

Pro-Life Day in Austin: Making God's dream our dream

By: Maria Frederick, Public Relations and Outreach Coordinator, Texas Catholic Conference

No two pro-life rallies are the same. This year's Pro-Life Day in Austin was my fourth to attend and I have to say that they keep getting better.

A few friends and I got up before the crack of dawn to make it to the 7 a.m. prayer vigil that started the day's events. Gathering at a Goodwill parking lot, we walked to a nearby abortion clinic where we prayed for families, children—born and unborn, doctors, politicians, and abortionists. Trucks on the sidewalk honked in support while a clinic worker took pictures every time a new person knelt to pray or a sidewalk counselor motioned toward cars entering the parking lot. Dr. Alveda King, niece of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., was also present at the vigil and spoke to us of her own life, steeped in the significance of civil rights, and how our presence was a testament to those rights.

After our prayers a deacon who had walked with us blessed us with Holy Water and also spiritually blessed all the children who had lost their lives in the clinic. Despite the brisk air, the prayer vigil organizers counted approximately 90 people in attendance, including the Catholic Longhorns for Life, a pro-life group from UT, and a Hispanic young adult group.

After the vigil, we headed over to San Jose parish for the Mass for Life. Present at the Mass were Bishop Gregory Aymond, of the diocese of Austin, diocesan priests and seminarians, members of the Knights of Columbus and the Guadalupanas, and youth groups from the University of Texas, Texas A&M University, Juan Diego High School, and other nearby parishes. The pews were packed and somehow we were able to find seats in the back row, inches away from the KOC's swords.

During his homily, Bishop Aymond made a simple statement that succinctly summed up why we as Catholics are pro-life. "All human life is sacred to God," he began, "and therefore is sacred to us."

And Bishop Aymond drew no lines in his homily to limit what human life is sacred.

"God's dream is that all human life will be respected," he said during his homily. "We have a dream not just for the unborn but for all human life. We have a dream that the terminally ill will not be in danger of losing their lives. We have a dream that those on death row will be given a chance to repent, instead of taking their life from them. We have a dream that the poor and the homeless and the hungry will be invited to someone's table. We have a dream that immigrants will be treated with respect and dignity."

This heightened awareness for *all* life stayed with us throughout the day. At Republic Square, where we met to march to the Capitol, we received signs that read "Protect Every Heart." Not just his heart, or hers, not just white or black, innocent or guilty, born or unborn, but every heart.

At the Texas Rally for Life at the Capitol, we saw Dr. Alveda King again as she spoke before the crowd of over two thousand supporters. "This battle is for all people fighting for the civil rights of the weakest," she told us.

Fighting for the weakest. This is exactly what we're taught in the Catholic Social Teaching regarding the preferential option for the poor—to set for ourselves a standard for decision-making that places at the

forefront what the effect of our decision is on the poor in our society. In the case of abortion, we argue that the unborn child is denied the right to life. But aren't children who are denied access to healthcare, immigrants who are denied a day's pay, parents who are denied their role as primary educator of their children, or criminals who are denied a chance at rehabilitation also denied the right to life with dignity?

These are the issues that face us as pro-life Catholics, issues that petition us to strive for a society in which all people, from conception and throughout life until natural death, can live a life of dignity. If we strive for anything else, we are narrowing God's dream instead of expanding our own.

To learn more about how the Texas Catholic Conference is striving to promote the dignity of all human life, visit our web site at TXcatholic.org. There you can find our legislative agenda, as well as resources on the many issues that we advocate for. To make sure you know about events like the Pro-Life Day, be sure to sign up for our email newsletter, the *Texas Catholic Voice* on the main page of our site.

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