

MEDIA BROWNOUT OF MARCH FOR LIFE

It wasn't a total blackout, but the media coverage of the annual March for Life wasn't far from it. This was one time television, radio and the major newspapers didn't have to worry about competition, as none of them showed any interest in reporting on the pro-life event that marks the anniversary of Roe v. Wade.

Police estimates put the crowd at 60,000 while Nellie Gray of the March for Life Fund offered the figure of 125,000. It is fair to say that those who attended the march were more inclined to believe the larger figure. In any case, not one protester was spotted by anyone from the New York Archdiocesan contingent, making this a very positive event. The Washington Post, however, gave a different impression.

Typically, a march that draws tens of thousands of participants from all over the country merits front page coverage. But not the March for Life. The Washington Post put the story on front page of the "Metro" section, thus suggesting that it was a local event. The photograph it printed showed one, lone woman carrying a pro-abortion sign, surrounded by marchers with pro-life signs. It would make a great story all by itself to find out how long it took the photographer to find this one protester.

It is not unusual for marches of this size to be marred by some incident, a confrontation, a brawl or litter scattered about. But this march was exceptional as nothing untoward happened: everyone was well behaved.

In study recently released by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the media offer a very biased perspective of abortion rights advocates and opponents of abortion. For

example, in 116 stories, Republican advocates of legal abortion were labeled “moderate,” and in 37 stories, pro-life Republicans were described with inflammatory terms like “far right” and “hard right.” No Democrat or Republican who is pro-choice was described as “far left” or “hard left.” Nor was a pro-life Democrat ever called “moderate.”

The media coverage of the March for Life, then, was no mistake. It reflects the bias that colors the profession of journalism, from top to bottom. And because so many of the marchers and leaders of the March for Life are Catholic—with the hierarchy plainly in sight—it is no leap of logic to conclude that old-fashioned anti-Catholicism also plays a role in how this issue is reported.