

March for Life Storms DC With Anti-Abortion Message

Anti-abortion marchers are expected on Friday to mark the 40th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling legalizing abortion, and Pope Benedict expressed support for the demonstrators.

The anti-abortion **March for Life**, an annual event in Washington, will be preceded by a midday rally on the National Mall.

Scheduled speakers include former Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum; Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley, head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-life Activities; and, by video, House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner.

The rally, which normally draws thousands of anti-abortion protesters, will be followed by a march on the Supreme Court. The high court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling on Jan. 22, 1973 legalized abortion in the United States.

Pope Benedict voiced backing for the marchers, saying in a tweet, "I join all those marching for life from afar, and pray that political leaders will protect the unborn and promote a culture of life."

Seminars, Catholic masses and memorials around Washington preceded the rally and march. Abortion rights activists have held few events in Washington around the anniversary.

The **anti-abortion** activities come as a poll has shown that most Americans remain opposed to overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

Despite the Washington protests, battles over abortion have largely shifted from federal courts to statehouses. The

Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive health and rights group, said this month that 2012 brought the second-highest number of state-level restrictions, trailing only 2011.

Reporting by Ian Simpson in Washington and Phil Pullella in Rome; Editing by Steve Orlofsky.

© 2013 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.