
March for Life marked by bitterness. Catholics upset by Biden's decisions

(from New York) Plans for the 48th March for Life were necessarily altered due to COVID-19 and the assault on the US Congress, but not its spirit. Today at 12pm local time in Washington, D.C. the March will be opened online from the National Mall where just a week ago President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris honoured the victims who died from the coronavirus. This year's March *is marked by bitterness, following the signing of a presidential memorandum by Catholic President Biden restoring funding for foreign nonprofits dealing with women's health*, including reproductive health, an adjective that does not exclude abortion. Under Title X of the Public Health Services Act, the federal government has provided funding for Family Planning Services, primarily serving low-income Americans. The Rule prohibits the use of Title X funds to perform or support abortion as a method of family planning, *but it imposes no additional abortion-related restrictions on recipients of the funds*. Biden's Memorandum on Protecting Women's Health at Home and Abroad rescinds the so-called 'Mexico City Policy' first instituted by President Ronald Reagan at the International Population Conference in Mexico City in 1984, blocking programs of foreign NGOs that provide or actively promote abortion as a form of family planning abroad. *Republican presidents have endorsed this policy, and Democratic presidents repealed it, branding it as a gag rule on Title X*. Biden is toeing the line of his Democratic predecessors, despite the fact that a report by former President Trump's health secretary on the implementation of the life-protection policy had shown that the vast majority of NGOs operating abroad - 1,285 out of 1,340 - had complied with the Administration's strictest requirements "with minimal disruption of health services and no reduction in funding." *This is a "grievous" act that "actively promotes the destruction of human lives in developing nations"*, Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, said in a statement. "We and our brother bishops strongly oppose this action. This Executive Order is antithetical to reason, violates human dignity, and is incompatible with Catholic teaching", declared the two prelates, however leaving the door open to cooperation with President Biden, criticised by the President of the Bishops' Conference, Jose Gomez, on the day of his inauguration for his position on abortion. *"The Catholic Church stands ready to work with you and your administration to promote global women's health in a manner that furthers integral human development, safeguarding innate human rights and the dignity of every human life, beginning in the womb"*, remarked Archbishop Naumann and bishop Malloy, urging the President to use his office for good, "prioritizing the most vulnerable, including unborn children." Meanwhile, a poll promoted by the Knights of Columbus, published on 27 January, shows that 77% of Americans oppose "US taxpayer funding for abortion overseas", 64% of whom identify as "pro-choice." *Overall, 58% of respondents "oppose the use of taxpayer money to fund a woman's abortion."* Biden's decision also runs counter to what voters are calling for, tweeted March for Life president Jeanne Mancini who called the memorandum "a deeply disturbing move, especially when the President says he wants national unity." *Indeed, unity is a key theme of this year's march, as its title - 'Together Strong. Life Unites!' - suggests*. But the organisers could not imagine that a President who identifies himself as a devout Catholic would disregard the mission of the event, held online to avoid the risk of contagion. Only a small group, led by Jeanne Mancini, will march to the National Mall for the traditional speeches and then on to the US Supreme Court, which on 22 January 1973 established a woman's legal right to an abortion, after which the March began to take shape. Yesterday, 118 members of Congress co-signed a letter asking Biden to reconsider his decision on the Mexico City policy. The President has not replied.

