

# Teens speak for those never born

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Each year when she celebrates her birthday, Sarah Hayes, 15, is reminded of the fact that her own government offered her no protection from being aborted.

"I feel lucky, I guess, because I'm alive," Sarah said, noting her birthday falls on Jan. 22 — the date in 1973 that the U.S. Supreme Court issued its *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion on demand.

Sarah has spent most of her birthdays, including her last one, marching with family members in Washington, D.C., to protest legalized abortion. She was part of a group of pro-life Catholics who traveled from St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Irondequoit to the nation's capital last week for the March for Life. She said she didn't mind spending her birthdays in Washington because of the cause she is supporting.

"I don't think anybody has the right to end the life of any child," said Sarah, a freshman at Our Lady of Mercy High School in Brighton.

Like any teenagers, the St. Thomas kids listened to pop and rock music, talked about their social lives in school and argued about sports during the bus trip to the march. Unlike most teens, however, these kids transformed into pro-life activists the moment they disembarked from the bus.

John Maurer, 15, a sophomore at Bishop Kearney High School in Irondequoit, joined other teenagers who chanted "Hey, hey! Ho, ho! *Roe v. Wade* has got to go!" John said he was glad he was at the march because it boosted his own sense of camaraderie with other pro-life



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Elizabeth Maurer, 13, stands during Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception Jan. 22 in Washington, D.C.

teenagers.

"It's an opportunity to see that it's not just these old people who are pro-life," he said. "I think it's good for young people to see that they are not the only ones who are pro-life. There are others out there like you."

His sisters, 13-year-old twins Marielle and Elizabeth, were also on hand at the march.

"It was cold, but it was worth it," Marielle said. "During the march, looking back and seeing as far as the eye can see, all the pro-life people marching for what they believe in — that was pretty cool."

Elizabeth, who like her sister, is in the eighth grade at Bishop Hogan Catholic Academy in Irondequoit, added that it was important for



young people like her to protest abortion.

"I think it's wrong to kill innocent babies that don't have a chance to speak out," Elizabeth said.

On another bus, which traveled from St. John of Rochester Parish in Fairport, friends Josh Whitcomb, 17, and Steve Fraysier, 17, sat together and tried to write songs, including one about the march. The two guitarists like Metallica and are forming a "classic rock" band called Keepers of the Flame, Josh said, and they both share a pro-life conviction.

"I believe that abortion is the biggest social-justice issue facing our diocese and our Catholic church today because of the grave losses of babies," said Josh, who attends Holy Spirit Parish in Webster. He added that he didn't buy the pro-choice argument that some women had to resort to abortion for economic reasons.

"There are so many agencies and persons willing to take this baby off your hands, there's no reason to kill it," Josh said.

His friend, Steve, also of Holy Spirit, said he may explore researching companies that contribute to such pro-choice organizations as Planned Parenthood and work on promoting boycotts of such firms. He added that he has wrestled with the abortion question and has come firmly down on the side of the fetus.

"I've come to realize that life starts right at conception, and you can't really do anything to end it," he said.

He added that, on a deeper level, abortion also affects one's relationship with the being who created both the unborn child and its mother.

"Since the body is God's gift to you, you're doing something against your body," he said. "Killing an unborn baby would be, in a sense, killing a part of you — and injuring God in a serious way."

Such thoughts motivated Steve and other young men and women to brave bitterly cold Washington streets and march for life.

"It's great to see everyone come together for one cause, a good cause," Steve said. "There's an energy you feel. You're not cold anymore because of the wind."



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