



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

# Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics



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May 2022

Dear Friends for Life,

## THIS MONTH OF MAY

May is a month filled with promise and hope, a time we honor mothers and motherhood, and a time dedicated to Our Lady, the Mother of God and our Mother, too. It is a time we may ponder how Mary reflects the magnificence of God in her grace, her holiness, and her mediation on our behalf, showing us the way to her Son and our eternal destiny, the Beatific Vision. In particular, as we approach the Solemnity of the Ascension, we are reminded how the Blessed Mother prayed with the Apostles after Jesus' Ascension, waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. (Acts 1:14) We know in our trying times, she does that with us, too.

These last few weeks have presented a dizzying array of politics, culture, religion, medical science and bioethics. The unprecedented leak of a draft of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson* case brought some hope that the era of *Roe v. Wade* might finally come to a close, but also precipitated false and exaggerated claims by abortion advocates about the consequences of reversing the error of *Roe v. Wade*. Overruling the *Roe v. Wade* decision merely returns the issue of abortion to the states. However, this breach sparked a furious response to advance abortion more deeply into our culture: a partisan effort in the Senate rabidly sought to codify abortion into U.S. law through the Women's Health Protection Act (passed by the House in Sept. 2021<sup>1</sup>) but thankfully the bill failed to garner the necessary Senate votes;<sup>2</sup> our governor directed \$35 million taxpayer dollars to protect and expand abortion access in New York, setting the stage to restore the Empire State's pre-1973 reputation for abortion tourism;<sup>3</sup> and a growing number of corporations, e.g. Apple, Amazon and Citigroup, etc. announced they will cover employees' abortion-related travel expenses, etc. Beyond abortion, many asserted false claims that a *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision favorable to life foretells the dismantling of other so-called rights (e.g. same sex marriage), and so they

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<sup>1</sup> [Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives - Vote Details](#)

<sup>2</sup> [U.S. Senate: U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 117th Congress - 2nd Session](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Governor Hochul Announces Nation-leading \\$35 Million Investment to Support Abortion Providers in New York | Governor Kathy Hochul \(ny.gov\)](#)

have redoubled efforts to promote other agendas that offend God’s plan for us. It seems the world is falling to pieces! *But*, in the words of St. Josemaria Escriva:

***“Remember this and never forget it: Even if it should seem at times that everything is collapsing, nothing is collapsing at all, because God doesn’t lose battles.”***

Therefore, we must continue our efforts to defend every unborn human life unperturbed and joined in fervent prayer with Our Lady. We welcome a *post-Roe* world, but we also have no disillusion about the work that must continue to be done for the unborn, their mothers (and fathers), and a world that still rejects the sacred gift of all human life.

## **A CLARIFICATION ON CONSCIENCE**

A recent Newsday article,<sup>4</sup> is striking in how it underscores a general confusion among many Christians between the Laws of Nature and the Natural (moral) Law when deciding one’s conscience on the abortion issue.

The Laws of Nature are those rules that govern the phenomena of the physical world—they have no role in moral decision-making; e.g. that gravity pulls things to the ground is a morally neutral truth. In contrast, the Natural Law are those rules God has written on the heart of each person about how to live—they are precepts one knows naturally by reason, not special expertise, and by which one can discern how to act morally, e.g. it is innately understood that the direct taking of innocent human life is wrong and so, we can know without special training or knowledge, that we should not do it. Dr. Charles Rice likened these to a God-given instruction manual, and it follows that adherence to these directions are required for our ultimate happiness with God in eternity (after all, we accept that ignoring the directions to our TV’s instruction manual would invalidate the manufacturer’s warranty—so too, for us and our Manufacturer!).

In the natural order, we know the strongest survive, and one might conclude glibly, by the Laws of Nature, that “Might is right.” It seems on this basis, many justify a so-called right to abortion: “it’s my right” (because I can do it and the innocent life of the baby cannot defend itself to stop me). But Natural law, on the other hand, innately informs us that taking an innocent human life is never a morally good act, and therefore abortion cannot be justified under any circumstances. Yet, this instinctive sense of what is morally right is often dulled by what can even seem to be very compelling reasons: “I’m not ready,” “How can I afford a child?,” etc. or sometimes even, the undue pressure of others to deny what we know is morally true.

Many claim their consciences allow them to accept abortion, the taking of an innocent life not yet born. Even if well-intentioned, this is misguided at best, and deviates from a true faith in a God Who created every unique, unrepeatable and immeasurably valuable human person in His Image and Likeness with a dignity above every other creature—He created every human life to flourish, not to be extinguished at will. It is true we must follow a certain conscience (one that is sure), but we have an equally important duty to first form that conscience properly—that is, based on the Natural (moral) Law from God—not the Laws of Nature, a radical autonomy, or a misguided cultural agenda. However, without diligent effort to pursue truth and continually fortify it, Pope St. John Paul II warned that consciences can also become darkened living in a world of systematic violations against the sanctity and dignity of human life—and that is

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<sup>4</sup> [On abortion issue and Roe, beliefs of LI Christians mirror U.S. - Newsday](#)

happening all too often.<sup>5</sup> We must not forget, too, that to form one's conscience well and follow it we need help. *Oh, Blessed Mother, stay with us! Our Lady, pray for us!*

Know too, that no one should despair the mistake of a past abortion—this is fully within God's mercy to heal and renew! Please refer to our Project Rachel resources if you or someone you know is suffering from the pain of a past abortion.

## OUR RESPONSE FOR A *POST-ROE* WORLD

Our response to all this chaos must *first* be grounded in prayer. Pray unceasingly. To this end, the Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics has changed our recently introduced Rosary for Life from a monthly event to a weekly virtual gathering so that participation may come from every corner of Long Island. We are so pleased that more of you are joining us every week—thank you! The Rosary, the “epitome of the Gospel,” is a most powerful defense in times of adversity. Sister Lucia, one of the Fatima visionaries, declared:

***“The Most Holy Virgin in these last times in which we live has given new efficacy in the recitation of the Holy Rosary. She has given this efficacy to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families ... that cannot be solved by the Rosary.”***<sup>6</sup>

In addition, we continue to expand and update resources on our website to help you stay informed on issues and opportunities to advocate and witness for life. As an example, we recommend a new twelve-part series by The Sisters of Life, “Into Life: Love Changes Everything” and there is a new section on *Dobbs v. Jackson*, and more information anticipated very shortly regarding the Walking with Moms in Need initiative.

The conviction of our words, though, must not be limited to elegant prose and lofty goals. In union with all the bishops of New York State, we are working diligently towards building a culture of life in the Diocese of Rockville Centre.<sup>7</sup> We want abortion to be unthinkable for a woman—not because the law prohibits it (that would be nice, but unrealistic), but because she knows she and her baby will not be abandoned even after her son or daughter is born. We are working with Catholic Charities and Catholic Health to make sure that as Catholics, we radiate the Light of Christ in everything we do, and here this means coordinating our resources most effectively to truly walk with Moms in Need physically, emotionally and spiritually—so that every woman knows she and her child are protected, supported, and loved, even in challenging circumstances, every step of the way.

## PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Most especially in this month of May, let us pray the Rosary and ask our Blessed Mother's intercession to help each of us make the world a place where all women are respected, the call to motherhood is valued, and the sanctity of all human life is defended and protected—a place where abortion is unthinkable.

It might not be easy, but Archbishop Cordileone reminds us to persevere: “... this is a time that God is calling us to live the last beatitude: ‘Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter

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<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical on The Gospel of Life *Evangelium vitae* (March 25, 1995) §21. [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html).

<sup>6</sup> [There's no problem, no matter how difficult, that the Rosary can't solve \(aleteia.org\)](https://www.aleteia.org/2022/05/01/there-is-no-problem-no-matter-how-difficult-that-the-rosary-cant-solve/)

<sup>7</sup> [BishopsStatement-Dobbs2022.pdf \(nyscatholic.org\)](https://www.nyscatholic.org/BishopsStatement-Dobbs2022.pdf)

every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.” (Matthew 5:11-12)

Please continue with unceasing prayer especially for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit<sup>8</sup> in the upcoming week and consider joining us for our next weekly Rosary for Life!

Sincerely in Christ,

Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D.

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<sup>8</sup> [NOVENA TO THE HOLY SPIRIT \(catholictradition.org\)](http://catholictradition.org)