

# Lifers

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## “The March for Life Changed my Priesthood”

CSC Chaplain is transformed by his first ever pilgrimage to Washington, D.C.

Ten Conception seminarians were given the chance to March for Life with the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joe, Missouri in January.

While at one of the stops on the long bus ride to the March for Life, a priest in our group told me, “This experience will change your priesthood.” I was open to the graces available, but was not exactly in the mood after a 24-hour bus ride and a diet of greasy foods. But I would come to see that the change was tangible.

I began to see it in the information provided in booklets from the Kansas City-St. Joseph diocese and videos we watched en route. Did you know that only a third of all abortions happen in the first trimester? And that only one form of partial-birth abortion is illegal? I certainly did not. I do not think that many Catholics would be lukewarm to the evil of abortion if they knew data like this.

I was grateful for a night in a bed after the beautiful vigil Mass in Washington, D.C., on the heels of our long bus ride. The following day of the March started off well for me, by virtue of the opportunity to hear confessions at the Youth Rally & Mass for nearly two hours. Despite the fact that I was reconciling persons who had been away from the

sacrament, I was more heartened by how many of the youth knew the Act of Contrition and reported going to confession regularly. Then, at the Eucharist following confessions, the youth were asked to cheer for their bishops as they were introduced. Though this could easily be considered hokey, I felt that their display was genuinely one of love for the Church from a hopeful and zealous Catholic youth. In this next generation there is hope for change! This enthusiasm moved me to tears. Before the physical March was the rally at the National Mall. Here

again, even with Pro-Life legislators speaking, I was more taken by two religious leaders who spoke: an African-American, Protestant minister and an Orthodox rabbi. I thought it important for the country that the Pro-Life movement is not seen as a “Catholic Issue” – it is a *human* issue! Any person of good will can come to reason the fundamental right to life. It is hard to describe what walking up Capitol Hill with 400,000+ people was really like. We spent our time weaving in and out of crowds, *(continued on back page)*



**“From one man in regard to his fellow man, I will demand an an accounting of human life.”  
- Genesis 9:5**

# Scenes from the 38th Annual March For Life in Washington, D.C.

The Catholic Church is the foremost supporter of human life, and the March for Life was a great example of how we can all play our part by not just "being" opposed to abortion, but how we can personally and concretely live out our love for humanity.

*-Thomas Skinner, Junior, Diocese of Wichita.*

The biggest thing I learned from the March was this: it is easy to get caught up in the daily grind here at school – thinking of what to eat at lunch and what to do on the weekends. At the March for Life, you get a broader perspective of what life is about and that it is about giving yourself to others. This brings you out of yourself.

*-Justin Hamilton, Diocese of Kansas City, Kansas*



The March For Life went beyond all my expectations. Never before have I felt that same spiritual life charge as I did on this pilgrimage. The Vigil Mass for Life was very powerful. The moment we rounded the corner and entered the Basilica I was in awe. The sheer volume of people from all across the country coming together for the greatest human rights cause was inspirational. To pray with all of those people filled me with such hope and respect for the whole movement. Upon departing the Basilica I was filled with energy to stand up for the Culture of Life.

*-Matthew Nash, Sophomore, Diocese of Grand Island*

Events such as the March (and the other events surrounding it) are designed to change hearts – even our very own in ways we can't imagine. The March has definitely helped strengthen and motivate me to further promote the Pro-Life cause with even more vigor back here at home – especially through prayerful means. Pray for the UNBORN, pray for the MOTHERS and their FAMILIES contemplating abortion, and pray for those fighting to PROTECT the unborn!

*-Josh Duncan, Junior, Diocese of Jefferson City*

This year, I had often times found myself to "busy" or "lazy" to make the trips with the school down to (Planned Parenthood) in Kansas City. When the opportunity came to go to Washington, D.C., I felt a tug in my heart that I was being called to go. Seeing the universality of the Church in this effort really reopened my eyes to the cause.

*-Ryan Rojo, Senior, Diocese of San Angelo*

Growing up in a Catholic environment made it seem like only Catholics were passionate about the Pro-Life movement. However, after being in the March, I realized just how many people, including Protestants, Jews, and even Atheists, were very much involved in the movement as well. This gave me a new sense of inspiration that we as Catholics are not alone.

*-Chris Waltman, Sophomore, Diocese of Grand Island.*

(continuation of “The March for Life Changed...”)

joining in with Rosaries, chanting Divine Mercy chaplets, seeing people we knew, and feeling like we could walk to New York with the fervor we felt! To conclude, I return to the original question. Did the March for Life change my priesthood? The answer is yes. Before attending, I had always made sure to preach the moral hierarchy with life at the top, prayed for an end to abortion, voted Pro-Life, and even adopted a spiritual child. Yet, I was never one to get out and protest. However, the March for Life taught me that my witness is needed on the front lines. The diocese’s Pro-Life department head shared a story with us that a woman he encountered told him on the day of the March. I think it captures the essence of the powerful effect the March had on me: “Yesterday I was Pro-Choice. But I saw a group of teenagers kneeling and praying a Rosary on the steps of the Supreme Court, and today I am marching with you.” During the reflections on a bus from our diocese, some teens reported that *they* had prayed. A March for Life changed my priesthood.

-Fr. Pachomius Meade, CSC Chaplain



## Catholic Corner

### **This Lent, Plan to Read Unplanned**

In later publications, this Corner will showcase public issues that have a particularly Catholic point of view with topics such as contraception, pornography, masturbation, and euthanasia.

Former Planned Parenthood clinic director Abby Johnson has released her new book, *Unplanned*, which gives a full account of her highly publicized decision to walk out of Planned Parenthood and into the open arms of the Coalition for Life.

The book has placed Johnson on the forefront of the abortion battle in the United States because of its descriptive accounts of the events that occur inside the walls of Planned Parenthood. Many of the women that visit the clinic go through intense battles within their consciences that leave the reader feeling saddened, surprised, but sometimes uplifted.

Few, if any, people in this world share the perspective that Johnson has on the abortion debate. She has experience on both sides of the fence, and her analysis of both camps is fascinating. On one hand, she shows the emphasis that Planned Parenthood places on making money, rather than reducing abortions and helping women. On the other side of the coin, she focuses on how scare tactics, such as showing signs of mutilated “fetuses,” are ineffective for supporters of life. Additionally, she lauds the efforts Pro-Lifers made to utilize silent prayer and sympathy toward all people who are on the other side of the fence.

Ultimately, Johnson’s book will affirm the way most Catholics see the abortion battle. In fact, in months since the books were released, it has been reported that Johnson has now converted from contraception and is in the process of joining the Catholic Church. Her story is so life-giving. I know that the next time I visit Planned Parenthood to pray on its sidewalk, I will have a more vivid picture of what takes place inside its doors. It is a story of agony, conversion, and hope that would be great choice during the upcoming season of Lent. As we continue to fight for the respect of all human life, Abby Johnson serves as an inspiration in a battle that can sometimes feel fruitless.

-Clay Kimbro, Diocese of Wichita