

# Editorial: The lie projected onto the National Shrine

It was an appalling sight. As the annual National Prayer Vigil for Life was taking place on the inside of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., Thursday night, a pro-abortion group that for some reason calls itself "Catholic" was desecrating the building on the outside.

Through the darkness, pro-abortion organizers projected the following phrases on the shrine's usually stunning 329-foot bell tower: "1 in 4 abortion patients is Catholic," "Pro-choice Catholics you are not alone" and "Pro-choice Catholics" in a cruciform shape. Only if these "protesters" had proffered the proverbial "bird" to the Eucharist could they have been more obscene.

The group responsible, "Catholics for Choice," succeeded in partially disrupting the events surrounding today's March for Life not only with its "light show" but with its subsequent "victory lap" on social media.

"I know that my faith teaches Catholics to honor personal conscience. And yet, the Catholic hierarchy seeks to polarize pro-choice Catholics and villainize people who make the moral choice to have abortions," tweeted Ashley Wilson, the communications director for the organization, Thursday night. "I am tired of feeling the shame and stigma for being a pro-choice Catholic. And I'm not here for people to judge my own personal relationship with God."

Jamie Manson, the president of the organization, followed up with a morning-after rationalization, if there can be such a thing. "We went to the Basilica to draw attention to the fact that women in the church have abortions," she tweeted. "These

are likely the women who serve as his lectors and Eucharistic ministers; who sew his vestments and wash his dishes. To ignore them is to betray them.”

What a complete and utter lie. Catholic women who have had abortions are not villainized. They are not betrayed by their Church. They are beloved – by the Church and by the God whose love and mercy is infinite for each of his flawed children. Multiple ministries within the Church are available to post-abortive women, filled with empathetic staff and volunteers who offer necessary healing, support and counseling. And the door to returning to full communion with the Church for our sisters (and our many brothers who also actively participate in abortion) is always open through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The absolution received in the confessional leaves no shame or stigma behind. It brings only peace.

Furthermore, how many testimonies have been offered by Catholics who regret their abortions – stories that have been a moving part of the March for Life? These are women who would leap at the chance to be able to make a different decision, and they are not represented by the self-aggrandizement of a group that claims to represent all Catholics who have had abortions. They are not victims; they are strong, brave women of God.

Countermarchers are always an unfortunate part of the March for Life experience, but never before has an anti-life message been broadcast in such a brazen, disrespectful and sacrilegious manner – and, more shamefully, by those who claim to profess the same faith that in no uncertain terms calls for the protection of life at all stages.

That the group’s vile display made use of the outside of a church building certainly serves as a parallel to reality: The members of such an organization and their supporters stand outside the Church – and by their own choice.

“The true voice of the Church was only to be found within the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception last evening,” Cardinal Wilton Gregory of Washington said in a statement on Friday. “There, people prayed and offered the Eucharist asking God to restore a true reverence for all human life. Those whose antics projected words on the outside of the church building demonstrated by those pranks that they really are external to the Church and they did so at night – John 13:30.”

The cited Scripture passage – “So he took the morsel and left at once. And it was night.” – refers to the very betrayal of Christ himself by Judas Iscariot. Indeed, it is not Catholics who have had abortions who are betrayed by the Church, but groups like “Catholics for Choice” that betray not only the Church but the God who commands his children not to kill. Thankfully, the same merciful Son that brings peace to the former can offer the same to the latter, should they but have the humility to ask.

*Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board: Gretchen R. Crowe, Scott P. Richert, Scott Warden, York Young*