

St. Agnes-St. William of York

Respect Life Newsletter - October 2019

October is Respect Life Month. During this time, Catholics in the United States make a concerted effort to acknowledge and celebrate the dignity and sanctity of life. I had never put too much thought into why the month of October was chosen as the month to celebrate life. I looked at some of the feasts and saints we celebrate and noticed that October is the month of the Holy Rosary, and on October 13 we mark the anniversary of the final apparition of Mary at Fatima. October also leads into the seasons of Advent and Christmas when we celebrate the incarnation of God and the birth of Christ. Of the awesome Saints we celebrate (St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Teresa of Ávila among them), St. John Paul II's feast day on October 22 stood out to me and eventually become the subject of this month's reflection.

ST. AGNES-ST. WILLIAM OF YORK RESPECT LIFE NEWS AND EVENTS:

- **Parish Respect Life News:** St. Agnes and St. William of York parishioners acknowledged Respect Life Month in a number of ways. Some participated in the 40 Days for Life Catonsville Campaign, others participated in the Women's Center West Baby Bottle Campaign and others reflected on Respect Life reflections provided during Tuesday Eucharistic Adoration.
- ✓ **The Fall 40 Days for Life Catonsville Campaign:** As we do every fall and spring, members of our parish participated in the, now, International 40 Days for Life campaign. This year I visited several of the Thursday prayer groups. I was surprised to see that each of the prayer groups I visited had its own unique style of praying.

The 9 am group most often consists of me and Kathie Kelly, with Barbara Strauch joining us when her schedule permits. It has become my custom over the years to spend the first 15 minutes listening to praise music (frequently Matt Maher). I feel it serves as a defiant rebuke to what is happening on the 6th floor of the building across the way. This year Kathie has kindly accommodated me and sung along. The 15 minutes of praise music is followed by the rosary. Generally we pray the Joyful mysteries. Kathie is awesome at coming up with intentions appropriate to each mystery. We often follow the rosary with the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

Members of the 10 o'clock group often pray silently. Members of that group include a couple of year-around pray-ers, a deacon, and a married couple.

The 11 o'clock group is the liveliest of the 3 groups. Its members often engage with passers-by, offering them rosaries or answering questions about what they are doing there. The day that I stopped by to take pictures, Chester showed up. He was greeted with hugs by members of the group. A couple of weeks earlier Chester had noticed the pray-ers while parking his car in the Shirley's parking lot. He paused by his car, interested in what they were doing, and eventually appeared to join them in silent prayer. One of the pray-ers approached him and eventually, the entire group invited him to join them in praying the rosary. Since he didn't have a rosary, they offered him one of the extra rosaries they carry with them, 'just in case'. A woman who was watching the interaction between Chester and the pray-ers spoke up and said, "I would like a rosary too". They gave her a rosary and showed her how to get the instructions for



The 10 O'clock Thursday Group



The 11 O'clock Thursday Group

praying it on her cell phone.

During the same visit, another passerby stopped and began chatting with a pray-er who likes to walk while he prays. The two men spent quite some time sharing their Christian faith.

Kim Frazer, who prays on Friday, shared the following story: "The other day on the sidewalk, a woman talked to us and told us that no one was outside praying when she came for an abortion. We were able to give her post abortion healing information. Today, I had good conversations about abortion with 2 men passing through the neighborhood. A third man driving by called out, 'Good job, and keep up the good work!'"

A wonderful source of sidewalk stories is the 40 Days for Life daily blog. I found the Day 30 post particularly powerful. Entitled "Behind Bars", the post describes how a 40 Days for Life group in Saginaw, Michigan invited prisoners in a local prison to join their prayer campaign. Initially they asked men to prayer for 12 hours, but the response was so great that men ended up praying 24/7 during the entire 40 Days for Life campaign. In the process, many of the men found healing and hope since many of them had had experiences with abortion. You can read the Day 30 blog at <https://www.40daysforlife.com/day-30-behind-bars>.

You can access all of the daily blogs here - <https://www.40daysforlife.com/blogs.aspx>.

- ✓ **40 Days for Life Eucharistic Procession:** On Saturday, October 19, St. Agnes and St. William of York parishes hosted a mass and Eucharistic Procession which marked the mid-point of the 40 Days for Life Catonsville campaign. 70+ pray-ers attended the mass at St. Agnes and then processed behind the Blessed Sacrament to Hillcrest and back. It was exciting to see parishioners from parishes throughout the region participating in the event. From what I could determine, St. Louis Parish in Clarksville was the most distant Maryland parish represented. However, the prize for greatest distance travelled by a pray-er went to Kim Frazer's parents. They live in Cleveland, Ohio. They were in town visiting Kim and participated both in the Eucharistic Procession and in praying outside of Hillcrest.

How awesome it was to watch the Baltimore County police stop traffic on Route 40 so that Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and the pray-ers accompanying Him could safely cross Route 40. What a sight it was to see people in their cars and standing outside of their businesses watch while pray-ers processed along Route 40 praying the rosary and the divine mercy chaplet. A man standing outside of his car asked me, "Is that a procession?" I explained to him that we were processing with the Blessed Sacrament and praying for the end of abortion in the building up the street. As I turned to leave he said, "Thank you".



Meet Chester



Meet Kim Frazer, 40 Days for Life Catonsville Campaign



Eucharistic Procession Along Route 40



Christ in the Blessed Sacrament at Hillcrest

As powerful as the procession was, it was even more powerful to watch the incensing of the Blessed Sacrament and Father Isaac blessing the Suburbia Building and the pray-ers kneeling on the opposite side of the street.

Here is a slideshow of the procession - <https://www.icloud.com/sharedalbum/#B0R5tzEA56NTM1>. Thank you, Joe Boland for beautifully orchestrating the event.

- ✓ **40 Days for Life Catonsville Closing Event:** The closing event for the Catonsville campaign is enticingly entitled, "**Song and Scripture on the Sidewalk**". Details are available on page 5. Hope to see you there!



2015 40 Days for Life Closing Event

- ✓ **Women's Center West Baby Bottle Campaign:** It has been a long custom for us to support Women's Center West Pregnancy Center (formerly Pregnancy Center West) by participating in a baby bottle campaign. Baby bottles with donations can be placed in designated containers in St. Agnes and St. William of York churches or returned to the office on the St. Agnes campus. The deadline for returning baby bottles is November 4. Checks should be made out to Women's Center West.

- ✓ **Respect Life Reflections:** Respect Life reflections were provided by members of the St. Agnes/St. William of York Respect Life Ministry. The reflection for the second week of October featured a poem written by Deacon Jack. The reflection for the third week featured a poem written by Lois and Henry Nejfelt's grandson, Owen. The two reflections are available on pages 8 and 9 of this newsletter. Thank you Deacon Jack and Owen.

- **Upcoming Parish Respect Life Events:**

- ✓ **Tuesday, November 5, 2019 - Respect Life Holy Hour:** Our monthly Respect Life Holy Hour is held on the first Tuesday of every month at St. Agnes. The monthly Holy Hour begins at 5:45 pm and ends with Benediction at 6:45 pm. The Holy Hour includes praise and worship music, the Angelus, time to pray for private and special intentions and the respect life rosary. Now more than ever it is necessary that we pray for life and for our nation. We hope to see you there.

When: Fri, November 5, 2019, 5:45pm

Where: St. Agnes Church

- ✓ **Fri, November 15, 2019 - St. Agnes/St. William of York Respect Life Meeting:** The St. Agnes/St. William of York Respect Life Committee will meet on November 15 between 10:00 and 11:30 am in the St. Agnes Activity Center meeting room. We will be examining our mission statement and begin planning for the very busy first quarter of 2020. The first quarter of any year is perhaps the busiest time of the year for us. We have the annual Life is Beautiful Mass and Reception (January 19, 2020), the annual March for Life in DC (January 24, 2020), the annual Maryland March for Life in Annapolis (February 24, 2020), the Maryland Legislative Session in Annapolis (January 8-April 6, 2020) and the Spring 40 Days for Life campaign. All are welcome to attend this important meeting. We would love to hear your ideas on how we can more effectively and creatively support life and the dignity of the human person in our parish community. Those who want to attend mass before the meeting are welcome to attend the 9:00 am St. Agnes School Mass. Please contact Paula Noeller (pnoeller@comcast.net) if you plan to attend.

When: Fri, November 15, 2019, 10:00-11:30am

Where: St. Agnes Activity Center

LOCAL AND REGIONAL RESPECT LIFE NEWS AND EVENTS:

Upcoming Local and Regional Respect Life News:

- ✓ **Thank you, Maureen!!! You Will Be Missed!!!:** At the end of the month, Maureen Bracken, the director of Women's Center West (formerly Pregnancy Center West) will be stepping down. I asked Maureen if she would write a brief account of her history as an advocate for the unborn and how she became the director of Women's Center West. If you have ever read one of her "From the Director's Chair" columns in her monthly newsletter, you know what a wonderful writer she is. Thank you, Maureen for taking the time to write this. And thank you for your service to the unborn and their mothers. Here is Maureen's story:

"I first became aware of the abortion issue when I was working as a Probation Officer. My job was to do background investigations on people who had already been convicted of a crime and make a recommendation to the Court as to sentencing. One woman I interviewed who had been found guilty of drunk driving related, with tears in her eyes, that she had had an abortion and how it had messed up her life. For some reason I became very upset myself. When she left, it was my turn to cry. One of my co-workers asked me what was wrong. I said, "She had an abortion." His reply was, "So what" and walked away.

Following this episode I thought I should look into the issue of abortion and joined the St. Agnes Respect Life group. I later did sidewalk counseling at Hillcrest on Fridays. On my first day I talked to a young couple that were heading towards the door. After talking to them for a while they agreed to follow me down to Pregnancy Center West on Edmondson Avenue.

In 1993 I started as a counselor at Pregnancy Center West. In 1996 I was asked to join the Board of Directors. In 2000 I began serving as President of the Board. We started looking into going medical and offering sonograms as part of our services. We raised the money and bought a small sono machine. After a long process, we finally were able to secure a medical doctor to operate under their license. Dr. Vicky Steiner Larsen became our Medical Director and even took the sonographer training to become a sonographer.

I remained a counselor up until I retired from work as a Probation Officer in 2012. Since then I have served as the Managing Director.

I am stepping down by the end of October of this year to help my children who are having babies themselves. My youngest daughter just had her first child and will going back to work as a nurse in November. Two of my other daughters have 3 children each and the one daughter daycares for the other who works part time as an occupational therapist. . Having 6 children to look after would be too much for one person so I will be helping her when I am not babysitting for my youngest daughter. My oldest daughter has two children but they are in grade school.

My work at Pregnancy Center West, now Women's Center West, has been very rewarding, and I have met so many wonderful people, co-workers, donors, and clients. Terrie McDade will be managing Director and I know WCW will be in good hands."



Thank you, Maureen!!

• **Upcoming Local and Regional Respect Life Events:**

- ✓ **Saturday, November 9, 2019, 9:00 pm - 40 Days for Life Closing Event:** The closing event for Catonsville campaign, "Song and Scripture on the Sidewalk", will be held on Saturday, November 9 at 9:00 pm. It will be held on Johnnycake Rd. outside the Hillcrest abortion facility and will be followed by fellowship across the street in *West Baltimore Pregnancy Choices*.

When: Mon, November 4, 2019, 7:00pm

Where: St. Mary's Seminary and University Chapel, 5400 Roland Ave Baltimore, MD 21210

- ✓ **Friday-Sunday, Nov 15 (5:00pm) - Nov 17 (4:00pm) 2019 - Project Rachel Retreat Weekend (Catonsville Area):**

Project Rachel weekend retreats offer an opportunity for healing to any woman or man who has struggled with the emotional or spiritual pain of an abortion. The retreat is a chance to get away from the daily pressures of work and family, to focus on a painful time in one's life, and to begin healing through a supportive and non-judgmental process.

The registration fee is \$150; however, scholarships are available. Contact Project Rachel at 410-625-8491 or at projectrachel@archbalt.org for information or to register. To register for and attend the retreat, please contact Project Rachel at least two weeks prior to the retreat date.



Project Rachel Baltimore

If you know someone suffering from the effects of an abortion you can refer them to this Facebook page for details - <https://www.facebook.com/events/499050083955325/>.

- ✓ **Saturday, December 7, 2019 - Pro-life Pilgrimage to the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in DC:** Join members of the Office of Respect Life and other Respect Life ministry participants in a pilgrimage to the Saint John Paul II National Shrine on December 7 from 10:00 am to 3:30pm. The pilgrimage is free. Pilgrims will meet at the Shrine at 10am for Mass in the Luminous Mysteries Chapel. The mass will be followed by the praying of the Rosary. The celebrant and homilist will be [Fr. James Brent, O.P.](#), a Dominican from the Dominican House of Studies. Fr. Brent has, in the past, been a spiritual leader for USCCB Pro-Life Activities conferences. He will also lead participants in a reflection. An opportunity for confession will follow. Lunch will be at the Shrine. **NOTE: Lunch is not provided, so bring your own lunch.** After lunch pilgrims will have the opportunity to take a self-guided tour of the Saint John Paul II exhibit, followed by relic veneration and prayer. The day will end with a Divine Mercy Chaplet. This event is open to all, so feel free to invite family and friends.

NOTE: Organizers are asking for an RSVP via this link (prolifepilgrimage.eventbrite.com). An event flyer can be found on page 10.

When: Sat, Dec 7, 2019, 10:00am-3:30pm

Where: St. John Paul II National Shrine, 3900 Harewood Rd NE, Washington, DC 20017

- ✓ **Saturday, December 14, 2019 – Project Rachel 'Come to the Waters' One-Day Retreat (Baltimore area):** Project Rachel Baltimore's Come to the Waters (CTTW) retreats offer an opportunity for healing to any woman who has struggled with the emotional or spiritual pain of an abortion. The retreat offers the opportunity to get away from the daily pressures of work and family, to focus on a painful time in life, and to begin healing through a supportive and non-judgmental process.

The registration fee is \$20, however, scholarships are available. To register, contact Project Rachel Baltimore at 410-625-8491 or projectrachel@archbalt.org at least two weeks prior to the retreat,

To learn more about Project Rachel, go to <https://www.archbalt.org/project-rachel/>.

When: Sat, Dec 14, 2019,
10:00am - 3:30 pm

Where: St. John Paul II National Shrine in DC,
3900 Harewood Rd NE, Washington, DC 20017

REFLECTION - The Theology of the Body Revisited, or Should I Say, Visited for the First Time

Although I lived much of my adult life during St. John Paul II's pontificate, I connected him mostly with the fall of the Soviet Union and the inauguration of World Youth Day. Of course I had heard of *The Theology of the Body*, but am embarrassed to admit I never read it. When I started to work on the October newsletter, I wondered whether there was a connection between St. John Paul II's October 22 Feast Day and the USCCB's designation of October as Respect Life Month. I soon realized that any connection between the two celebrations was providential. Respect Life Month was inaugurated in 1972, six years before St. John Paul II's pontificate began; and October 22 (St. John Paul II's Feast Day) was the day he was installed as Supreme Pontiff in 1978.



Statue of St. John Paul II at the Baltimore of Basilica.

By the time I realized that there was seemingly no connection between the two October designations, it was too late. I had already begun researching St. John Paul II's writings and was totally blown away. This reflection focuses on a cursory look at one aspect of *The Theology of the Body*, a composite of 129 weekly Wednesday audiences given by then Pope John Paul II between September 5, 1979, and November 28, 1984. Those of you who have read the *The Theology of the Body* or have taken a course in it will immediately recognize that I am just beginning to dip my toes into its very expansive and deep waters... waters that encompass the complexities of human sexuality and marriage and all they entail. This reflection focuses on the concept of personhood.

As I was doing my research I came across an article in which the author made an interesting point. He pointed out that when one is hit, one doesn't say, "Don't hit my body"; instead, he or she says, "Don't hit **me!**", implying that one takes such treatment very *personally!*. It implies that a person is more than his or her body! During his January 2, 1980 audience entitled "Creation As a Fundamental and Original Gift", Pope John Paul II expounded on the concept of man being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). He said:

"The Bible texts contain the essential elements of this anthropology, which are manifested in the theological context of the "image of God"... Man, whom God created male and female, bears the divine image imprinted on his body "from the beginning." Man and woman constitute two different ways of the human "being a body" in the unity of that image." (TOB, January 2, 1980)

During his October 22, 1980 audience, the pope continued to speak on the "body-soul unity" of the human person when he said, "In its masculinity and femininity, the body is called "from the beginning" to become the manifestation of the spirit... in a way, a sacramental sign." (TOB, October 22, 1980)

What an awesome way to describe the concept of "personhood"! A person is not a soul contained in a body, but an embodied soul.... a body that bears the divine image imprinted on it!

As I reflected on the human person as a body-soul unity, the following, clearly overly simplistic analogy, came to mind. I thought of a cake. Although a cake is made of individual ingredients, the

resulting cake is more than a mixture of the ingredients that comprise it. It exhibits the quality of "cakeness". If one tries to separate the cake into its individual ingredients, one ends up destroying the cake and it loses that quality of "cakeness". If we apply this analogy to the concept of personhood we might conclude that by considering the body apart from the soul or by denying the existence of a soul, one alters totally the meaning of personhood.

It occurred to me that the timing of St. John Paul II's series of talks was not coincidental. John Paul II's pontificate followed that of St. Paul VI, separated by the brief 33 day pontificate of Pope John Paul I. St. Paul VI wrote the controversial encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and his pontificate coincided with the onset of the sexual revolution. It occurred to me that, when considering the human person, our culture more often than not disassociates the body and soul (or ignores the existence of a soul altogether) and that this disassociation likely accounts for many of the horrors of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, centuries that have seen two world wars, the Holocaust (and other acts of genocide), and a cultural transformation marked by the introduction of contraceptive technology, the deaths of millions of unborn children, the growing acceptance of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, and a utilitarian approach toward the human body which has led to the commoditization of human body parts. Consider how the manner in which abortions are done and end of life medical decisions are made are increasingly influenced by the lucrative organ transplant industry.

George Weigel, John Paul II's official English biographer, has described *Theology of the Body* as "one of the boldest reconfigurations of Catholic theology in centuries" and a "kind of theological time bomb set to go off with dramatic consequences, sometime in the third millennium of the Church." My admittedly oversimplified reflection on the human person as a body-soul unity and the consequences of rejecting this unity by a culture leads me to agree with Weigel's conclusion. Not only does the rejection of St. John Paul II's view of the human person seem to help account for many of our culture's problems, if correct, John Paul's II views must also hold some of the solutions to those problems. How excited I was to hear that on St. John Paul II's feast day this year the Polish Bishops' Conference asked Pope Francis to name him a patron of Europe and a doctor of the Church. If he is made a doctor of the Church, perhaps there will be a resurgence of interest in his writings. I know I have made a commitment to dust off the still shrink-wrapped copy of *The Theology of the Body* that sits on my bookshelf and read it this coming Advent.

PS... It occurred to me this morning at mass that the word "person" applies not just to human beings but to the three "persons" that make up God. How awesome is that word? And how awesome that God shares His identity with us!

Prayer for Our Nation

God our Father, Giver of life, we entrust the United States of America to Your loving care. You are the rock on which this nation was founded. You alone are the true source of our cherished rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Reclaim this land for Your glory and dwell among Your people.

Send Your Spirit to touch the hearts of our nation's leaders. Open their minds to the great worth of human life and the responsibilities that accompany human freedom. Remind Your people that true happiness is rooted in seeking and doing Your will.

Through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, Patroness of our land, grant us the courage to reject the "culture of death." Lead us into a new millennium of life. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

If you have a printed copy of the newsletter, you can access links to slideshows, websites and other linked resources by going to <https://www.stagnescatholicchurch.org/respectlife>. There you will find archived copies of the newsletter from which you can access the links.

To subscribe to the monthly St. Agnes-St. William of York Respect Life Newsletter, please email Paula Noeller at pnoeller@comcast.net. In the subject field enter 'Newsletter'.

Prayer Intention and Reflection for the Second Week of October, Respect Life Month

Prayer Intention:

Let us pray for women and men suffering from the trauma associated with abortion, especially those who are participating in the November 14-15 Project Rachel Weekend Retreat, and for those in the Project Rachel ministry.

Reflection by Deacon Jack Ames:

The following poem is a part of a reflection that Deacon Jack Ames wrote in response to a reflection in a previous issue of the St. Agnes/St. William of York Respect Life newsletter. In that reflection, reference was made to the failure of the ancient Israelites to listen to the Lord through the prophets He had sent. The consequences of Israel's failure to listen were devastating. Fast forward to our present time. In 1968, Pope St. Paul VI, a modern prophet, published the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*. Much like the ancient Israelites, many in the 20th and 21st centuries have failed to listen. The consequences have also been devastating.

Listen

By Deacon Jack Ames

I heard a voice cry in the night
'I need your help, defend this life'.
Where is this voice I cannot see?
Alas, it is about a child, not yet born, 'to be'.

I heard a voice cry in the night
About this child who has the right.
The right to live in their mother's womb.
Yet some say 'not to be', but in the tomb.

I heard a voice cry in the night
Who can help this child whose 'out of sight'?
It is you who read this, among the living,
So please **listen**, be giving and forgiving.

I heard a voice cry in the night
Which now I know is such a fright.
Lord give me strength to make human life a right.
Teach me to pray so I may conquer this fight.

God said, "I am the voice you heard in the night.
I need everyone to listen, pray and save human life (*Humane Vitae*)."

Prayer Intention and Reflection for the Third Week of Respect Life Month

Prayer Intention: Let us pray that all men and women will stand up for the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death and will stand up against the evils of abortion and assisted suicide/euthanasia.

Reflection:

From a commentary by Supreme Knight Carl A Anderson in the July 2018 issue of Columbia magazine:

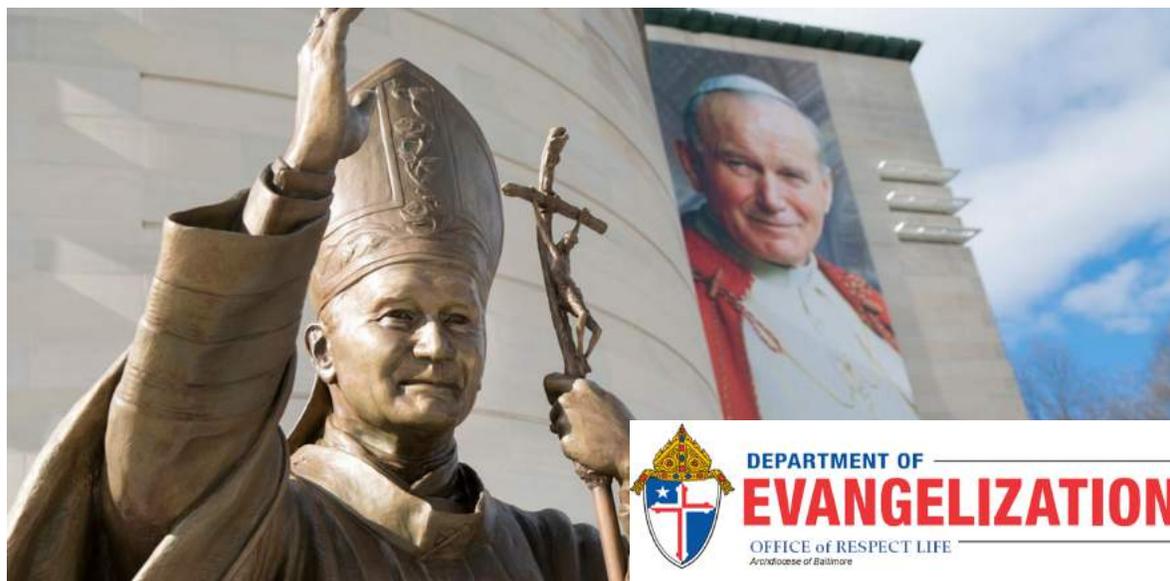
"There is much to reflect upon in Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad). In one section, the pope writes: 'Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly.... We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in (the) world' (101)...."

Catholics have a responsibility to insist that those responsible for the public good focus public debate where it belongs: on respect for the dignity of every human being and the sanctity of every human life."

A poem by Henry and Lois Nejfelt's, then, 13 year old grandson:

The Gift of Life by Owen Chen

I have ten little fingers and ten little toes
I have two little hands that could hold a rose
Two little legs that could walk on the sand
I have two little arms that could hold your hand
I have two little eyes and two little ears
And I have emotions like pain and fear
I have a mouth to cry but no (one) can hear
I am a human I have a real heart
But life on this earth I will never start
My mom made a choice when I was unaware
I was killed by a doctor who did not care
Life is a gift from God not to be wasted away
No baby should ever be killed this way
Everybody's life is extremely precious
Abortion should make every person breathless
Life is built to have spectacular thrills
Every person should have all of their fill



PRO-LIFE PILGRIMAGE

TO THE SAINT JOHN PAUL II NATIONAL SHRINE

Date: December 7, 2019

3900 Harewood Rd. NE
Washington, DC 20017

Cost: FREE

Parking: Onsite & FREE

To RSVP:
prolifepilgrimage.eventbrite.com

Schedule

10am: Mass & Rosary
11am: Reflection & Confession
12pm: Lunch*
1pm: Self-guided tour
2:30pm: Visit Chapels
2:45pm: Relic veneration
3:00pm Divine Mercy Chapel
3:30pm: Departure

**Bring your own lunch*