Standing for the Unborn

The Jesuit Response
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A Prayer for Life
Heavenly Father and maker of all,

You adorn all creation with splendor and beauty,

and fashion human lives in your image and likeness.

Awaken in every heart

reverence for the work of your hands,

and renew among your people

A readiness to nurture and sustain your precious gift of life.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you in

the unity of the Holy Spirit,

God, for ever and ever.

Amen.
Letter from The Office of Student Life

Dear Gonzaga Community,

This publication, Standing For The Unborn, The Gonzaga Response, features the document from the Society of Jesus entitled Standing for the Unborn: A Statement of the Society of Jesus in the United States on Abortion. This piece is the work of countless individuals that have prayerfully and with deep discernment considered the issue of abortion. Many have written, contributed, collaborated and compiled these materials in order to present a philosophy and defense that is truly reflective of the perspective and mission that defines Gonzaga as Catholic and Jesuit. The office of the Vice President for Student Life is pleased to bring you this publication to support our Jesuit brothers and the many people that are committed to respecting all human life.

Work on this publication began in Spring 2004 through the Vice President of Mission with support and encouragement from University Ministry and the Vice President for Student Life. For a number of years the University has been approached by a non-sectarian organization to distribute a pro-life advertisement on campus. While many on campus found the advertising supplement to be informative and helpful, there remained a sense that an institution such as Gonzaga had an obligation to present the discussion in our own Jesuit context. With this in mind, Standing for the Unborn: A Statement of the Society of Jesus in the United States on Abortion became the focal point for this publication.

Gonzaga University is a dynamic place and an enriching environment in which to pursue the beauty of truth and nourish the mind, body and spirit. This publication provides invaluable material for all of us to consider. Whatever your position on abortion, I invite you to read these words with an open mind and an open heart.

Table of Contents

- Standing for the Unborn: A Statement of the Society of Jesus in the United States on Abortion 6
  - I. The Heritage of Catholic Moral Teaching 8
  - II. Our Jesuit Tradition of Respect for Life 9
  - III. Public Dialogue About Abortion in a Pluralistic Society 11
- How is the Society standing for the unborn one year after publishing its statement? by Julie Bourbon 12
- Jesuit students stand up for life by Tom Lankenau, S.J. 14
Standing for the Unborn:

A Statement of the Society of Jesus in the United States on Abortion

Released March 2003

On this feast of the Annunciation of Our Lord, we, the leadership of the Jesuits in the United States, fervently renew our opposition to abortion and our support for the unborn.

In treating this delicate and controversial topic, we hope to provide our brother Jesuits, colleagues, parishioners and students with the spiritual leadership and ethical guidance they expect from us. As an international Society, we take with utmost seriousness the task of bringing the Gospel to the world, sharing the fruits of our spiritual heritage and engaging in dialogue with all the cultures and persons we encounter.

In this statement we wish to underscore the correctness of Catholic Church teaching regarding abortion, joining with many other people of conscience who are working to protect life in the womb, and who are seeking an end to abortion so as to restore our country’s respect for the core human value of the right to life. We wish to add further insights to support this teaching, drawing upon the heritage of our Jesuit history and the treasure of Ignatian spirituality.

In 1995, representative Jesuits from around the world met in Rome for the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. In their completed document “Our Mission and Justice,” they noted that “Human life, a gift of God, has to be respected from its beginning to its natural end” (n. 57). The most fundamental building block of a just social order is respect for human life. Until men and women individually and collectively make a profound commitment to the value and dignity of all human life, we will never find the true peace, justice and reconciliation God desires for us.

When we, the leadership of the Society of Jesus in the U.S., survey the developments unfolding in our culture, we are deeply distressed at the massive injustices. A spirit of callous disregard for life shows itself in direct assaults on human life such as abortion and capital punishment, as well as in senseless violence, escalating militarism, racism, xenophobia, and the skewed accumulation of wealth and life-sustaining resources. These realities compel us to speak out against what Pope John Paul II has called “the culture of death.”

This is the 30th anniversary year of the Supreme Court decision that made abortion legal throughout the United States. Since the January 22, 1973 Supreme Court decisions in Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton, more than 39 million American lives have been ended by abortion. Among all the justice issues we as a society should view with grave concern, abortion is a key social evil.

Jesuits draw upon a long and rich tradition of reflection, professional study, experience, and spirituality that brings many resources to the complexities of the abortion issue.
We offer the following insights for shaping future public dialogue about abortion:

First, abortion is a human rights issue. It is also a social issue, and not simply a personal decision made in artificial isolation from wider social reality. Attempts to frame the issue as merely a question of personal preference or private choice ignore important features of abortion as a public policy. Because the state and society as a whole have an intense interest in promoting respect for life, we may not with a clear conscience relegate such life-and-death issues to the private realm, no matter how appealing and convenient such arguments may appear on the surface. Abortion policy contains embedded cultural assumptions, values and attitudes that have wide repercussions for the way we collectively treat all human life. The whole array of potential threats to life and human dignity is interrelated, and the Christian imperative to oppose it calls forth from us a consistent ethic of life.

Second, when we as religious leaders speak out against abortion, we are in no way endangering important Constitutional principles. While we invoke faith-based claims for opposing legalized abortion, Jesuits are only one part of a broader coalition that finds many reasons to protect unborn life. In recent years, new evidence about prenatal biology has persuaded numerous people, often without explicit religious commitments, that the fetus is indeed a living, unique human being, worthy of the respect and protection we give to all human beings. When abortion laws are changed, it will not be the imposition of a narrowly-confined religious position upon an unwilling majority, but rather the consequence of a new broad-based consensus grounded upon persuasive and reasonable arguments accessible to people of all faith traditions and people of none.

Third, beyond the actual content of “what” we say in making a case against abortion, it is critical to pay attention to “how” our defense of the unborn proceeds. As St. Paul reminds us, we must “speak the truth with love.” The dialogue should never devolve into a shrill clash of shouts, much less threats of violence. We should remain confident that adjudication on the grounds of what is reasonable and consistent with human well-being is possible.

As Jesuits, we now offer some observations: first, what our Catholic faith tradition teaches regarding the sanctity of all human life; second, what our distinctive Jesuit approach, including the heritage of Ignatian spirituality, brings to bear on life issues; and third, some concluding reflections on the manner of public dialogue about abortion in a pluralistic society. We hope that each will help clarify the urgency of our renewed stance in defense of human life.
The social teachings of the Catholic Church place the dignity of the human person at the center of all concerns for justice. Every human being, no matter how small or young or dependent on others, possesses infinite value. The book of Genesis testifies how it pleased God to create human persons “in the image and likeness” of God (Genesis 1:26) as free and rational beings possessing innate and sacred dignity. The Hebrew Scriptures treat violations against the life and welfare of innocent people as offenses against the God who is the Author of Life. The Decalogue unambiguously declares: “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13).

Although the Scriptures have almost nothing to say specifically about the topic of abortion in the modern medical sense (i.e., as a surgical procedure or pharmaceutical intervention), the books of both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures paint a reality that clearly rules out disregard for innocent human life. We find in the Bible several passages that testify to the preciousness of the unborn child. The prophet Jeremiah describes God’s love for the unborn: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you” (Jeremiah 1:5). The book of Psalms offers this prayer of wonder: “You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb. My very self you knew; my bones were not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, fashioned as in the depths of the earth” (Psalm 139:13-15).

When early Christians began to reflect on their faith in Jesus of Nazareth as Christ and Lord, they concluded that abortion was a grave sin. To believe in the mystery of the Incarnation, in God’s wondrous decision to become human and take on the life of our natural existence of conception, birth, maturation, and death, commits one to affirm the dignity and sacredness of human life from conception to death. One of the earliest teaching documents of the Christian community, the “Didache,” circa 1st century A.D., proclaims: “Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant.” In addition, Christian reflection of subsequent eras provides an unbroken testament of an utter respect for unborn life. Though theologians of the patristic, medieval, scholastic and early modern eras offered diverse speculations on the origin and nature of the early stages of human life, Catholic tradition provides solid support and grounding for contemporary church teachings against abortion.

Church leaders in the past century have found it necessary to reiterate the importance of the respect for life and condemnation of any violation of the right to life, the most basic value upon which all other human rights depend. We live in an age when the lives of “inconvenient” people, including the unborn, are disregarded. Demands for legalized abortion have sprouted around the globe. All the popes of the 20th century have spoken out boldly against abortion as well as a panoply of other threats to human life. The Second Vatican Council, in its 1965 social teaching document “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” (Gaudium et Spes), reminds us that “life must be safeguarded with extreme care from conception; abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes” (par.51).

Pope John Paul II has consistently provided strong leadership in the struggle against abortion. In speeches, homilies, and formal writings, the pontiff has challenged all women and men of good will to step up their efforts against abortion. Among his efforts to highlight the sacredness of life are his encyclicals, “The Splendor of Truth” (Veritatis Splendor, 1993) and “The Gospel of Life” (Evangelium Vitae, 1995), which provide compelling rationales for opposition to abortion. Here John Paul II explains the philosophical and theological grounding of the stance against abortion, invoking elements of the Catholic moral
tradition such as natural law and the notion of a well-informed conscience. The Holy Father situates our reflection on the ethics of abortion within the context of broad themes such as the sanctity of family life, a personalist approach to morality, and a theology of the body. In the 1994 “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” we find a clear affirmation of the right to life: “from the first moment of [his or her] existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person, among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life” (n. 2270). The 1987 Vatican document “Instruction on Bioethics” (Donum Vitae) offers further recommendations regarding the sanctity of life amidst difficult decisions that have arisen in our age of sophisticated reproductive technologies. Documents of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops repeat the universal church’s condemnation of abortion and challenge the faithful in our country to advocate vigorously for the protection of unborn life.

In all of our Jesuit works and institutions and in our shared charism to serve, we hope to witness ever more authentically to God’s mercy and saving love for all humankind. The close linking of the service of faith and the promotion of justice has been a hallmark of Jesuit ministries from the very beginning. There can be no service of faith without the promotion of justice. Jesuits, therefore, must seek an end to the injustice of abortion.

It is part of our Jesuit charism to enter into creative dialogue with diverse cultures, a concern that reflects our desire to evangelize in the most universal sense. Such concern positions us well to engage in fruitful interaction with contemporary spokespersons of diverse viewpoints on life issues.

Ignatian spirituality reminds us that the work of making correct choices about moral issues such as respect for unborn life is a difficult one. Through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, a believer comes to realize that our lamentable hardness of heart, our sinful tendency toward selfishness and our aptitude for choosing to follow the “enemy of our human nature” make refusal to protect human dignity a real possibility even for well-intentioned people. St. Ignatius was famous for teaching the “discernment of spirits” and urged his followers to take greater notice of their emotions, internal movements and spiritual desires. He instructs us to be attentive to the various kinds of decisions that typically confront us, including matters of clear right and wrong.

These insights shed some light on the ethics of abortion, at least insofar as we might assist in discerning the psychological health and spiritual state of those who procure or undergo abortions. Evidence from numerous sources, including the Project Rachel programs set up in many dioceses to counsel women and men who have experienced or been involved with abortions, suggests at least two things. First, that tremendous pressure is often brought to bear on women facing unplanned pregnancies. Second, that horrible trauma and regret often haunt participants in the aftermath of abortion. As the United States bishops poignantly noted: “Roe v. Wade has left a trail
of broken hearts.” The struggle to achieve a sense of reconciliation with God and the aborted child often takes years to resolve, if it happens at all.

A key theme of Ignatian spirituality is freedom. Indeed, an important function of a spiritual director in the Ignatian tradition is to facilitate the freedom of the directee. This might include aspects of what can be called “freedom from” (e.g., freedom from fears or inordinate attachments) and aspects of “freedom for” (e.g., freedom to pursue a more authentic calling, lifestyle or set of relationships). Political philosophy teaches us that freedom is not the power to do what we like but what we ought. All too often in abortion debates, “liberty” and “choice” devolve into code-words for utter freedom to terminate a pregnancy without limits or conditions.

To be pro-life is to be pro-woman. Because we support women, we oppose abortion. We realize that the prevalence of abortion on demand is a clear indication that women are not receiving the types of societal and personal support necessary to bring their pregnancies to term. As MaryAnn Glendon, the Harvard law professor who headed the Holy See’s delegation to the United Nations’ Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995, stated: “All who are genuinely committed to the advancement of women can and must offer a woman or a girl who is pregnant, frightened, and alone a better alternative than the destruction of her own unborn child.”

Just as Jesus sought out opportunities to reach out to women who were downtrodden, challenging the social conventions of his day, so has the Society of Jesus worked with and for women since its founding. St. Ignatius worked with women of faith throughout his life, accepting their offerings when he was a destitute pilgrim and working for their advancement locally in his years in Rome and universally through the men he missioned around the world. In our day, the 34th General Congregation stated its firm resolve to oppose any social injustice based on gender, reflecting the best of this relationship between women and the Society of Jesus throughout the world in its Decree 14, “Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society.”

Some influential voices posit a zero-sum conflict between “women’s reproductive rights” and the right to life of unborn children. Jesuits ought to find their place among those who demonstrate the obvious confluence of women’s rights and respect for life in all its forms. Pope John Paul II summed this partnership up when he wrote: “Therefore, in firmly rejecting ‘pro-choice’ it is necessary to become courageously ‘pro-woman,’ promoting a choice that is truly in favor of women. It is precisely the woman, in fact, who pays the highest price, not only for her motherhood, but even more for its destruction, for the suppression of the life of the child who has been conceived. The only honest stance, in these cases, is that of radical solidarity with the woman. It is not right to leave her alone.”
The United States is blessed to be a pluralistic society with a vigorous tradition of free thought and speech. To be surrounded by such a kaleidoscope of cultures, customs and ideas is a privilege rare in human history. While enriching, this can also be a potential source of frustration and conflict. What binds the United States together is a tradition of tolerance and mutual respect for the opinions of others, as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the United States.

As Catholics and Jesuits, we would naturally prefer to live in a country where every citizen, voter, and court consistently favor legal recognition of and protection for the unborn. We are encouraged by recent evidence indicating a modest shift of public opinion away from the easy availability of abortion, and are heartened that recent polls now show that far fewer Americans are willing to call themselves “pro-choice.” In addition, we are also encouraged by the large influx of young Americans – those under 30, and therefore survivors of Roe v. Wade – who are active in pro-life efforts.

We must acknowledge, however, that phrases such as “the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” and “the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” in documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are phrases with contested meanings that others understand differently than we do. This awareness can lead us in two directions, only one of which will be constructive in the long run. The first is the sectarian option, something which has decidedly not been the dominant thread of the long Catholic tradition. It would lead us to seclude ourselves from this corrupt world, and have as little as possible to do with the workings of governments, courts, and the whole “culture of death.” It might make us feel better for a time, perhaps savoring the illusion that we are at least preserving our moral purity within a corrupt world, but it would not be socially responsible.

The more attractive option seeks neither to flee nor to dominate situations of pluralism. It commits us rather to a process of engaging those who initially disagree with us on some issues, seeking to create an acceptable consensus wherever possible by building upon those truths on which we can reach agreement, while continuing to educate and persuade those who disagree with our convictions. This path of “proposing, rather than imposing,” was described by the great American Jesuit theologian of the past century, John Courtney Murray. While emphasizing the value of tolerance and mutual dialogue, he also advised against any sort of moral relativism that might lead one to despair of finding and pursuing fundamental truths about human existence. Another way of describing this stance is to say that Jesuits are committed to narrowing the gap between the current civil law of our nation and the demands of the moral law as we understand it. Our long-term goal remains full legal recognition of and protection for the unborn child – from the moment of conception.

In the near future, we cannot realistically expect complete agreement among all participants in the abortion debate. We must listen respectfully to others’ opinions, just as we expect a fair hearing of our own arguments against abortion. Our confidence in the persuasive power of well-articulated defenses of pro-life positions sustains us, even as we acknowledge the long struggle ahead. An acceptable outcome may be a long way off, although building a consensus against the most egregious wrongs, such as partial-birth abortions, may be possible sooner than we expect. In the meantime, our common calling is to stand in solidarity with the unborn, the “least of our brothers and sisters” (Matthew 25:40), through prayer and political activism.

As we have throughout our nearly five hundred year history, Jesuits will continue to undertake a broad variety of works and play diverse roles in the Church and in the wider society. It is our desire that Jesuits, along with their colleagues, will continue to offer a consistent message of respect for life, especially for unborn children. All of God’s daughters and sons, particularly the most vulnerable and those yet to be born, must be treated with respect and protected by the laws of our nation.
How is the Society standing for the unborn one year after publishing its statement?

By Julie Bourbon

Released March 2004

Nearly one year has passed since the March 2003 publication of “Standing for the Unborn: A Statement of the Society of Jesus in the United States on Abortion,” published in the 30th anniversary year of the Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion in the U.S. Written under the auspices of the Office of Social and International Ministries at the Jesuit Conference, the document represents the Society’s official position on abortion and places the issue within the larger context of human rights.

More than 14,000 copies of the document were printed, with copies distributed to every Jesuit priest, brother, scholastic and novice in the U.S. Assistancy, as well as to university presidents and rectors, high school presidents, the boards of the Jesuit Secondary Education Association, the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities and the Jesuit Refugee Service. In addition, copies were sent to the USCCB, the Holy See Mission at the United Nations and to President Bush’s advisor Karl Rove, Vice President Dick Cheney, Senate leadership and all Catholic members of Congress. The document has been translated into Spanish and was downloaded from the Jesuit Conference website more than 13,000 times in 2003.

Written to “underscore the correctness of Catholic Church teaching regarding abortion,” the document addresses American culture’s pervasive “spirit of callous disregard for life (that) shows itself in direct assaults on human life such as abortion and capital punishment, as well as … senseless violence, escalating militarism, racism, xenophobia, and the skewed accumulation of wealth and life-sustaining resources. These realities compel us to speak out against what Pope John Paul II has called ‘the culture of death.’”

In the financially strapped Diocese of Santa Rosa, Calif., parishioners at St. Helena Parish in St. Helena bought more than 400 copies of the statement using their own funds because monies for pro-life programming have been cut.

James Dillon, who first heard about “Standing for the Unborn” from a friend in Maine, has been distributing copies at parish meetings. Dillon, who is locally active in pro-life ministry, said that “the most important thing is that the document exists,” because “the Jesuits, who were silent for a long time, are no longer silent.” He added that it is “very disturbing” that the USCCB has not been vocal enough in its stance on abortion.

Fr. John Swope (MAR), socius of the Maryland Province, which ordered 1,000 copies of the statement, praised the authors for placing the issue within a social justice context in a high profile manner. “Rank and file Jesuits hadn’t heard much about it,” he said, noting that for many people, there is not an obvious link between “pro-life and social ministries. It positions the issue very well in terms of … how we understand our stance on pro-life in the social justice landscape.”

“We didn’t invent this issue. This is a priority of the Church in the United States and we’re a part of that,” Swope added. “There is no such thing as Jesuit social teaching. There’s Catholic social teaching,” which the Society promotes and upholds.

Fr. Tom Massaro (NEN), one of the document’s primary authors, said that it is based on the thought of John Courtney Murray, using
a pluralistic approach for what he deemed “a long term cultural, not just political, battle.”

“Our document is a hopeful document,” one that he believes will promote “cultural dialogue, finding common ground, keeping our principles and Catholic identity.” Citing the recent pronouncement of Bishop Raymond Burke of LaCrosse, Wis., that Catholic politicians who support abortion or euthanasia should be denied the Eucharist, Massaro said “It’s an attempt to avoid this kind of crossroads of ‘either you’re with us or against us.’”

Sean Raftis (ORE), another of the document’s authors, noted that pro-life clubs at the Society’s high schools, colleges and universities seemed to be “revivified” by its publication. “The statement gives a modern and rational Jesuit articulation of our pro-life position that can be used by anyone as a resource, teaching tool and a discussion starter.”

Citing the partial-birth abortion ban signed by President Bush in November of last year, Raftis was optimistic about the pro-life movement’s eventual success in bringing an end to legalized abortion. “Statements such as this help continue the process that is necessary to correct such grave errors … as Roe v. Wade.”

Jesuit apostolates across the country ordered copies of the statement for distribution among their constituents. Fr. Dave Godleski (CHG), vocation director of the Chicago Province, sent 100 copies to candidates considering entering the Society, “just to let the guys know that the Society of Jesus cares about abortion,” he said. The statement was a good tool to “counter any sense that the Society is too liberal” on the issue.

At Fairfield College Prep in Connecticut, Fr. Ron Perry (NEN) has been using the document in his sophomore religion classes in which students study Christian morality. “My purpose was really to make them familiar with the Church’s stance,” he said, noting that it was a “consciousness raising experience, particularly for those who hadn’t thought about the rights of the unborn.”

Later this month, the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Rockville Center Diocese in Long Island will host its annual convocation for respect life leaders. The Jesuit statement will be included in a packet of information materials made available to attendees. “We were very impressed with the research and quality of work,” said Madelaine Willi, the office’s co-director. She ordered 300 copies of the statement, which she praised for its broad approach reminding Catholics that “we can’t ignore the other attacks on humanity.”

Just before the document was published last March, Loyola New Orleans hosted a debate on abortion co-sponsored by Compass, a Catholic student group, and the university’s Women’s Studies Center in which a spokesperson for the archdiocese debated the Louisiana representative of the National Organization for Women. More than 400 students attended.

Drawing on the obvious interest on campus, Loyola was the site last month of a dinner hosted by pro-life groups at the university and Jesuit High School. “Standing for the Unborn” was the subject of keynote speaker Dorinda Bordlee’s address. Bordlee, staff counsel for Americans United for Life, a Chicago-based public interest law firm, said that pro-life groups around the country were “thrilled” by its publication.

“It’s both pro-woman and pro-life,” said Bordlee, a Loyola New Orleans graduate. “That’s why it’s so well received. … The Jesuits (are) recognizing the need to reach out to both women and children.”

One of the sole criticisms of the document, which Swope and others made, is the lack of a pedagogical tool to accompany the statement for facilitation of dialogue on the subject of abortion. “Unless you can lead people pedagogically, it’s very hard to get the head and heart around it,” he said.

British Robinson, national director of the Social and International Ministries Office, said that the question she has heard most often has been “what about the dialogue?” Plans are in the works for follow-up to the document that would result in a companion publication for group discussion.

For copies of “Standing for the Unborn,” contact the Jesuit Conference or visit www.jesuit.org.
What does it mean to stand up for the unborn? For several hundred students from more than 20 Jesuit schools, standing up for life meant selling funnel cakes, spending all night on buses, sleeping on gym floors and missing important classes.

Participants in the March For Life, they joined tens of thousands of others on the National Mall January 22 to commemorate the 31st anniversary of the Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion.

Though the march along Constitution Avenue has been an annual event since 1974, for many, this was their first public, pro-life act. Their presence was a response to Jesuit leaders in the US Assistancy who called for Catholics to “stand in solidarity with the unborn through prayer and political activism.”

Led by the efforts of Fr. Barney Barry (MIS), campus minister at Saint Louis University, the Jesuit schools assembled as a unified body. Gathering in the shadow of the Washington Monument, they unfurled their school banners, beacons of Jesuit representation and a rendezvous point for the colorfully clad and upbeat youth.

They came from the north, from Le Moyne, Scranton, Saint Joseph’s and Fordham, and from the south, from Loyola New Orleans and Spring Hill College. They arrived by the busload from the Midwest, legions of marchers from Rockhurst, Saint Louis University, John Carroll and Loyola Chicago.

They came from prestigious universities and small colleges, from the Big Apple to the nation’s backyard, Appalachia to the Rocky Mountains. Regis University sent three representatives; Loyola Baltimore came with 13. A student-led group drove down from Holy Cross.

Numerous Jesuit scholastics also participated. Seven accompanied the Fordham group, while others came with Saint Louis University High, Xavier Prep and Fordham Prep. A novice helped coordinate a vanload from Wheeling.

“Jesuit Pro Life” was emblazoned across the bright blue knit caps worn by the 60 plus marchers from Jesuit High School in New Orleans. Young men from Georgetown Prep, Xavier Prep, Saint Louis High, Gonzaga High, and Fordham Prep displayed “badges of courage,” lettermen’s jackets and school sweatshirts.

Together they marched for life, testifying for a “consistent message of respect for life,” while other members of the Jesuit family who could not be present commemorated the day with special events back home.

Students for Life at Holy Cross staffed a table to promote awareness of the day, while Loyola Marymount University held a Mass for the unborn. Phil Hurley’s (MAR) ethics class at Gonzaga College High spent the week discussing life issues.

Final exams kept Canisius High students from traveling to Washington, but they marked the day with a special prayer and Mass, and will hold a day of prayer for life in the near future. Creighton students are raising money to attend next year.

Prior to the march, students from Georgetown Prep and Gonzaga High attended a morning rally and Mass at the MCI Center. Sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington, the event featured Christian rock music and a rap-singing priest. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick celebrated Mass for the 15,000 young people and seminarians in attendance.

The Jesuit New Orleans group celebrated mass each day and attended the Solemn Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Spring Hill students spent the morning of the march distributing roses to members of Congress and afterwards gathered at their hotel for reflection and to say the rosary.

Students from Rockhurst and SLU spent the day after the march on Capitol Hill and met with Sen. Christopher Bond (R-MO), who praised them for “taking a worthwhile journey.” Later in the day, they visited the Holocaust Museum and participated in a forum on life issues, then gathered for mass at Georgetown University.

Georgetown University paired the march with its Fifth Annual Cardinal O’Connor Conference on Life. Jesuit ethicist and geneticist Fr. Kevin FitzGerald (WIS) spoke on the future of reproductive technologies. In his keynote address, Sen. Rick Santorum (R-PA) thanked the students for “standing up for life and being countercultural.”

Standing up for life. For the hundreds of Jesuit students who walked in the cold, who rose early and stayed up late, who traveled far or came from nearby, participating in the March for Life was an important witness, one of solidarity and faith, compassion and
"All of God’s daughters and sons, particularly the most vulnerable and those yet to be born, must be treated with respect and protected by the laws of our nation."

- Standing for the Unborn