Under cloudy-bright skies, with the temperature hovering around 25 degrees, an estimated 500 people joined in the annual Walk for Life, January 19 in Yakima.

Carrying signs and pink and blue balloons, the group walked from St. Paul Cathedral, along Yakima Avenue, to Millennium Plaza on South Third Street. All ages were represented from seniors, to young adults, teenagers, and babies and toddlers riding in strollers and in one family-size wagon pulled by a smiling father. The mood was optimistic, yet ever mindful of the 50 million babies who have lost their lives in the 40 years since Roe vs. Wade legalized abortion in the United States.

The event began with a gathering at St. Paul Cathedral in which Bishop Emeritus Carlos Sevilla, S.J., offered a prayer and reminded the crowd that the annual Walk for Life shows support for human life from conception through natural death.

Other speakers stressed the importance of each and every person doing something constructive to stand up for life – from volunteering at prayer vigils at Planned Parenthood in Yakima every Tuesday and Wednesday at 9 a.m., or Tuesday at 2:30 p.m., to volunteering at the pro-life booth at this year’s Central Washington Fair – and thanked the many individuals and groups who had made possible the 2013 Walk for Life. The Walk, this year, was sponsored by Image Point Mobile Medical Services.

As walkers filled the two eastbound lanes of Yakima Avenue, led by police escort and a sound truck carrying large pro-life signs, some expressed their reasons for attending.

“This is the right thing to do. This is the thing (abortion) we need to change in this country,” observed Bob Bader, a Holy Family parishioner who has participated in walks for life “off and on” for about 20 years, as he strode along the Avenue. “I think that abortion is the basic, underlying evil that is taking this country apart,” he suggested.

“It looks to me like the biggest group we’ve had for a while,” added Jonella Leadon, also a Holy Family parishioner, as she walked in the midst of the crowd. “Maybe some of the things that have happened politically have spurred people to get involved,” she said.

“It’s just great to see such a large number of people coming out for this,” commented Ryan Yedinak, 19, a member of REACH youth ministry, as he reflected on the Walk for Life after closing comments, song and a release of some 400 helium balloons at Millennium Plaza.

“It’s awesome. It’s exciting. It’s important for my children to understand what’s going on,” said Ginger Acob, who stood with her 13- and nine-year-old kids in the Plaza.

Some walkers were more subdued. Bill Eggleston, from Open Bible Church in Yakima, said he couldn’t help but think “of the percentage of the U.S. population” which has been aborted.

Jim Anson, from Holy Family Parish, added that, “It says in Matthew’s gospel, ‘Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren…’”

Kathy Dean of St. Paul Parish, noted that, “Respect for life is being lost. It filters into all parts of our life, from the elderly to special needs children.”

Yet, overall, the mood remained upbeat.

“It was nice to see the support of all the generations,” observed Mira Dowe, from Christian Life Center.

“It’s good to support the little unborn babies who can’t support themselves,” added Olivia Wauzynski, 15, of St. Paul Parish.

“I just think it’s right,” agreed her sister, Stella Wauzynski, 17, also from St. Paul Parish.

Following the Walk for Life, on January 22, the second annual Mass for Life was held at St. Paul Cathedral, with the Rev. Msgr. Robert Siler, Chancellor for the Diocese of Yakima, officiating. Other, upcoming events include a proposed October walk for life, marking the traditional Respect Life month.
Safe Environment: Tips on How to Effectively Communicate Concerns

“I am hesitant to talk to her because I don’t want her to think I am accusing her of something.”
“What if he gets angry and starts saying things about me?”
“I am afraid to say anything – I don’t want to ruin someone’s reputation.”

These are examples of the kinds of reasons, or justifications, that adults have for not communicating concerns about the actions of other adults who work with children in our parishes and schools. It is important to trust our instincts and communicate our concerns in order to create safe environments for children.

In his book, The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals that Protect us from Violence, Gavin De Becker, urges all adults to trust their intuition – that “uneasy in the gut feeling” that tells us that something is just not right. That instinct, or intuition, is an early warning signal for us and, if we listen to it, it can serve us well. However, all too often we second-guess that little voice telling us that something is not right. We think, “But he seems like such a nice guy!” Or, “She has been working with children for years, so she must be okay.” Or, “I am just being paranoid.” When we suppress our instincts in favor of our “better judgment,” the consequences can be serious.

Trust Your Instincts -- and Talk To The Appropriate Person

Effectively communicating concerns begins with trusting our intuition when we sense that something is just not as it should be. Listening to and respecting that sense of anxiety or that instinctive concern is one of the first steps each adult can take in the effort to create safe environments for children.

When we see or hear something that raises concerns, it is important to communicate that unease to someone who can do something about it – either the person who is behaving in a way that concerns you, or that person’s supervisor. Your decision about who to approach depends on the nature of the concern and the level of comfort you have in talking with the person involved.

For example, if your church or school has a policy that two adults work together to transport children and you notice that the new soccer coach is offering to take home an individual child after practice every day, you could talk to her directly. Let her know about the policy and remind her of the Church’s commitment to safe environments for children.

Follow Through, Be Clear and Do Not Gossip

If the person responds appropriately and alters her behavior, the situation is handled with a minimal amount of upset for everyone involved. However, if she does not respond well or becomes outraged, it is important that you stand your ground on this issue. Express your concerns to a supervisor. Remember that your first priority is the safety of children.

If you feel uncomfortable approaching the coach in the first place, or if the situation is a serious concern that you think is better addressed by the supervisor, you should talk to the person in charge and express your concerns. Don’t let your fear of being wrong or of upsetting someone stop you from protecting children.

Whether you talk with a supervisor first, or wait until after your conversation with the person you have concerns about, be prepared to tell the supervisor exactly what happened that raised your concerns. Be clear about what you saw or heard and the nature of your concern about it.

Remember that communicating a concern is not an accusation. Communicating concerns does not ruin reputations. Communicating concerns does not destroy people. But, if you talk to another person other than the person involved or that person’s supervisor, you run the risk of doing all three. How? Because talking with anyone other than the person involved or their supervisor is gossip – and gossip destroys reputations and damages the lives of good people. Conversations about your concerns with other parishioners, schoolteachers, religious education teachers, or parents undermine the good name of someone who deserves the opportunity to address and resolve your discomfort.

Bottom Line:

It is critical that each adult communicate concerns about the behaviors of adults who interact with the children in our communities. Don’t be the one who never spoke up about a concern until after something terrible happened. Protect children and the good name and reputation of those who work with children by communicating your concerns to someone who can do something about it—the person involved, or that person’s supervisor.

This article was provided by Virtus, which provides safe environment curriculum used in many schools and parishes to help train children and young people.

If you have been abused or victimized by a member of the Catholic clergy, please believe in the possibility for hope and help and healing. We encourage you to come forward and speak out.

The Yakima Diocese has a sexual abuse hotline for those who wish to report some incident concerning that issue as regards a bishop, priest, deacon or diocesan employee or volunteer. (888) 276-4490
Father Tom Kuykendall has vivid memories of the way Lent used to be, during his childhood.

“I attended St. Paul School in Yakima,” recalls the 76-year-old pastor of St. Joseph Church, Wenatchee, and Director of Schools for the Diocese of Yakima. “I remember the whole school, class by class, going over to church for ashes. We always had ashes that fell on our noses and the kids giggled. The Dominican sisters wore white habits and their ashes left big black marks on their habits.” That brought more giggles.

“Most kids in those days gave up candy for Lent (in Father Kuykendall’s case, that would have been chocolate such as Milky Way candy bars). I think we also used to give up things like the 25-cent Saturday movie matinees of the ‘Lone Ranger.’ Then, every Friday afternoon during Lent, we went to Stations of the Cross in St. Paul. There were 500 or 600 of us, so there were a lot of kids in that church!” he said. “We’d sing ‘Stabat Mater’ (Sorrowful Mother Stood) in Latin.”

Father also recalls how fasting began at midnight, the night before Mass, in those days. For children, who usually couldn’t stay up that late, that realistically meant nothing to eat after dinner the night before.

“If you served the 1 a.m. Sunday Mass, you were told to eat breakfast and not go to Communion,” he said. “They didn’t want us to faint!”

Although some of the rules and regulations have changed since Father Kuykendall’s childhood, the meaning and spirit of the Season remain just as important, he maintains. Lent, which includes 40 days that technically end the evening of Holy Thursday, followed by the “Triduum” of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, is still a major part of Catholic identity and thinking.

“It is a thoughtful, reflective time, in general, until we zero in on the Passion and death of Christ,” he said. “It’s a time of reflecting on our lives, on what needs to change. The Sunday readings really call us to look into ourselves, to try harder and to be into conversion.”

Actually, today’s Lenten focus on final preparations for catechumens (those preparing to become Catholics) and of “cradle Catholics” remembering our Baptismal promises is more in keeping with the ancient traditions of the Church than were the more penitential practices of Father Kuykendall’s youth, before Vatican II, he observes.

“It’s more in keeping with the Third, Fourth Century way of preparing for Easter,” he explained. “After that, when everyone had been baptized, and most of Europe was Catholic, the penitential focus came about.”

Although the concept of “giving up something for Lent,” as well as practices such as receiving ashes on the forehead, confessing sins, attending Stations of the Cross and fasting (on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday) have continued, other newer variations also have emerged. Now, we have communal penance services, weekly soup suppers, and/or Rice Bowl donation boxes, for example, in many Catholic parishes, he noted.

Father Tom Kuykendall recalled memories of Lent.
Father Davis To Become Army Chaplain –

Father Jacob Davis, a former Norbertine monk, left Central Washington earlier this month to begin a three-month Army Chaplain Basic Officer Leader Course at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

Father Davis, the son of Bill and Margaret Davis of Richland, has worked in the Diocese of Yakima for the past year and a half. He grew up in Christ the King Parish in Richland.

This past summer, Father Davis served as a chaplain at Joint Base Lewis-McChord on the Washington coast for “Operation Warrior Forge,” which involved leadership training for 10,000 ROTC students. He will report for an assignment at Fort Riley, Kansas, toward the end of April. He expects to be sworn in as an active-duty chaplain at about that time. He plans, one day, to return to serve in the Diocese of Yakima.

Our prayers go with Father Davis as he begins his new endeavors.

Don’t Forget Lenten Regulations

Although Lenten regulations have changed over the years (see related story, page 3), all practicing Catholics still are required to observe a few rules.

Don’t forget that Ash Wednesday (February 13) and Good Friday (March 29) are days of fast and abstinence. This means that no meat or meat products may be eaten on these days by anyone age 14 and older. In addition, these are days of fasting for all between the ages of 18 and 59. This means no food or drinks (except water) between meals, and there should be only one full meal and two smaller meals on such a day. For medical concerns or other special circumstances on which you have questions, check with your parish clergy.

In addition to these requirements, all faithful Catholics are urged to willingly perform other acts of “prayer, self-denial and charity,” in keeping with the spirit of the season.

Latin Mass Scheduled

All are welcome to come to a Traditional Latin Mass, scheduled for 1:30 p.m., Sunday February 10, in the chapel of Holy Family Church, Yakima.

Experience the beauty and solemnity of this ancient Catholic rite. Refreshments will be served following Mass.

Holy Family Church: A Large Parish With ‘A Lot Going For It’

Father Cesar Vega M. clearly remembers that day in 2009 when Bishop Carlos Sevilla, S.J., called, asking him to become the new pastor of Holy Family Church in Yakima.

“At first, I was silent,” Father Vega recalled. “The Bishop asked, ‘Father, are you there?’ I said that I was trying to get over the shock! It was a little overwhelming!”

At the time, Father Vega (who uses only the “M.” from his surname, Mendoza) was 33 years old, the pastor of some 300 families in St. Francis de Sales Parish, Chelan. It was a giant step to become the first Hispanic pastor of Holy Family Church, with its 1,500 parishioners and the largest Catholic Church building in Yakima.

In the three years since he assumed his new role, Father Vega has drawn perspective from a prayer written by Archbishop Oscar Romero. The Archbishop wrote, “It helps now and then to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision…We plant the seeds that one day will grow…We lay foundations that will need further development…We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that...it is a beginning...an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.”

Now, Father Vega has hit his stride in this “very generous, very active, very committed parish with people who are very involved in different ministries.”

Under a five-year, $2 million capital campaign started by Father Michael Ibach, Father Vega has overseen updating including new stained glass windows, a new roof, heating and cooling improvements and parking lot refurbishing. By Easter, it is hoped that remodeling of the sanctuary, Baptismal font and flooring in the main Church will be complete. The floor will feature symbols of the seven sacraments, leading up the main aisle to the altar.

“We’re a church on a journey,” he observed. “Our mission is to figure out how we can be the best companions to people on the journey of faith.”

Father Vega credits several priests-in-residence, Fathers Gary Desharnais, Ronald Patnode and Thomas Lane, with providing invaluable assistance in juggling the many needs of the large parish. Father Ibach, the Judicial Vicar for the Diocese, also contributes greatly. Deacons John Cornell and Jim Kramper are other key resources.

Since its establishment in 1959, Holy Family Parish has been led by numerous other pastors. Father Richard Queen was the first, celebrating Mass in Queen Gym for a number of years before the main sanctuary was consecrated in 1969. Father John Shaw served for a time as co-pastor. Other pastors and co-pastors have included: Mgrs. Edmund McGrath, John Ecker and Perron Auve, and Fathers John Tholen, Frederick Brenner and John Murtagh.

Holy Family School was open from 1963-1971, with Dominican sisters and lay teachers. Today, some of the most active parish groups include the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters of America, Young Ladies Institute, St. Paul’s Guild, Sewing Ladies, Altar Society, Elizabeth Ministry (support after losing an infant), Knitting for Christ, and Projects Committee. And there’s Bible study, a men’s program, RCIA, and other teaching on Catholicism for all ages.

“Whatever someone is looking for, we probably have it,” observed Rose Meyer, a parishioner for 35 years and Religious Education Director for preschool through eighth grade. “Father Cesar is a good listener, and really takes an interest in what the parish needs. He tries to make sure that everyone feels welcome here.”

Jamie Canape, a parishioner for 23 years and Special Events Coordinator, agreed.

“Fellowship is a huge part of our parish,” she said. Whether it’s gathering for coffee after Mass, the annual bazaar or the annual Community Builders Gala (a dinner, auction and dance), there’s an emphasis on welcoming newcomers and extending fellowship to all, she said.

Sylvia Brule, who, with her husband, Don, has been a parishioner of the parish “since the beginning,” credited Father Vega and previous pastors at Holy Family with being “eager to have lay people involved” in a variety of parish programs.

“It has given my husband and me the opportunity to become very involved in the parish – to have personal growth and help the parish grow,” she said. (The Brules lead the “Father Gawdy Boys” program at Holy Family which supports 165 boys at a boarding home in Burma.)

“We’ve got a lot going for the parish,” she said.

“It’s an amazing church,” added Meyer.

Holy Family Church is home to 1,500 parishioners.