

Weather hinders March for Life

35,000 activists brave ice, cold

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Cold and ice may have thinned their ranks as compared to previous years, but abortion opponents who gathered Jan. 21 for the annual rally and March for Life were as enthusiastic as ever.

Before setting out for the U.S. Capitol, marchers from around the country met on the Ellipse south of the White House to hear leaders of the pro-life movement encourage them to work and pray for an end to abortion.

Despite a week of record-breaking cold across much of the United States and a related two-day state of emergency in Washington, the U.S. Park Police estimated that 35,000 people braved sub-freezing temperatures and icy conditions for the annual march.

Official crowd estimates over the last five years have ranged from 50,000 to last year's 75,000. One of the smallest turnouts was the 5,000 who marched during a blinding snowstorm in 1987.

"Abortions do not stop during a snowstorm," said March for Life organizer Nellie Gray, explaining why the program was not canceled this year: "We are not fair-weather friends."

Although the sun shone brightly, the temperature around noon, when the rally began, had reached only 22 degrees Fahrenheit, and the wind-chill was below zero much of the day.

Sidewalks, streets and even the grassy surface of the Ellipse were covered with a slick sheet of ice, but the U.S. Park Police reported no serious injuries or other problems.

The weather — and the state of emergency in Washington — apparently helped to thin the ranks of individuals from the Diocese of Rochester attending the march.

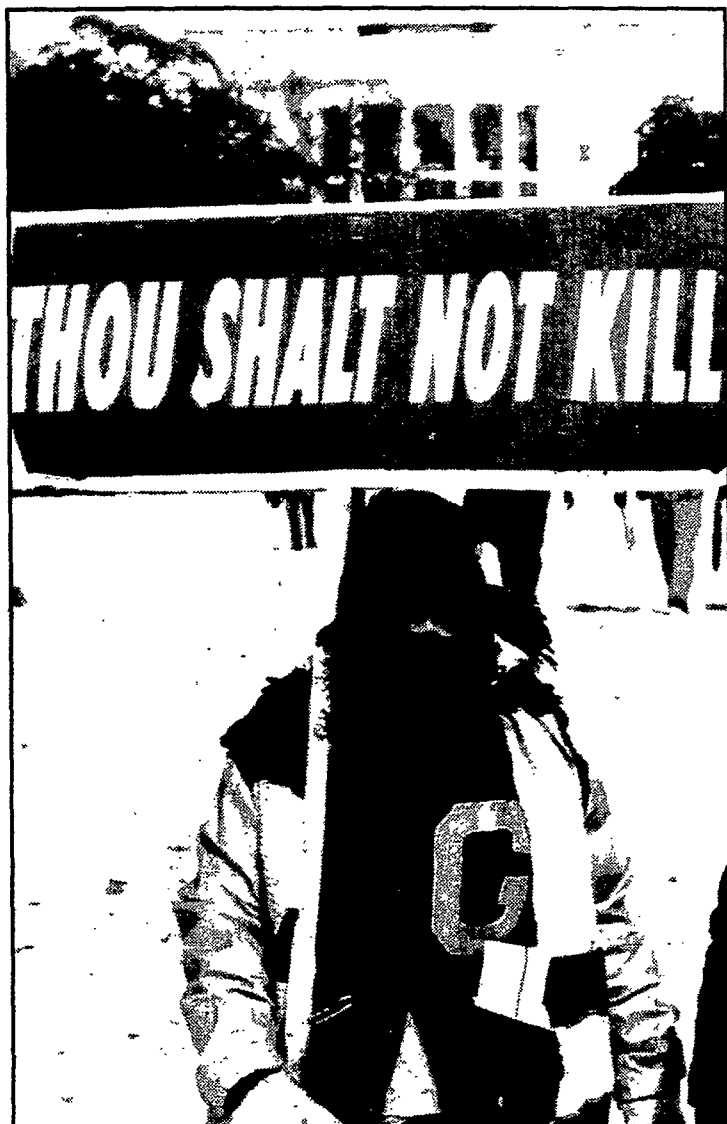
Some buses were cancelled, including the ones from St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Rochester, St. John of Rochester in Fairport, and a bus jointly sponsored by St. Margaret Mary's Church in Apalachin and Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Vestal, N.Y.

"We didn't want to put anyone at risk," explained Mary Jo Maurer, who helped to organize the bus for St. Thomas the Apostle. "We had a number of older people and a number of younger people signed up, and we didn't want to take a chance."

Meanwhile, the number of buses going to Washington from Horseheads was reduced from three to two due to the weather, noted Susan Mason, who helped to organize the trip for Chemung County Right to Life.

"We had five or six people call up to cancel because they couldn't get their cars started (to get to sites from which the buses were scheduled to leave)," Mason reported.

Normally held on the Jan. 22 anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* ruling that legalized abortion, this year's march and rally took place a day earlier so participants could try to reach members of Congress in



AP/Wide World Photos

A pro-life activist is bundled up for the cold during the start of the March for Life Jan. 21. Thousands of protesters braved snow and ice at the annual march to mark the 21st anniversary of legalized abortion and to protest President Clinton's health care plan.

their offices on a business day.

Sharon Pearte of the Chemung County Right to Life and a parishioner at St. Mary's Parish in Elmira noted that members of her delegation visited to the offices of Republican Amory Houghton, whose 31st Congressional District includes all of Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and parts of Tompkins, Seneca and Cayuga counties.

The purpose of their visit was not only to lobby for pro-life and against pro-choice legislation, Pearte explained, but also to thank him for voting in favor of the Hyde Amendment, which limits government funding for abortions.

"It's the first pro-life vote he's ever made," Pearte said. "We wanted to do more than just keep asking him to do things. We wanted to thank him for what he's done."

Various activities held in conjunction with the annual march were canceled either because planners expected difficulty in getting to events or because of the state of emergency declared for Jan. 20 by District of Columbia Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly. The mayor had ordered public and private businesses to close that day to ease a record demand for energy during the cold snap. Some groups that usually come to the march from around the country canceled their plans.

Robert Dorschied, who helped to organize the two buses that left from St. Jude's Parish in Rochester, said it was probably a wise decision on the part of some older people not to go.

"It was extremely slippery," Dorschied said. "There was ice everywhere."

One thing he noticed this year, Dorschied continued, was the number of young people taking part in the march. He speculated that perhaps they were more obvious because of the number of older people who opted to stay home.

But, Dorschied added that he noticed participants he had never seen before, including high school students and a

group from Monroe Community College.

"I enjoyed myself on this march a lot more because of the number of youths who took part," Dorschied said.

Pearte also remarked on the number of young people taking part in the march this year.

"You saw a lot of college groups," Pearte said. "We marched in front of students from Cornell for Life. There was a pro-life group from Elmira College. We knew about a pro-life group at Ithaca College, but not Elmira or Cornell."

"That's a hopeful sign," Pearte added, "because the young people are the future."

At the rally, participants enthusiastically cheered Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry, New York Cardinal John J. O'Connor and others as they were introduced.

In addition to pressing President Clinton, Congress and the Supreme Court to act to end

abortion, march organizer Nellie Gray called upon the diverse groups opposed to abortion to unite behind the single-minded, single-issue cry, "abortion is murder."

The breadth of organized opposition to abortion was reflected in the variety of groups represented on the stage: the Christian Coalition, the Pro-Life Action League, Operation Rescue, Pastors for Life, the National Pro-Life Religious Council, Dentists for Life, Priests for Life. There also were groups from the Catholic, Episcopal, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist and Church of Christ congregations.

Twelve U.S. bishops and three cardinals were among those introduced, along with Reps. Chris Smith, (R-N.J.), and Robert K. Dornan, (R-Calif.), both Catholics and active opponents of abortion-related legislation.

Besides Cardinal O'Connor, members of the Catholic hierarchy attending the rally were Cardinals James A. Hickey of Washington and Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Philadelphia, and Bishops Edward D. Head of Buffalo and Thomas V. Daily of Brooklyn.

Smith, Dornan, Gray and other speakers particularly criticized Clinton for including abortion as part of a proposed national health-care plan and for reversing several orders by the Reagan and Bush administrations that had limited federal involvement in providing access to or information about abortion.

"Bill Clinton, the abortion president, is a deceiver, a fast-talking, silver-tongued master of double speak," said Smith. He said despite Clinton's frequent comment that he thinks abortion should be "rare, safe and legal," the president instead has tried to find ways of paying for abortions with tax dollars and to make felons out of abortion protesters.

Smith encouraged abortion foes to continue with "persistent prayer, fasting and hard, hard work" in their fight.

Contains local reporting by Lee Strong.

CFC senior group gives doll house to Hillside

ROCHESTER — A group of eight seniors from the Catholic Family Center's 700 North Street Senior Center recently donated a handcrafted doll house to the Hillside Children's Center.

The doll house was presented to Hillside's Family Based Treatment Program, located at 1337 E. Main St. This program serves seriously emotionally disturbed children.

North Street Senior Center members worked a combined 70 hours per week on the year-long project. These seniors included Umberto Arena, Joe Danna, Ken Finch, Vivian Holcomb, Leon Jensen, Clarence Kudrewicz, Sal Palmeiri and Millie Strong, along with instructor Larry Naylor.

The four-foot-by-three-foot doll house is big enough to allow children to play inside of it. Some construction material and furnishings were donated by the Catholic Family Center, City of Rochester and Monroe County Office for the Aging.

Senior event planned at Greece high school

GREECE — An afternoon of entertainment for senior citizens has been set for Sunday, Feb. 13, at Greece Athena High School, 800 Long Pond Road.

Members of the high school's stage band, jazz ensemble and show choir will perform from 4-7 p.m. Festivities for this semi-formal affair will include dancing, "prom photos," door prizes and refreshments. Escort transportation is offered for those needing a ride from their home, and bus transportation is available from the Happy Harvester and Westridge senior centers in Greece.

Admission is \$5 and advance registration is required. Tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis. For details, call 716/663-8320.

Ithaca program needs goods for area refugees

ITHACA — The Refugee Resettlement Program of Ithaca needs donated items for Ukrainian, Armenian, Somali, Burmese and Vietnamese refugees settling in the Ithaca area.

Items such as dressers, linens, blankets, sofas, tables, chairs, desks, lamps, silverware, dishes, pots and pans are requested.

Those wishing to make donations should call 607/277-8648.

Villa seeking to raise \$50,000 through drive

GREECE — St. Joseph's Villa recently launched its annual fund drive, which this year hopes to raise \$50,000 to hire additional counselors for the agency's Residential Treatment Program.

Donations to the fund can be mailed to the St. Joseph's Villa development office at 3300 Dewey Ave., Rochester, 14616.

The Villa is a private, non-profit agency providing mental health and support services for youths and their families.

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