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CONTACT: Rose Trabbic, Publicist
Walk for Life West Coast
media@walkforlifewc.com
(239)867-4180

Pope Benedict XVI honors Walk for Life West Coast

Record crowd tops 50,000, fills main S.F. thoroughfare for more than 1 mile

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 27, 2013 – Pope Benedict XVI commended the “outstanding public witness to the fundamental human right to life” of the Walk for Life West Coast, in a special message delivered by his delegate to tens of thousands gathered in front of San Francisco’s City Hall Jan.26.

The Walk for Life West Coast rally at Civic Center Plaza filled the plaza, before participants walked the two miles from City Hall to the Ferry Building, traveling through the heart of the city’s shopping and financial districts. More than to 50,000 participated, organizers estimated.

Pope Benedict XVI’s representative to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano delivered a message from the pope along with his papal blessing. Pope Benedict’s message, which was also sent out on a Vatican Twitter feed, said, His Holiness “is grateful to all those who take part in this outstanding public witness to the fundamental human right to life and the moral imperative of upholding the inviolable dignity of each member of our human family, especially the smallest and most defenseless of our brothers and sisters.”

“You are a powerful witness that God’s truth cannot be silenced,” said San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone, who blessed participants to begin the event. “Yes, we are here to stay because life is good and life is holy.”

The speakers at the Walk included Lacey Buchanan, the mother of a disabled child; Elaine Riddick, who was forcibly sterilized by the state of North Carolina at age 14; Kelly and Matthew Clinger who regret their abortions; and the Rev. Clenard Childress, Jr., who has spoken at nearly every walk since its founding in 2005.

“Truth is rising up and you are the picture of that truth,” said Rev. Childress to loud cheers. “We will not draw back until every child is free.”

A Jumbotron displaying a graphic video of aborted children was set up by an anti-abortion group midway along the Walk route, despite efforts by Walk organizers to dissuade the group from playing the video.

Founded in 2005 by a group of San Francisco Bay Area residents, the Walk for Life West Coast’s mission is to change the perception of a society that thinks abortion is the answer. For more information and photos, www.walkforlifewc.com