



Branches on the Vine

FEBRUARY 7 - 13, 2026



Sister Suzanne Gross, second from left, marches with fellow Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist and other pro-life advocates from the Archdiocese of Hartford at this year's national March for Life in Washington, D.C. PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

This year Sister Suzanne Gross, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist in Meriden, will have attended the national March for Life in Washington, D.C., for a total of 26 years. Since she began marching, she has only missed a few years due to a snowstorm and the pandemic.

To top it off, Sister Suzanne has reached another milestone: her 80th birthday. And yet she accompanies young people and adults on this annual pilgrimage in the cold and thinks nothing of it.

"I'm very blessed with good health," says Sister Suzanne, who attended this year's national March for Life events in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 22 and 23. "I think the Franciscan way of life is a good thing. We have a really strong schedule.

"I grew up in Iowa on a family farm. So, I keep busy cleaning and weeding the garden in Meriden. I love that," she says. "I walk a little slower, but I'm doing well." She also continues to work in home health care administration.

This year, Sister Suzanne boarded one of two buses sponsored by the Archdiocese of Hartford that was headed for Washington, D.C. She's a believer that she needs to make her position clear about the critical importance of protecting all human life, no matter what the U.S. Supreme Court thinks.

"You can just look at the abortion statistics or people's attitudes toward unborn life.

FRANCISCAN SISTER REFLECTS ON QUARTER CENTURY AT THE NATIONAL MARCH FOR LIFE

I can't say how important this event is because there's such a lack of reverence for life, whether it's for the elderly or for the unborn. And people don't even think a baby is a baby, until when?" Sister Suzanne asks.

"Our Church has such a correct and beautiful presentation of how life is sacred from the moment of conception," she says.

The Washington trip also gives her the opportunity to meet young people from throughout the archdiocese. "This march is something people like to do. More than 150,000 people come together for a peaceful march," she points out. "We're helping to build a culture of life. We're helping young people have their chance. And we have students coming from different Catholic schools," such as from St. Paul Catholic High School in Bristol.

The national March for Life offers two full days of activities, she adds, and she loves it.

"It's always kind of a surprise. That time together on the bus with the young people is always good, and the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception Mass is so meaningful.

It's just such a wonderful experience of the Catholic Church," Sister Suzanne says, with bishops and priests present from across the country.

During the actual march from the National Mall to the Supreme Court building, she is thrilled to see the Archdiocese of Hartford banner held overhead, letting people know that a Hartford contingent is present, standing up for the beauty and dignity of all life.


Over the years, fewer buses have departed from Connecticut, she notes, with many people shifting their attention to the Connecticut March for Life in Hartford. "Still, we're grateful to have these two buses," Sister Suzanne says.

The Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist will be present at the state march, too – at the Connecticut March for Life on **March 18** at the Connecticut State Capitol in Hartford. For more information, visit marchforlife.org/Connecticut.

- Story by Shelley Wolf




Upcoming Events




National Vocation Summit

2026 Theme: *Awakening Apostles of Hope*

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Curtis Martin
President: Focus Campus Ministries



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Where: Legion of Christ Seminary, Cheshire, CT

Register Here or Scan Here



Details: NationalVocationSummit.org
 Questions? Joann O'Neil admin@VocationActionNetwork.com



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Still giving up chocolate for Lent? How has that helped you on your spiritual journey? It is our lifelong pilgrimage that is the path of formation. It never happens overnight – or even over 40 days. But Lent affords us the time to really consider our personal ongoing challenges in our formation as a follower of Jesus. Is there something that will make this Lent different from the others? Are you open to real change?

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