

2019 March for Life Pilgrimage Evaluation Results

Components of the Pilgrimage

1. Registration & Payment Process
 - Process was very straight-forward
 - Emails were informative and instructive
 - Thanks for being so flexible and patient
 - Too many options; maybe just need either on-line or printed registration and payment
2. Send-Off Mass & Activities
 - Liked multiple departure locations
 - Liked having midnight Mass on Thursday, our first day
 - Would have preferred a single departure location
 - Mass too early
 - Had to wait too long before departing / too much time after Mass waiting for buses to arrive
 - A wonderful send-off
3. Prayer & Spiritual Activities
 - Really liked having prayers, including Divine Liturgy, in the program booklet
 - Those who lead the prayers and spiritual activities did a great job.
 - I am not Catholic, so it was kind of [unfamiliar].
 - Liturgy of the Hours was great!
 - Loved having the youth lead the rosary
 - Pleasantly surprised there was more prayer and spirituality than expected
 - Would have liked more opportunities for confession on return trip
4. Educational Activities
 - [Program booklet] content, discussions and videos did a good job of educating and tying topics together
 - Information in the program booklet about Washington DC was helpful but more time to go sightseeing would have been better
 - I learned tons on this trip
5. Movies
 - Movies were good, but there were a lot of them
 - Would have liked more entertaining movies in the evening
 - Good messages, but not like movies we are used to watching
 - Very helpful, especially [*I Lived on Parker Avenue*] and [*Who Was the Real Margaret Sanger?*]
 - *The Giver* and *October Baby* were great. *Paul VI* was interesting but long.
 - Good mix of education and entertainment
6. Social Activities & Personal Time
 - We needed more personal time
 - We did not have many social activities, but these were not necessary.

- Lots of fun group time this trip
 - Enjoyed introductions and learning interesting facts about others
7. Youth Rally & Mass for Life at the Capital One Area
- Youth Rally & Mass was not as full and not as energetic as in the past
 - I fell asleep during Youth Rally & Mass, sorry
 - The Mass was my favorite part of the trip
 - I was amazed at the number of young people, seminarians and young priests in attendance. This gives me hope.
8. Pro-Life Rally & March for Life
- Best part of my year!
 - I still cannot believe the March is both the largest and most peaceful human rights event in our country.
 - Speakers were great!
 - Group got spread out a little too much
 - This was HUGE! How can this annual event not get any media coverage?
 - I learned a lot from the stories of other people as we walked.
 - Only at a pro-life event would they tell you to pick up any trash you see.
 - With so many faithful pilgrims, I knew the March would be a joyful experience. However, with over a half million people marching, I was surprised that there wasn't any rudeness, disrespect or anger (except for the very few people I saw who opposed our position).
 - Heard some people mention the lack of toilets was a concern
9. Post-March Reflection & Discussions
- Best part of the trip!
 - I was initially a little hesitant to share my thoughts but hearing others who had the same experiences created a sense of unity and gave me confidence.
 - Making the testimonies optional was the right decision but I just felt compelled to stand up and support those who did speak out.
 - I didn't fully realize how much the trip impacted me until I heard others speak about it.
 - I was too nervous to get up and speak but I agreed with many people who did give testimonies.
10. Meals & Rest Breaks
- Fewer stops needed / more stops needed
 - Some stops were too early / too late
 - More variety, fewer Cracker Barrels
 - Shorter stop needed in Breezewood [Final stop prior to arriving into Washington DC]
 - Well-thought-out meal and restroom stops and good locations
11. Buses
- Drivers were great
 - Wi-Fi intermittent or did not work
 - Needed wireless microphones on both buses
 - Difficult to sleep in seats, but this was also a pilgrimage not a vacation

- The bus trip required some sacrifice and redemptive suffering but that is what made this trip a true pilgrimage!
- A lot of people I know flew to Washington DC but I cannot imagine having a pilgrimage without the bus ride.
- Bus rattled
- Not much space and roof may have had a leak

12. Leadership Team

- Really chill and nice!
- Great job!
- The timing of most things was well done, and communication was helpful. Flexible and very kind.
- First time pilgrims would have benefited from more up-front instruction and expectations for the trip.

How did you hear about the March for Life Pilgrimage trip?

- Family & friends
- Past pilgrims
- Parish/school youth group
- Catholic Key
- Parish bulletin
- Parish Respect Life Committee
- School Director of Religious Education

Why did you decide to go on this trip?

- Feel called to protect our most innocent brothers and sisters
- Wanted to be “actively” pro-Life, not just “passively” pro-life
- Liked idea of “ironman” trip with no frills and no hotel stay
- Speakers at March for Life Rally
- This was on my bucket list
- I care about the unborn *AND* their mothers
- To speak for those who cannot speak for themselves
- I love babies and America
- Have always been pro-life but felt I needed to be doing more
- Idea just popped into my head totally out of the blue

What aspect(s) of the pilgrimage did you most enjoy?

- The bus ride, regular prayers and “pro-life” videos made it a true pilgrimage
- Fellowship with so many people who feel the same way I do
- Meeting so many faithful Catholics
- Seeing so many youth committed to their faith
- March for Life Rally gave us energy and hope
- Marching in solidarity with 500K+ other people
- Testimonies
- Being with prayerful Catholics all day for three days, seeing the faith of our youth and so many young people at the March for Life

- Speakers on the National Mall talking about God
- Amazed at the number of youth who went to confession at Youth Rally & Mass
- Witness of so many families present at the March

What aspect(s) of the pilgrimage did you least enjoy?

- Had to get up too early
- Slow getting on the road due to multiple Masses at different locations
- Bus got uncomfortable / hard to sleep
- Rest stops and meal stops could have been shorter
- Fewer breakfast options than in the past at Breezewood
- Having to wear layers of clothing for a few hours after March
- Leaders telling us what to do, need to treat youth with respect
- So glad to see so many youth, but they were very loud
- Leaders were not Christ-like and reflective of our universal Church -- should have been more welcoming of first-time pilgrims by inviting us to sit with them during meals
- I liked the trip with the hotel stay last year better
- The Youth Rally & Mass was unnecessary; would have rather gone sightseeing
- There was so much going on at the Youth Rally & Mass, I ended up with a headache
- Bus was too warm
- Introductions made me nervous
- Some in the dinner crowd at Union Station after the March seemed disrespectful of others
- Not being able to shower; I felt nasty

What do you now plan to do to help build a culture of life?

- Pray regularly for an end to abortion
- Join parish Respect Life Committee
- Consider organizing a parish pilgrimage next year
- Utilize science and facts in addition to faith when discussing abortion
- Let people know that abortion is not cool, and you cannot change your position just to fit in
- Share the message of the March for Life and compassionately help “pro-choicers” understand the truth
- Help my friends have the same pro-life passion I do
- Take the opportunity to be a witness more often
- Utilize my role within the parish and within our Knights of Columbus council to raise awareness and to raise money for local pregnancy centers
- Take a small group to pray outside Planned Parenthood
- Embrace those considering abortion and those hurt by abortion
- Persevere
- Continue current parish Respect Life work, including supporting local pregnancy center and doing Holy Hour for Life
- I would like to get involved with sidewalk counseling
- Speak out more in social settings

Additional Comments

- Might consider alternating “ironman” trip and “hotel stay” trip

- Parents and grandparents accompanying young family members may not have always known who the chaperones were for the friends of our youth. Would have been good for all chaperones to have a list of the names and assignments of all other chaperones.
- A couple pairs of teens tried to test the rules. Make a bigger issue at the beginning of the trip about appropriate dress and emphasize the appropriate rules for boys and girls.