

# WORLD & NATION

## Marchers press for end to abortion

By Nancy Hartnagel  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — At the rally kicking off the 26th annual March for Life Jan. 22 in Washington, March founder Nellie Gray and Boston Cardinal Bernard F. Law urged marchers to read the U.S. Catholic bishops' latest pro-life statement.

The ongoing impeachment trial of President Clinton took a toll on speaker turnout, as only five members of Congress — far fewer than in recent years — addressed the noontime gathering on the Ellipse near the White House.

The rally and march to the U.S. Supreme Court marked the anniversary of the court's 1973 Roe vs. Wade and Doe vs. Bolton decisions, which legalized abortion in the United States.

This year's theme was: "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Near the end of the 80-minute rally, Gray told tens of thousands of marchers gathered under cloudy skies that the bishops' statement was printed in the march program.

Titled "Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics," it was approved by the bishops last November at their general meeting in Washington.

"We are moving in the right direction with this statement," Gray said, adding that she intends to work with the bishops in a united effort.

But, she said the statement had been "reported with various spins," and she encouraged marchers to "read that statement totally."

Gray then introduced Boston Cardinal Bernard F. Law, former chairman of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The cardinal said he was proud of the body of U.S. bishops, also represented at the rally by Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York and 15 other archbishops and bishops.

"There is no body in the United States that has been more consistently and effectively pro-life through the years than has the National Conference of Catholic Bishops," he said.

"It's very important that in the pro-life movement we understand who is with us and who is against us, and that we stand united for life," he said.

After introducing the bishops present, Cardinal Law also urged marchers, "Read the bishops' statement."

In this nation, he said, "we are becoming



Marty Lueders/CNS

Tens of thousands of people from around the country gathered in Washington to protest abortion at the annual March for Life Jan. 22.

desensitized to the needs of the poor, the vulnerable, the weak." The "chickens of abortion" had come home to roost in changes in welfare law, in debates on capital punishment and "in the callousness with which we ignore genocide in the Sudan," he said.

"We need to make a change," he continued. "And don't think that the change is going to be excommunicating this one or that one. That's not going to do it."

"The change is going to be with every Catholic citizen assuming his or her responsibility to vote for life across the board," he said. "That's what's going to make the difference."

No estimate of crowd size was given by march officials, though Gray promised even more would come in 2000. Neither Washington Metropolitan police nor U.S. Park Police give crowd estimates.

In his remarks at the rally, New York's Cardinal O'Connor told the crowd that a number of U.S. cardinals and bishops were in Mexico to greet the pope at his arrival there Jan. 22.

"In view of the fact that no one in the world — no one — has stood taller for life than Pope John Paul II," he said, "it is most fitting that a very large contingent of American cardinals and bishops be on hand to greet him in Mexico."

## Rebel group executes nun

By Lynne Weil  
Catholic News Service

ROME — A nun held hostage by rebels in Sierra Leone was killed, and at least one other kidnapped missionary was injured, according to reports from an Italian Catholic missionary news agency.

Sister Aloysius Maria, a member of the Missionaries of Charity order founded by Mother Teresa, was shot to death, the MISNA news service reported Jan. 23.

The nun was kidnapped with five other members of her order Jan. 14 from the Xaverian community in Kissy, east of the Sierra Leonean capital of Freetown. Xaverian Father Girolamo Pistoni, 43, taken from the same community Jan. 12, was reportedly hospitalized but out of danger in Freetown with a gunshot wound to the chest.

MISNA reported that the nun had been executed, and the priest apparently was injured in a botched execution attempt.

"According to Father Pistoni's descriptions of events on arrival at the hospital, the rebels were abandoning their provisional headquarters in the area of the capital in a disorderly manner," the agency said. "They decided to get rid of some of the prisoners, shooting them in cold blood."

A young Indian boy among the hostages was shot in the mouth and left for dead, but was reported to be recovering.

The whereabouts of the rebels, the five remaining captive nuns and a Xaverian missionary, Brother Guglielmo Zambiasi, remained unknown.

Pope John Paul II decried the shootings Jan. 24 after Sunday noon prayers during his pastoral visit to Mexico City.

He called the nun's killing a "barbarous murder" and said "no motive can justify such carnage against persons and institutions that for many years have worked for the good of all."

An archbishop and four Xaverian priests escaped the same rebel kidnappers unharmed.

MISNA reported that the four priests and Archbishop Joseph Ganda of Freetown and Bo fled Jan. 20 and were found by Nigerian-led peacekeeping forces two days later.

Bishop George Biguzzi of Makeni, Sierra Leone, told MISNA that the escapees were in "satisfactory health." "They were not mistreated," he added, "though they were not able to wash for two weeks."

The agency said the four escaped captives found their getaway opportunity in the confusion caused by the rebels' sudden relocation to avoid the peacekeeping troops.

## Vatican condemns U.S. air attacks against Iraq

MEXICO CITY (CNS) — The Vatican condemned renewed allied attacks against Iraq as Pope John Paul II preached peace during a pastoral visit to Mexico.

Prompted for comment on the Jan. 25 attacks thought to have claimed nearly a dozen civilian lives, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls told members of the traveling Vatican press corps: "This new incident confirms once again what the Holy Father has said before, in recent days: That military measures do not by themselves resolve problems. On the contrary, they make them worse."



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