

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This past week, I attended the March for Life in Washington, DC. Or at least, I assume I did... you see, I have to write this article for the bulletin before the March actually happens! In any case, I have attended the March every year of my priesthood. Some years I really look forward to it; others I look ahead with unease... thinking about the long bus ride, the long waiting times, the unknown weather. I have been through rain, sleet and snow, through single digit temperatures and temps in the 50s. You always have to be prepared. It has been said that Satan really knew what he was doing when Roe v. Wade was decided... it is the worst time of year for a protest March!

And yet, it is the best time of year.

You see, I don't go down with any unrealistic expectations that we will make a political impact. Despite the fact that the March has happened every year since Roe v. Wade (January 22, 1973), and over the years has become an increasingly younger March (now, the prevalent groups of people are young adults and teens, not the "older" crowd... like me), despite the fact that every year, no matter what the weather, literally hundreds of thousands of people go to Washington to March against the incredible injustice of the massacre of pre-born humans... until last year, it never was more than a blip on the national news radar! (Last year was different, since the newly inaugurated Vice-President attended the March ... that made news.)

I feel like I have been side-tracked... what was I saying? Oh yeah, I don't go expecting the media to take notice of us, I don't expect the politicians to take notice of us. None of that will happen, since what we are fighting is a spiritual battle. And it is because of the spiritual battle that I see this as the "best time of year." This is the time of year where the uncertainty of weather can change a 9 hour trip into a 13 hour trip. This is the time of year when we can experience the freezing cold air temperatures, or worse, the chill to the bones of freezing rain. A few years ago, hundreds of Marchers got stuck in a blizzard on the Pennsylvania Turnpike on the way home... and made news because of their outdoor Mass on a "snow-altar"! There are so many opportunities to offer up sacrifices to Almighty God! And in this spiritual battle, it is our sacrifices and prayers that touch God's Heart. Prayer is powerful, but prayer and sacrifice suspends the laws of nature and changes hearts, as it becomes a magnifying glass of Grace!

Why do we go? For the babies, pure and simple. God calls us to stand up for the weakest and the marginalized, to be a voice for the voiceless. We become that voice. We become that voice because Christ is in that silent one. We become that voice because the innocent must be spared. We become that voice because we have been called to go beyond ourselves. Our sacrifice and prayer is lifted to the ears of Almighty God, and it is only He who can break through the darkness and bleakness of our world.

I just mentioned that the innocent must be spared. This is the message of the Old Testament. The beauty of our God is that in the New Testament He calls us to recognize that *the guilty must be spared, too* (read John 8:1-11 of the woman caught in adultery). This is the beauty of the Ocean of Mercy, which is our God – that even when we have sinned, no matter how bad the sin is, no matter how troubling it is, God will forgive if we turn to Him and ask for mercy. If you have had an abortion, if you have encouraged or pressured someone to have an abortion, if you have participated in the abortion industry – **God still loves you!** God hates the act of abortion, but He still loves *you!* He has more mercy than we know and is so willing to heal us, to make us new. No one reading (or writing, for that matter) this article is without sin. No one is free from the guilt of offending God. Yet God's mercy is endless! Infinite! Believe that. Do not allow self-recrimination, shame or self-hatred to keep you from receiving God's boundless mercy. Receive that mercy. Let God steep you in His mercy! He has a great plan for changing pain into grace, sin into love, death into life!

I pray that each of us may truly know His mercy and love. I pray that we will stop the senseless killing of the innocent, of the pre-born humans. I pray that hearts will be changed, converted and healed. I pray that we may know and embrace God's will with all our hearts and live. As the saying goes, "You will not silence our message. You will not mock our God. You will stop killing our generation!"