



Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

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Statement on the Anniversary of Roe vs Wade Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann Chairman, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities

The pro-life ethic challenges us to care about the sacredness of every human being throughout the life spectrum. We are called always and everywhere to promote the dignity of the human person.

Protecting the life of the unborn children is the pre-eminent human rights issue of our time, not only because of the sheer magnitude of the numbers, but because abortion attacks the sanctuary of life, the family. Abortion advocates pit the welfare of the mother against the life of her child. Every abortion not only destroys the life of an innocent child, but it wounds and scars mothers and fathers who must live with the harsh reality that they hired someone to destroy their daughter or son. In reality, the welfare of parents and their child are always intimately linked.

We are concerned about the life and dignity of the human person wherever it is threatened or diminished. We care about those harmed by economic poverty, by racism, by religious intolerance. We care about the plight of the refugee fleeing persecution and the immigrant seeking a better life for his or her family, of victims of violent crime as well as those imprisoned, of those with intellectual or physical disabilities and the frail elderly, of violence and disrespect against those in law enforcement as well as the victims of police brutality. Anyone whose life is threatened and anyone whose human dignity is disrespected have a claim on our hearts.

For all Catholics, the last several months have been profoundly difficult. We have been devastated by the scandal of sexual misconduct by clergy and of past instances of the failure of bishops to respond with compassion to victims of abuse and to protect adequately the members of their flock. The abuse of children or minors upends the pro-life ethic because it is a grave injustice and an egregious offense against the dignity of the human person. Moreover, the failure to respond effectively to the abuse crisis undermines every other ministry within the Church.

As people of faith who believe God's truth about life, we must support and seek justice for all of God's children. We must do all we can to be God's witnesses of merciful love in the world. We know and give thanks for the great dignity God has given to us from the moment of conception, to be made in his image. We also must pray for the grace to remind others of this inherent dignity, in our words and in our actions.

January 22nd is the National Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. It is a special time for Americans to unite ourselves to the cause of life, through prayer and fasting. I encourage all God's people today to pray for an end to the human rights abuse of abortion, and for a culture of life, where through God's grace all will come to know they are made in His Divine Image. Let us pray that we can be great and effective witnesses for life, witnesses for love, witnesses for mercy.

January 18, 2019