



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE  
**Office of Human Life,  
Family and Bioethics**



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Dear Friends for Life,

## RESPECT LIFE MONTH

As faithful Catholics we know all human life is sacred. But during October, as a Church, we celebrate Respect Life month as a time to more deeply contemplate the inestimable value and inviolable dignity of every human life. We know this truth instinctively because it is written on our hearts—just think about your natural response of joy to the news of the birth of a child and the sense of loss at a funeral or the scene of a terrible accident—but what does it mean to us and how do we live it?

In light of the *Dobbs v. Jackson* case that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, Archbishop William E. Lori who serves as the chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Pro-Life Activities, asks us to rededicate ourselves to building a culture of life and a civilization of unconditional love throughout the upcoming year. In this, we are called to cherish, protect, and defend individuals and families across the entire lifespan, but with a special focus on expectant mothers and their babies.<sup>1</sup> Many of you already embrace this spirit.

I am grateful to and inspired by so many of you who have participated in prayerful witness through the 40 Days for Life campaigns during this last month (and throughout the year). You make a profound difference in the world: offering hope and real help to women on the verge of a dreadful decision and, at the same time, being a vivid example of courage and strength for others to see. Each of you is a light in the darkness.

Likewise, those of you at a parish outreach, pregnancy resource center, or pro-life prenatal care center who accompany these mothers are heroic models of the “radical solidarity” with mothers, their babies and their families that Archbishop Lori exhorts us to be. Your words of encouragement, bundles of baby items, safe shelter, and/or medical care that dignifies motherhood are genuine lifelines. *Thank you.*

And then there are those of you who walk with women and their families through the pain of an unexpected pregnancy loss or a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis. Your mission is so special: to give recognition as full

members of the human family to these little ones for whom the Divine Plan is very short here on earth. You confirm each of us is created in His Image from the very beginning of our existence. There are those who minister to the women and men wounded by a past abortion, bringing them to understand God's mercy is infinite and *for everyone*. And finally, there are those unable to share in the physical labor, but who perform the most essential aspect of this work: prayer.

All of you are special ambassadors of a vibrant and splendorous culture of life and civilization of love. But, we have much work still to do. I hope in the coming months you will join the Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics as we embark on the journey to walk even more closely with Moms in Need.

## CLARITY AND TRUTH

Last month I focused on speaking truth with love. In the wake of the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision last June and with the upcoming elections, there has been misrepresentation of certain facts regarding women's health that must be dispelled. A number of women have spoken about "the abortion procedure" they needed after a miscarriage, and their concern that, post-*Roe*, other women will be denied such a "life-saving" procedure if abortion is banned. *This is absolutely untrue. Abortion restrictions will not limit care in the aftermath of miscarriage.*

Unfortunately, such stories instill unnecessary fear and could further compound the tragedy of miscarriage by leading a woman to believe she has had or will need an "abortion." Exact terminology is variable, but in general, it is both popularly and medically understood that induced abortion is the direct and deliberate taking of human life in the womb as the result of a chemical or surgical intervention. Miscarriage occurs when the preborn life ends without any medical or surgical intervention, i.e. the baby dies naturally. When a miscarriage occurs, a surgical procedure may be required to remove the deceased remains from the mother's womb to prevent a potentially life-threatening complication.<sup>2</sup>

However, in their narratives, these storytellers conflate induced abortion with miscarriage based on the fact that the same procedure may be used to remove the preborn remains from the womb in both situations (i.e. by dilatation and curettage, D&C, or dilatation and evacuation, D&E). But abortion and miscarriage are distinctly separate conditions for which the same D&C or D&E procedure may be used; but abortion begins with a living human being, miscarriage does not. To refer to the D&C or D&E as "the abortion procedure" is misleading and unfair to all women.

To be clear, miscarriage management with D&C or D&E is medically and morally appropriate—as well as lawful. However, that doesn't mean induced abortion is. Words matter.

“...the greatest destroyer of peace today is the cry of the innocent unborn child.”  
--St. Teresa of Calcutta

## PROTECTING AND DEFENDING LIFE

November offers a unique opportunity to protect and defend life: exercising our right to vote.

In his pastoral letter, *Quo Vadis, America*, Bishop Barris explained the background on *Roe v. Wade* and the implications of the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision. More than ever, our votes can effect change for the good. He writes:

“As the Catholic Church, founded by Jesus Christ, and guided by the Holy Spirit over these past twenty centuries, we do not believe that we can ever vote to overturn God’s Law. We can only vote to ratify it. But now, thanks to the decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, we have the opportunity for the first time in half a century to make the case for God’s Law, to participate in the debate in the public square and to help our fellow citizens understand that now there are only two ways that lie before us...one of life and one of death, but a great difference between the two ways.”<sup>3</sup>

And he gives us specific direction in our efforts to return this nation back to God’s Law:

“But we cannot do this by imposing our will on others, as was done to us. We must fulfill this Great Commission of Jesus in the same way that the Apostles fulfilled theirs: by preaching the Truth of the Gospel of Life to our fellow citizens and persuading them to vote in favor of Life.”<sup>4</sup>

## **ELECTION ISSUES: WHAT IS AT STAKE?**

We cannot shy away from our responsibility to protect and defend life with our vote—and to help others do the same. In past newsletters we have recounted the continued erosion of respect for life, family and marriage, attacks on religious freedom and conscience protections, etc. Sadly, that news bears an inverse correlation with the view towards the sanctity of life by elected officials. But the way we vote can change this because *elections matter*.

In the homily he prepared for the Mass for Health Care Professionals at St. Agnes Cathedral on October 16, 2022, Bishop Barres pointed out the implicit contradiction of those who call themselves “Matthew 25 Catholics” as a way to excuse neglect for the life issues:

“...it is not possible to claim to be a so-called “Matthew 25 Catholic” without being a “sanctity of human life Catholic.” In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, Jesus challenges us, “Whatever you did for the least among you, you did for me.” How could we imagine the least among us without including the poor, the elderly, the abandoned, and the defenseless life of the child in the womb?

“...it is not possible to invoke our Faith, or the heroes of our Faith, such as Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta and her love for the poor in the gutters of the world without also invoking her prophetic teaching on the sanctity of human life as the foundation of all other human rights.”<sup>5</sup>

And while campaign rhetoric is intensifying around abortion access, in the background there is the so-called “Super Rule” proposed by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to which Bishop Barres also referred in his homily. Based on **Section 1557** of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act which prohibits discrimination in health care, the proposed rule would force entities which receive funding through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide abortion and “gender-affirming care.” Since there is no provision for exemption of religious organizations, on the grounds of so-called gender and health equity, Catholic hospitals and physicians could be forced to provide interventions in violation of their consciences or lose federal funding.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that, just like a new Supreme Court justice, appointments to HHS, CMS and other important positions are made by the President of the United States and confirmed by the Senate. *Elections matter*.

As a further example of what is at stake, on a state level, the first step to enshrine abortion rights by amending the New York State constitution was advanced in June.<sup>7</sup> If the amendment is passed in the next legislative session, it goes to a ballot measure before the people of New York. That means there is much work to be done to educate others, but it is equally important to recognize now that *elections matter*.

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”  
--Edmund Burke<sup>8</sup>

## VOTING RESPONSIBILITY

In *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope St. John Paul II writes:

“...we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the ‘culture of death’ and the ‘culture of life.’ We find ourselves not only ‘faced with but necessarily ‘in the midst of’ this conflict: we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life.”<sup>9</sup>

This means we must be pro-life at home, at work, at school, on vacation, and even in the voting booth! Moreover, he tells us, “**All abuses of human dignity are intrinsically evil, but attacks on human life must be viewed as the most egregious violation because *the right to life is the most fundamental human right and the source of all other human rights.***”<sup>10</sup>

Although our votes are not cast on one issue alone, it must be clear that a candidate’s support of a single intrinsic evil could be sufficient to exclude him or her from our voting consideration.<sup>11</sup> Just as we would disqualify from our vote an otherwise perfect candidate who endorsed a return to slavery, we should be no less discriminating when it comes to support for the most egregious attack on human rights of this time: abortion.

In 2020, Archbishop Naumann further clarified the importance of the life issue in our voting decision:

“The U.S. bishops have reaffirmed that ‘the threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed.’<sup>12</sup> While they did warn us not to ‘dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty, and the death penalty,’ they did give priority to upholding and defending our brothers’ and sisters’ most basic right—to live.”<sup>13</sup>

So, after you have done your research on the candidates and their positions, when it comes time to vote remember simply this: first, love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself, for we are made to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Do no evil (and do not vote *for* a morally evil issue). Then pray—a lot! Whoever the candidates are on your ballot, you will know those for whom you cannot vote. The rest is up to you.

“Now choose life”  
--Deuteronomy 30:19

## PRAY ALWAYS

Prayer is the cornerstone of all the work we do, and it is no less important, when it comes to the elections. So let us pray with a firm conviction to support life, created in His Image, with our hearts, our minds and our votes. God's will be done. *Fiat!*

### Prayer Before an Election<sup>14</sup>

*Lord God, as the election approaches,  
we seek to better understand the issues and concerns that  
confront our city/state/country,  
and how the Gospel compels us to respond as faithful citizens  
in our community.*

*We ask for eyes that are free from blindness  
so that we might see each other as brothers and sisters,  
one and equal in dignity,  
especially those who are victims of abuse and violence,  
deceit and poverty.*

*We ask for ears that will hear the cries of children unborn  
and those abandoned,*

*Men and women oppressed because of race or creed,  
religion or gender.*

*We ask for minds and hearts that are open to hearing the  
voice of leaders who will bring us closer to your Kingdom.*

*We pray for discernment  
so that we may choose leaders who hear your Word,  
live your love,  
and keep in the ways of your truth*

*as they follow in the steps of Jesus and his Apostles  
and guide us to your Kingdom of justice and peace.*

*We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ and  
through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*Amen.*

### Prayer After an Election<sup>15</sup>

*God of all nations,  
Father of the human family,  
we give you thanks for the freedom we exercise  
and the many blessings of democracy we enjoy  
in these United States of America.*

*We ask for your protection and guidance  
for all who devote themselves to the common good,  
working for justice and peace at home and around the world.*

*We lift up all our duly elected leaders and public servants,  
those who will serve us as president, as legislators and judges,  
those in the military and law enforcement.*

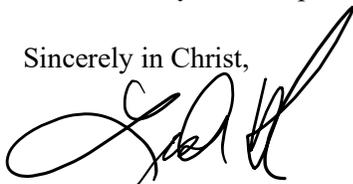
*Heal us from our differences and unite us, O Lord,  
with a common purpose, dedication, and commitment to  
achieve liberty and justice*

*in the years ahead for all people,  
and especially those who are most vulnerable in our midst.*

*Amen.*

Please see the rest of the newsletter for all upcoming activities and consider joining us for the Rosary for Life on Fridays at 3:00 p.m. God bless you!

Sincerely in Christ,



Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D.

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<sup>1</sup> [rlp-22-chairman-statement-FINAL.pdf \(uscgb.org\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Miscarriage may also be referred to as "spontaneous abortion." For more information about the historical, cultural, medical and social influences on the use of the terms abortion and miscarriage see ["Miscarriage or abortion?" Understanding the medical language of pregnancy loss in Britain: a historical perspective - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Dobbs-Pastoral-Letter-6-24-2022-3.pdf \(drvc.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Dobbs-Pastoral-Letter-6-24-2022-3.pdf \(drvc.org\)](#)

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- <sup>5</sup> [Bishop John Barres' Homily for Health Care Professionals on Vimeo](#)
- <sup>6</sup> [HHS Announces Proposed Rule to Strengthen Nondiscrimination in Health Care | HHS.gov](#)
- <sup>7</sup> [New York lawmakers move to enshrine abortion rights in state constitution | CNN Politics](#)
- <sup>8</sup> [FACT CHECK: Did Edmund Burke Pen This Quote On The 'Triumph Of Evil'? | Check Your Fact](#)
- <sup>9</sup> [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>10</sup> [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>11</sup> <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/The-Challenge-of-Forming-Consciences-for-Faithful-Citizenship-Part-2.pdf>
- <sup>12</sup> <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-introductory-letter>
- <sup>13</sup> <https://www.usccb.org/resources/rfp-20-priorities-at-the-polls-bulletin-insert.pdf>
- <sup>14</sup> [Prayer Before an Election | USCCB](#)
- <sup>15</sup> [Prayer After an Election | USCCB](#)