



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO
Office of the Bishop

Protecting the Fundamental Freedom to Live

March 15, 2022

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

A little less than two months ago I was privileged to join with many members of our Catholic Faithful, as well as many of our Christian friends, on a particularly frigid January day in an inspiring and prayerful rally entitled: *Celebration and Prayer for Life*. This ecumenical event was in conjunction with the 49th anniversary of the tragic *Roe v Wade* Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion in our country. People from across our Diocese prayed, rallied, and celebrated the truths we know about life: that each human life, from the moment of conception, is a gift from God, and that each human life is made in the image and likeness of God and must be respected. We know that every human life is precious to God, and we mourn the loss of the more than 60 million aborted babies over these past nearly five decades.

It is true that we have cause for hope as the Supreme Court of the United States considers its decision regarding *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization*. This case addresses whether banning abortions after 15 weeks gestation is constitutional. The ruling on this case has the potential of overturning *Roe v Wade* either entirely or in part. We anticipate the Court's decision will be handed down prior to this coming June or July. If overturned, one possible outcome of the decision is that abortion could be regulated by each individual state rather than the federal government.

However, I write to you today to bring to your attention a profoundly serious concern that could very well undo all the progress that has been made over these nearly 50 years to protect the life of the unborn. There is a pro-abortion proposal currently underway in Michigan to have the right to an abortion protected by a new law that is to be enshrined in the State Constitution by amendment. If enacted this would be a devastating blow to innocent human life in the State of Michigan.

A pro-abortion coalition, called "Reproductive Freedom for All," currently is conducting a petition drive to allow a proposal on the November 2022 statewide ballot. The canvassing and marketing efforts will be extensive to collect the more than 425,000 signatures necessary to make this possible. If this proposal makes it onto the November ballot and is successful, then it would become part of the state constitution.

This constitutional amendment states that its purpose is to "reaffirm Michiganders fundamental right to reproductive freedom." It is important for everyone to be informed of the full extent of the proposed amendment. Within the amendment "reproductive freedom" would include "all matters relating to pregnancy, including abortion, birth control, prenatal care and childbirth." Additionally, the amendment, if passed, would invalidate most current pro-life laws that regulate abortion and help protect women and children. Some of the other pro-life laws that would likely be effected include: the state's ban on taxpayer-funded abortion; the state's partial-birth abortion ban; the born alive infant protection act; the requirement for parental consent prior to an abortion for minor children; the 24-hour waiting period and informed consent provisions and the health and safety regulations for abortion facilities. ***This proposed amendment to the Michigan Constitution, if passed, would allow unlimited abortion on demand in the state, at any time in the pregnancy up to and including the moment of birth, for any reason at all.***



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Oftentimes the Church is criticized by some people for being overly focused on the single issue of abortion. Of course, that is not true; it is clear to all faithful Catholics that the Church's social and moral teachings are to guide us in every regard of our lives to help us to deal with all social evil. However, at this time, it is critically important for all people to be aware of this petition drive and to understand the ways it disregards basic moral principles in multiple ways.

I am urging all the faithful and all people of goodwill to thoroughly understand the grave implications of this proposed constitutional amendment. Signing yes and endorsing this petition is in effect endorsing the constitutional right to abortion for anyone regardless of their age and without the need for parental consent. This is not only counter to our dear and firmly held belief that life begins at conception and continues until natural death when we are called Home by God but is also a grave evil we must defeat.

As People of Faith we are not just about opposing wrongs but also about making our world, God's Kingdom here on earth, a better place that protects the dignity of all God's children. I am grateful for the countless and tireless efforts of the many volunteers and champions of life. How we "walk the walk" in both celebrating and protecting human life is to continue to support and participate in the many works of the Church. These include our Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo's Caring Network agency which supports mothers-to-be in need and helps them with resources both during their pregnancy and for two years after the birth of their child.* Our Knights of Columbus have saved countless lives of the unborn through their ultrasound initiative and the councils in our diocese have led our state in that effort. We also extend God's love and mercy to all those who carry the wound of abortion by offering Project Rachel, a diocesan-based network of specially trained priests, religious, counselors, and laypersons who provide a team response of care for those suffering in the aftermath of an abortion.

Additionally, I am grateful for our Parish pro-life groups who consistently educate and lead the Faithful in prayer and action; and to Parish efforts such as St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Portage, which offers the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) "Walking with Moms in Need" initiative.* I am particularly grateful to the 40 Days for Life efforts and to those who quietly pray outside the Planned Parenthood facility, and to all those who pray for an end to legalized abortion. We must all continue to pray fervently that our society can reclaim the basic respect for all human life, especially in the nine months each unborn baby is so vulnerable.

My dear sisters and brothers, let us join in bearing witness to the truth that every life is worth living. Let us strive to treat one another as sons and daughters of God, and brothers and sisters in Christ, all made in God's image. United in our commitment to see every human life as sacred, and asking that we keep one another in prayerful remembrance, I remain,

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo

*"How Catholics Walk with Moms in Need", *Focus*, Volume 50, Spring 2022, Michigan Catholic Conference, www.micatholic.org