



**Diocese of Norwich
Office of the Bishop
201 Broadway
Norwich, Connecticut 06360
(860) 887-9294**

MOST REVEREND
MICHAEL R. COTE, D.D.

January 4, 2021

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

January 22, 2021 marks the 48th anniversary of the landmark Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. The day is set aside as a day of prayer and penance. Traditionally, each year in Washington, D.C. there is the National March For Life. The theme of this year's march (which will be held on January 29) is "Together Stronger, Life Unites".

Defense of the unborn is a pastoral priority of Pope Francis. He often speaks about the "throw away culture". In doing so he echoes the clarion call of Saint John Paul II who noted in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*: "It is no less true that we are confronted by an even larger reality, which can be described as a veritable structure of sin. This reality is characterized by the emergence of a culture which denies solidarity and in many cases takes the form of a veritable 'culture of death'. This culture is actively fostered by powerful cultural, economic, and political currents which encourage an idea of society excessively concerned with efficiency. Looking at the situation from this point of view, it is possible to speak in a certain sense of a war of the powerful against the weak: a life which would require greater acceptance, love and care is considered useless, or is held to be an intolerable burden, and is therefore rejected in one way or another." (EV, 12) Who can be more weak and vulnerable than an unborn child?

At its core, the issue of abortion is fundamentally a spiritual problem. Do we have the trust in God that the developing life within will have enough food, money, resources, love, and support? If not, where is the Christian community? This past year the U.S. Bishops launched a year-long service project to mark the 25th anniversary of *Evangelium Vitae* - The Gospel of Life. The service project is titled "Walking With Mom's in Need". If our pro-life witness is to be effective, we need to be on the front lines of caring for moms in need. In doing so we are heeding the call of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, to go to the margins of society.

One of the bright lights in our culture is the work of crisis pregnancy centers/services. Recent ultrasound technology has now been made readily available so that pregnant mothers can see the miracle of life growing in their womb. Many abortion-minded women have changed their minds with the gift of this technology.

As the U.S. Bishops have noted, defense of the unborn is a "pre-eminent priority" for U.S. Catholics. We turn to the Lord of Life and beseech His aid and guidance. God doesn't need large numbers. Remember, in the Old Testament Gideon was successful in battle with just a handful of men. If we are to transform the "culture of death" into a "culture of life" everyone is called to a conversion of heart. Prayer can obtain all things. May the Lord hear our prayers and pleas for a culture that values and treasures human life.

Thank you for your work in God's vineyard and thank you for all you do to build a culture of life in the Diocese of Norwich.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop of Norwich