committee member; actually debating with office officials defending the right to life. The college students visited Georgetown and Catholic Universities, and were hosted by local churches in an effort to keep the students cost down!

Fr. Frank Pavone, of Priests for Life, made a very important statement, "We are all called to do something in God's kingdom for the dignity of human life. For some it is working to protect innocent life before birth, for some it is standing up to stop the death penalty, for some it will be to work in the medical profession to ensure Christian moral values are protected. But we are all called to protect the dignity of human life in some role in our lives" That's why the March for Life is so important, we are standing up for life, all life.

Teens, young adults mark your calendars now for next years' March— 1/19 through 1/23 2007. It is an event that you will never forget!

To see our pictures and a short (very amateur!) video - <http://www.lemontyouthministry.com/March06.html>

*Attending from Lemont: Vicki, Rich, Tom, and Matt Anzalone, Colleen Bielfeldt, Allison and Kandy Carmen, Diane Herman, Joe Kopinski, Jessica Krysto, Kurt Rudolph, Alan Solowski.*