

Pilgrims lace boots, grab hats and prepare to 'March for Life'

BY MICHAEL C. GABRIELE

Editor

AREA—Catholics throughout the Archdiocese of Newark will join with thousands of people from all corners of the United States to participate in the 37th annual March for Life rally, which will be held in Washington D.C. Jan. 21 and 22.

The two-day rally, a national grass-roots effort that involves people of many faiths, is staged each year to protest the Jan. 22, 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion throughout the United States.

Jim Sondey, chairman of the archdiocesan Pro-Life commission, who first became involved in the event 20 years ago, said he draws inspiration from the growing number of teenagers and young adults who have joined the ranks.

"My expectation is to see more and more young people, especially high school and college students," Sondey said. "They get motivated through their schools and want to take a stand. This is one way to do it. Their enthusiasm is heartwarming. They believe in the cause and their dedication is an inspiration for me."

The rally's main event—the march along Constitution Ave.—is scheduled to begin Friday, Jan. 22 at noon, according to information on the March for Life Web site (www.marchforlife.org). In addition, there will be a "mini rally" held at Lafayette Park, located near The White House, on Thursday, Jan. 21, 6-8 p.m.

The theme for this year's march is: "Stand Up Now! Unite for the Life Principles—No Exception! No Compromise!" It's expected that well over 100,000 people will attend the event this year. The first March for Life was held Jan. 22, 1974, which drew a gathering of 20,000 people.

A member of Holy Spirit Parish, Union, Sondey said he will travel to Washington courtesy of a bus trip organized by the Knights of Columbus Cranford Council 6226, which will depart from Saint Michael Parish, Cranford.

There's no central archdiocesan committee coordinating bus rides to Washington. It's suggested that anyone interested in attending the event should contact community parishes for information. Archdiocesan parishes slated to offer bus rides to the rally include Saint John the Apostle, Linden; Saint Philomena, Livingston; Saint Elizabeth, Wyckoff; and Queen of Peace, North Arlington.

As reported last month, the archdiocesan office of Youth and Young Adults Ministries and Youth Retreat Center, Kearny, will sponsor a round-trip bus ride to Washington as part of the "Young Adult Month" slate of activities (see *The Catholic Advocate*, Dec. 23, 2009). The bus will depart Jan. 21 from Saint John the Apostle Parish, 1805 Penbrook Terr., Linden. Contact Sister Marilyn Minter, director of young adult ministry and parish outreach and training, by phone at (201) 998-0088, ext. 4147, or via e-mail (minterma@rcan.org) for details.

Saint John the Apostle Parish is the home of the archdiocesan Respect Life Office, which is directed by Father Joseph A. Meagher, who also serves as parochial vicar at Saint John the Baptist Parish, Jersey City. He described the annual March for Life as "a powerful experience of faith and hope for the future for all who come."

Michelle Krystofik is the associate director of the Respect Life Office (Web site: www.rcan.org/life), which sponsors events and programs throughout the year, including the "Rachel's Vineyard" healing weekend retreat for women and men who struggle with the emotional and spiritual pain of an abortion. Upcoming retreat dates are Jan. 15-17, and March 12-14. Call Krystofik at (732) 388-8211 to register.

