



Bishop Larry J. Kulick

A PASTORAL LETTER ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S POSITION ON PROLIFE ISSUES

Donum Vitae: The Gift of Life

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

By now, you have heard that a decision has been rendered by the United States Supreme Court on the *Dobbs v. Jackson Health* case, on a six to three vote, overturning the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision which allowed abortions without restriction. For nearly 50 years, parishioners from our Diocese, joining with the faithful all across the country, have prayed, marched for life in Washington, D.C. and in Harrisburg, and have used their voices to defend the rights of the unborn. As Catholics, we can rejoice that our prayers have been answered with this decision. However, the truth is that much work still needs to be done. The debate on abortion now moves to the state legislature and to the voters. Our fight will not ever truly be settled until all acknowledge the truth that life is sacred from the moment of conception until natural death. For that reason, our diligent work to protect the rights of the unborn must continue.

The title of this Pastoral Letter is *Donum Vitae: The Gift of Life*, as disciples of Christ, we know life is a divinely designed gift given to us from God. This cherished gift allows humanity to build up and propagate the Kingdom

of God. The right to life is preeminent. It is **the** fundamental right.

As Bishop, and as a successor to the Apostles, asserting these teachings with clarity and without ambiguity is one of my most important pastoral responsibilities. I must clearly convey these teachings so that they are known and understood and so that there is no confusion on the part of the faithful when forming and informing conscience, in order to advocate for the truth in the world. In light of the high court's recent decision, now is a most appropriate and incredibly important time to remind those entrusted to my pastoral care about the Church's teachings on the dignity of all human life through this pastoral letter.

From its beginning, the Catholic Church has consistently upheld the sanctity of human life. Although our language has evolved as science and technology have developed, the Church's moral foundation on the issue of life, from conception to natural death, has never changed. Before the use of the microscope, the science of fertilization was unknown and unobserved. In 1827, the human ovum was observed under a microscope for the first time. Forty-two years later, in 1869,

the Catholic Church, following the science, codified its most ancient position on the matter of when life begins by declaring that, from the moment of conception, a new person has come into existence. While science and technology continue to advance, new discoveries with DNA only more clearly demonstrate our teaching that every human life is unique a gift.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly defines our relationship with God on this issue. *"Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end."* (CCC2258) Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, tells us that every human being has *"great dignity...a dignity based not on circumstances but on the intrinsic worth of their being. Unless this basic principle is upheld, there will be no future either for fraternity or for the survival of humanity."* (Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti 107). To oppose this teaching directly contradicts Sacred Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, and the will of Almighty God. No number of protests, criticisms or condemnations can change this truth or will cause us to waver from proclaiming that truth. We as Catholics are not alone in this

- in many other faith traditions and men and women of good will stand with us on this fundamental right to life.

Because of the separation of Church and State in our country, many believers have remained silent on this issue, seeing it solely as a political issue. This silence has led to the perception that we are the minority. The result has been the enactment of many public policies inconsistent with our beliefs, the use of public office to break with the Church's pro-life teachings, and the attempt to codify positions supporting abortion rights. However, because pro-life issues transcend political lines, they are not reserved for a particular political affiliation. We cannot continue to be silent and sit on the sidelines. Silence is a fast track to a continuation of policies against human dignity and an implicit acceptance of the evil of abortion. If we do not advocate with elected officials for the rights of the unborn, we shall fail in our efforts to change minds and hearts. With prayerful consideration, we must always speak for those who are unable to speak for themselves, such as the unborn.

As Bishop, I will not remain silent. My episcopal motto is Christ is the Truth.

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The teachings of our Church, based on Christ, are unchanging truths. Scripture tells us Jesus Christ is *the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6).

We must proclaim the truth as Christ did, and always with his compassion and love. We see the same face of Christ in the unborn child, in the child's mother, and in the abortion activist. We must always be ready to love in the face of anger. Many believe abortion solves an immediate problem of an unplanned or unexpected pregnancy and provides a necessary solution for those who are living on the margins of poverty. The truth is that 60 million unborn children have already lost their lives to abortion since Roe v. Wade, and it has caused countless women to suffer physical and emotional trauma. It has led to what St. Pope John Paul II called a culture of death and what our Holy Father, Pope Francis, described as a throwaway culture. This can and must change. Anyone impacted by abortion must come to know that we are here to join you on your journey with the love, compassion, and mercy of Christ.

Stating what we believe is often the easy part. Our greater challenge is to respond to the needs of women and those around them who see abortion as the only possible answer to their situation. In the United States, the Catholic Church is the largest non-governmental funder of human service support. Our parishes, schools, hospitals, and food banks continue their constant work to support many who struggle,

including mothers and young families in need. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Greensburg provides clothing, food, housing and utility assistance regardless of an individual's religious affiliation. We have done much, but we can do more.

I pledge to you as your Bishop that our Diocese will not only continue this work but will build upon it on both a Diocesan and Parish level. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) "Walking with Moms in Need" initiative has begun in our Diocese and is a ministry of which I am very proud and remain committed to in the future. I call on everyone to help us expand our outreach for women and couples facing unexpected or difficult pregnancies. My hope is that this ministry and other efforts will help our faithful in the Diocese of Greensburg to know more about what resources Catholic Charities, our Parishes, and the many pro-life centers around our Diocese can offer those in need of assistance. I pray that together we shall make the sacrifices necessary to assist young mothers and families during and after pregnancy. We must be willing, as a Diocesan family, to reach out to these men and women – to support them, love them and show them the compassion of Christ.

I want to share with you a prayer offered in 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI at the beginning of the Advent season. His Holiness wanted to stress the need to support women in their pregnancies and to hold up the dignity of every

human person. I hope you will join me in praying this prayer:

Lord Jesus,

You who faithfully visit and fulfill with your Presence the Church and the history of men; You who in the miraculous Sacrament of your Body and Blood render us participants in divine Life and allow us a foretaste of the joy of eternal Life; We adore and bless you.

Prostrated before You, source and lover of Life, truly present and alive among us, we beg you.

Reawaken in us respect for every unborn life, make us capable of seeing in the fruit of the maternal womb the miraculous work of the Creator, open our hearts to generously welcoming every child that comes into life.

Bless all families, sanctify the union of spouses, render fruitful their love.

Accompany the choices of legislative assemblies with the light of your Spirit, so that peoples and nations may recognize and respect the sacred nature of life, of every human life.

Guide the work of scientists and doctors, so that all progress contributes to the integral well-being of the person, and no one endures suppression or injustice.

Give creative charity to administrators and economists, so they may realize and promote sufficient conditions so that young

families can serenely embrace the birth of new children.

Console the married couples who suffer because they are unable to have children and in Your goodness provide for them.

Teach us all to care for orphaned or abandoned children, so they may experience the warmth of your Charity, the consolation of your divine Heart.

Together with Mary, Your Mother, the great believer, in whose womb you took on our human nature, we wait to receive from You, our Only True God and Savior, the strength to love and serve life, in anticipation of living forever in You, in communion with the Blessed Trinity.

As a faith community, we must redouble our efforts in prayer for a change of heart for all people. We must continue to expand the available resources and support those in need, spiritually, emotionally, and financially, and welcome them with the mercy and compassion of Christ. And we must always stand with courageous resolve to defend the sanctity of human life in all cases. May our actions be a sign to the world of the sacred truth of ***Donum Vitae: The Gift of Life.***

Your brother in Christ,



*The Most Reverend
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*Given at Blessed Sacrament
Cathedral on June 24, 2022*