

“What is Love?”

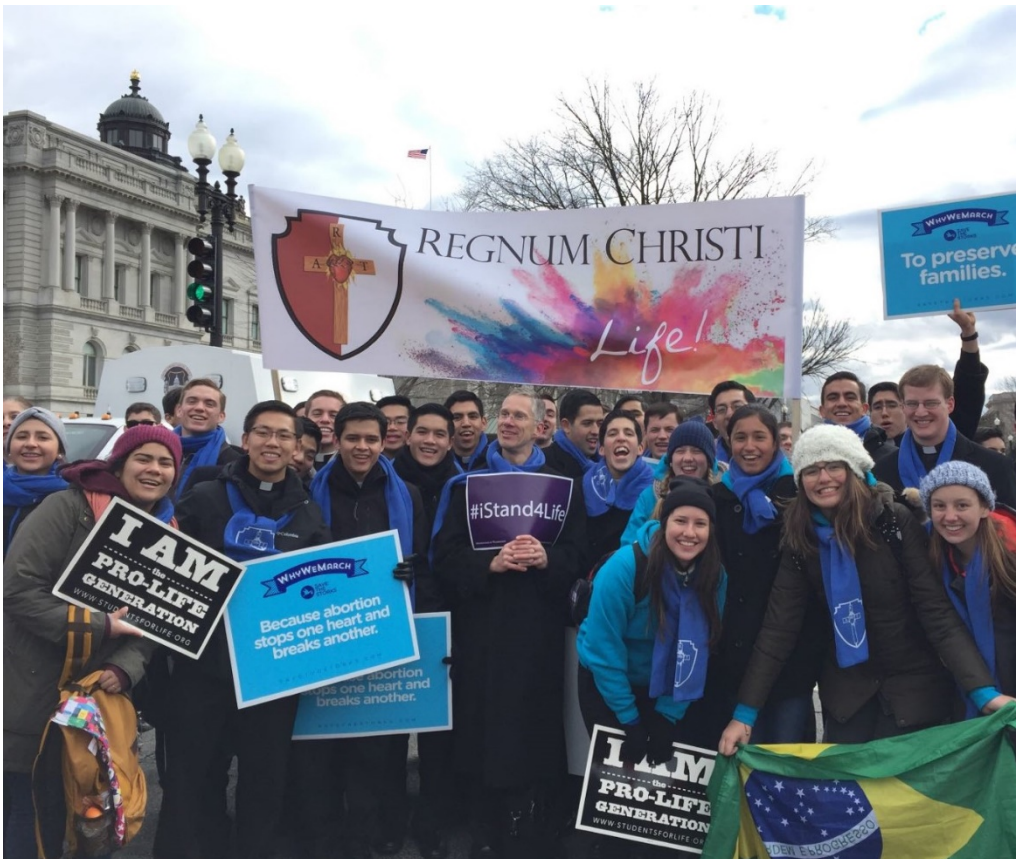
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“What is Love? Baby don’t hurt me, don’t hurt me no more.” Most of us are familiar with these lyrics from the 1993 hit-single by Haddaway. It’s one of the simplest songs I know, with the above-quoted lyrics repeated time and time again between intervals of techno music. But if Haddaway’s intent was to leave the listener at the end of the song with the haunting question “what *is* Love?” bouncing around in his brain, he did an excellent job at it.

Today we are faced with a similar question: “what is *Life*?” Life is a lot like Love. It’s free, it’s expansive, it’s joyful, it’s eternal. I feel that if we know what Life is, we’ll know what Love looks like. And if we know what Love looks like, we’ll recognize Life when we see it. I’m making no claims to be a master of clarity here, so feel free to reread that last sentence if necessary. I’m just trying to express what’s on my heart. Allow me to explain.

Last weekend, I went down to Washington D.C. with 40 of my religious brothers in the Legion of Christ to participate in the annual March for Life. It was my first time going to the March since I was very little, so I didn’t know exactly what to expect. We started things off right by attending the sacrifice of the Mass at the Armory with Archbishop Daniel DiNardo of Houston early Friday morning. That’s where I had “Experience Number One” of Life in the larger sense: thousands of young people singing praise and worship, at 7:30 in the morning I might add (!), in preparation for the Eucharist. Dozens and dozens of priests and seminarians. Colors and banners and t-shirts and smiles and... dancing! It was becoming clear to everyone involved that this was no protest, but rather a celebration.

When we finally put our hands down (see the Jan 27 video at <https://www.facebook.com/LCcheshire>) and finished Mass and wrapped up a whole rosary, we felt tanked and ready to go. After confronting the metro system, we made the short walk to the National Mall, where we heard Vice-President Mike Pence tell us that “Life is winning again in America.” How wonderful to hear those words! How much joy and enthusiasm electrified the crowd as we heard his speech encouraging us! It set those young hearts on fire and our eager feet marching.



“Experience of Life Number Two,” was when we actually marched the March. We Legionaries of Christ linked up with the members of Regnum Christi (www.regnumchristi.org) and set off down the street with the colorful crowd in our merry blue scarves. To be amidst so many like-minded and like-hearted people motivated me to keep marching! The brothers around me began to sing and stomp and chant joyful rhymes and phrases, the most direct and endearing of which was “We like babies, yes we do, we like babies how ‘bout you?” (It’s worth the digression to mention that anyone who tried to challenge us in a friendly way by “re-chanting” that chant back at us was then subsequently “out-chanted” by the brothers once again. We didn’t allow anyone to pretend that they were more pro-life than us; all “rival-chanters” eventually slunk away into the crowd, and we remained triumphant upon the field of victory.)

All in all the tone of the march was friendly and very upbeat. I met many new people and conversed with those around me as we walked. I even ran into Amelia Hoover, a consecrated woman of Regnum Christi who knows my brother and one of my cousins. What a joy to have companions in life who also feel strongly about protecting Life for others!

As I marched however, I felt that there was something else lurking below the surface. It can never be an entirely happy experience to confront evil, and recalling Roe v. Wade is no exception. I look again to the words of Haddaway’s song:

*Oh, I don't know why you're not there
I give you my Love but you don't care
So what is right and what is wrong?
Give me a sign. What is Love?*

These words present the poignant call I would like to make to aborted babies who are simple “not there,” their desperate mothers who sometimes “don’t care,” the conscience of my generation confused about “what is right,” and my fellow marchers who “give me a sign” by their simple presence. And the very last phrase, well, that’s for all of us.

I detest abortion. Lots of people detest abortion. It doesn’t make any sense, and it’s cruel. If I had my own hit-single, I would paraphrase Haddaway’s song like this: “What is Life? Don’t hurt a baby, don’t hurt a baby, no more.” It’s so simple! Stop hurting mothers and babies. Now let me say that nobody at the rally harbored any tender feelings for the heinous practice of abortion- that’s not in doubt for an instant- but it’s also true that we were there for something greater than just protesting abortion. We were there for moms and dads and children and grandparents and great uncles and third cousins twice removed, everybody! Everyone has a right to Life, and that’s all we wanted to say.



Then came the tantalizing thought, the thought of Victory. I began to ask myself, “what if we really succeed in taking down abortion via the Supreme Court? And what if it’s really soon? Would we even need to have the March again next year?” That thought alone is enough to give an ardent Catholic goosebumps. After a moment’s reflection, I felt strongly within me the emphatic response: “Yes, we would!” I pray to God that abortion will end, but if it does, I hope we still come back for the March for Life next year. The sense of gratitude we would assuredly feel for an evil expelled from our midst notwithstanding, we would be drawn inexorably to continue proclaiming that Life at every moment and in every circumstance is worth fighting for. Child abuse, contraception, the death penalty, euthanasia, or downright selfishness: all of these are opposed to what we believe because all of them limit Life and Love. And as long as they exist, we will keep marching.

So what is Love, and what is Life? Maybe we don’t have it all clear ourselves, but I would propose looking to someone who did. Segway to “Experience Number Three”! The day after the March, we piled into our buses and headed to the Saint John Paul II National Shrine, where we had Mass and time to visit the museum. There I was struck by the forcefulness of the Pontiff, nearly 12 years dead, who continues to speak to our hearts with the unparalleled strength of his conviction. I was bombarded by photos of the venerable saint as he exhorted, embraced, enlightened, and encouraged the men and women of his day.

As John Paul II said at Madison Square Garden on October 3, 1979, *“Dear young people: you and I and all of us together make up the Church, and we are convinced that only in Christ do we find real love, and the fullness of life. And so I invite you today to look to Christ.”*

He was truly the pro-life Pope par excellence. He gave Love and protected Life. He spent his Life in Loving others, and here he is telling us that “real love” and “the fullness of life” are found in precisely the same place: in Christ. So these experiences of Life that I had, of singing and worshipping at Mass, of marching alongside my brothers, and of admiring the greatness of those who went before me, all these led me to a greater Love in Christ.

We Legionaries made the trip back to Cheshire on Sunday, and daily life goes on for us. But as long as we Live, we continue to ask, “What is Love?”

