

## **Thoughts about the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual March for Life in Washington D.C. January 2009...**

As the Respect Life Coordinator for the Diocese of Toledo, I had the opportunity to attend the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual March for Life Events in Washington D.C. on January 21 & 22, 2009. Despite the repugnant cause that brought us all together, the demonstration of support for Life was amazing! I was moved several times through the proceedings.

First of all, I was overwhelmed with the number of people who attended the Vigil Mass at the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception! Every seat was filled almost two hours before Mass. People stood or sat in the aisles. There were people in the Crypt church watching the video feed. Despite the massive amount of people attending, there were no complaints about the cramped space or the extended length of Mass. Instead people sang and participated, they applauded the priests and bishops who attended, and they prayed for everyone affected by abortion.

The next day there was a Youth Rally and Mass at the Verizon Center. Again, the huge number of people, especially young people, was incredible! The concert that preceded Mass brought out tremendous energy and praise of God, but what dazzled me occurred right before Mass. In preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist and the prayerful nature of Mass, it was announced that we would pause for the Rosary. At that, a cheer went up! How amazing to hear appreciation for the Blessed Virgin and the Rosary! Delightful! Additionally impressive were the cheers that went up for the bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, and religious in attendance.

The final event was the March from the Verizon Center to the Mall and then to the Supreme Court. I was astounded by the huge crowd of young and old, healthy and disabled, men and women, clergy, religious and laity who peacefully and prayerfully spoke out for Life through their presence, words, and signs. There was support for babies, mothers, fathers, and families. It was all very moving!

From our own Diocese, Bishop Blair and several priests and deacons participated at Mass and in the March. In addition, ten bus loads of people were in attendance from Maumee, Toledo, Tiffin, Delphos, Lima, Paulding, and Gibsonburg. It was so uplifting to know that the Diocese of Toledo stood strong for the issue of Life!