

# At events nationwide, hope rises that abortion ruling will be overturned

A renewed spirit of hope reverberated through events nationwide that marked the 49th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion.

From Vermont to Los Angeles, thousands of people were buoyed by the prospect that the court would reverse its 1973 *Roe* decision by upholding a Mississippi law banning most abortions after 15 weeks.

The ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* is expected in early summer.

In Montpelier, Vermont, hundreds of people bundled in parkas and boots against temperatures that hovered near zero during the annual Rally for Life at the Vermont State House on Jan. 22. Organizers described the gathering as being among the largest of its kind in the state capital.

Mary Beerworth, executive director of the Vermont Right to Life Committee, said that while it is impossible to predict what the Supreme Court may decide, "pro-lifers feel that finally the spotlight is shining on the humanity of the unborn and discussions now center on how early little hearts are beating."

She cautioned, however, that even if *Roe v. Wade* is reversed the decision to allow or disallow abortion will return to each state.

In Vermont, legislators are debating Proposal 5, an attempt to amend the state Constitution to enshrine "reproductive autonomy," including abortion. If passed by the Legislature,

the proposal could go before voters in November.

She said pro-life Vermonters “have an uphill battle ahead for years to come.”

This year’s rally included a Respect Life Mass at St. Augustine Church and a prayer service at Lighthouse Christian Church, both in Montpelier, before people gathered at Montpelier City Hall and marched to the State House for the rally.

At the Mass, Bishop Christopher J. Coyne of Burlington, said the nation is “beginning to move the dial back in terms of recognizing the child in the womb as a person who needs protection.”

However, the bishop expressed concern about Proposition 5, which he said would “enshrine in a nebulous way” so-called reproductive rights. He called on anyone seeking to protect the rights of the unborn to “be educated” and to share accurate information with voters.

Elsewhere, Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis told more than 2,000 people at the annual “Prayer Service for Life” on Jan. 22 in the Cathedral of St. Paul that the nation could be on the brink of a “post-Roe world.”

The moment requires prayerful discernment of God’s will to build a culture of life, and for a deep respect for all life, born and unborn, the archbishop said in his homily.

While awaiting the Supreme Court’s ruling, people can continue to work through charity and justice to help women and families struggling with crisis pregnancies, he said.

Quoting from a Jan. 22 opinion piece in USA Today by Ashley McGuire, a senior fellow with The Catholic Association, the archbishop urged pro-life advocates to continue to act with “calm and steadfast seriousness” while they await the Supreme

Court's decision.

He also encouraged that they listen for "marching orders from the Lord, for promoting a culture of life on what could be a changed landscape as the battle shifts from Washington to each of our states," including Minnesota.

Families, high school students and others at the prayer service – many of whom afterward participated in the annual March for Life to the nearby state Capitol despite temperatures in the teens and wind chills below zero, noted the gravity of the moment.

"We're optimistic that almost 50 years of this unjust decision might be overturned," said Stephen Maas, 44, who was at the prayer service with his wife, Jennifer, and their five children, ages 6 to 15.

"I think there is a lot of anticipation," said Maas, a member of Nativity of Our Lord Parish in St. Paul. "It's not a sprint, it's a marathon. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* will be just the first leg."

The national March for Life in Washington saw more than 200 people arrive from several parishes and schools in the Diocese of Nashville, Tennessee, to rally with pro-life advocates.

Father Andy Bulso, chaplain of the diocese's Office of Faith Formation, was among those making the trip. Addressing the Tennessee contingent before the march, Father Bulso said that while experiencing discomfort because of the frigid temperatures in the nation's capital, each person would have to "reconnect with your reason, your why" for attending.

"This is a day to get out of ourselves," he said. "Maturity and love involves getting out of ourselves and doing things for other people. This day is a real chance to do that."

Kayleigh Langenstein, a student at Belmont University,

traveled with the diocesan University Catholic college campus ministry program to Washington. Standing outside the Supreme Court building made an impression, she said.

“I was like ‘Holy cow, in a couple months *Roe v. Wade* could be overturned right here,’ which was really powerful for me,” she said. “This could be the last March for Life during the *Roe v. Wade* era. This could be a very real possibility that the next March for Life will be more focused on individual states.”

Dozens of Catholic U.S. military personnel and members of the Archdiocese for the Military Services joined the March for Life in Washington as well. The delegation included cadets from the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York, midshipmen from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and others who were attending the archdiocese’s Young Adult Ministry Symposium.

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, who heads the archdiocese, was joined by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph L. Coffey, archdiocesan episcopal vicar for veterans affairs, and several priests who serve as military chaplains around the world.

During his homily at Mass for participants in the archdiocese’s Edwin Cardinal O’Brien Pastoral Center in Washington, Archbishop Broglio reminded marchers that a strong prayer life must feed outward demonstrations of witness to the Gospel.

Borrowing from St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the archbishop spoke of a reservoir in which people of faith “fill up with Christ so that we are in a position to share our abundance. The reservoir retains water until it is filled and then discharges the overflow without loss to itself.”

“We cannot get up and march if we are not filled up with Jesus Christ and a desire to share his life with others,” he said. “We cannot teach if we do not draw the fullness of the gospel of life,” he added.

In Los Angeles, thousands of people gathered on Jan. 22 for the eighth annual OneLife LA, where Archbishop José H. Gomez called on pro-life advocates “to build a society where it is easier for people to love and be loved.”

“We show that love by the way care for one another, especially the weak and vulnerable. OneLife LA reminds us of the beautiful truth that we are all children of God, and that every life is sacred,” Archbishop Gomez said.

He called on people “to create a civilization of love that celebrates and protects the beauty and dignity of all human life.”

A week earlier, on Jan. 15, thousands of people converged on the Colorado State Capitol in Denver for the Celebrate Life March to witness to basic human rights in calling for an end to abortion.

Attorney Dan Caplis called on participants to continue their work to end abortion as the Supreme Court weighs its decision.

“And when *Roe* fails, yes, the highest mountain will have been conquered. But when *Roe* falls, there will be many other peaks to be scaled because when *Roe* falls, you have a chance to make law and to save babies,” Caplis said in calling on legislators to pass a law that would end abortion in Colorado.

Auxiliary Bishop Jorge H. Rodríguez-Novelo of Denver said the work of defending life “will require heroism, courage and suffering.”

“To defend the lives of the unborn is a reality that cannot accept delay or hesitation and demands boldness and action. It is a matter of life and death to defend the life of the sick, the elderly, the terminally ill, the people on death row,” the bishop said.

“It will imply a change of heart, moving from individualistic,

selfish and materialistic understanding of life to a compassionate and solidarity and sharing one. The question of life is the greatest priority after God.”

*Contributing to this roundup were Cori Urban, managing editor of Vermont Catholic magazine, the official publication of the Diocese of Burlington; Joe Ruff, news editor of The Catholic Spirit, newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis; and Katie Peterson, who is on the staff of the Tennessee Register, newspaper of the Diocese of Nashville.*