THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

Renew Faith • Build Communion • Inspire Hope

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

November 11, 2022

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Peace be with you! My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, that beautiful greeting, which Jesus so frequently used when He came to His Apostles, or when encouraging those in challenging circumstances, is a greeting which I have used many times in the past when I come to you, but never with more heartfelt purpose than I do so today.

The passing of the radical and extreme "Proposal 3" earlier this week marks a very sad day for us in the State of Michigan. Not only was a law passed, but the very Constitution of the State has been amended to now include the right for a person to kill their unborn child with little to no limitations; and beyond that, is now the most permissive in the country, and perhaps the world, for any and all aspects of "reproductive services", with no need for parental consent if the individuals are minors.

Those of us throughout our Diocese who worked diligently, prayed intently, and voted against "Proposal 3" may very well feel sad, defeated and discouraged. And yet in the words of St. Paul we must instead: "**Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, and persevere in prayer"**. (Rom 12:12)

It is true that this Amendment to our Constitution is a major disappointment; but it is by no means a final defeat.

We need to keep in mind that Jesus would oftentimes add to His greeting the directive: "Do not be afraid!" Jesus has won the ultimate Battle over sin and death. Jesus has defeated the binding power of the Evil One. Jesus has promised us that He has "built His Church upon Rock, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it". (Mt 16:18) That is the reason why we can **rejoice in hope**. As followers of Christ, we know the end of the Story, so to speak − God's ways will ultimately prevail, and so we **endure** in these current afflictions. Jesus has shown us the power of prayer in His own life, and He has urged us to pray always; therefore, even now, we must **persevere in prayer**.

Indeed, as I said in my Statement issued the day of the election results: "We must not lose hope. Instead, we must continue our defense of the unborn; we must continue to work tirelessly to support pregnant women, new mothers, and families in need; and we must advocate for a respect for life from conception to natural death, and at every point along the life spectrum".

I remember well the mood throughout the country in 1973, when I was just a 2-year-old priest, and the Supreme Court upheld the "Roe v. Wade" decision, effectively guaranteeing the right to abortion in the United States Constitution. While that was a major disappointment and huge shock, it also spawned the "Pro-Life Movement", a movement which has grown over two generations of people who have prayed, protested, advocated to overturn that Decision, and in the process saved many lives. And, as we know earlier this year, the Supreme Court ruled the original decision should never have been upheld.

However, with the passing of the amendment to our State Constitution, we are being called to determine a new and more energized "Pro-Life Movement".

Ultimately this is not about amendments, laws, or elections; what we need to focus on is conversion of hearts and enlightening of minds. We need to make sure we completely understand, and that we clearly teach to others, the Church's moral teachings, and the beauty and wonder of God's precious Gift of Human Life.

We need to continue focusing on building a culture of life and praying that God's Mercy and Grace will change the hearts of those who are bound by the illusions of individual freedom and the right to do whatever one wants to do, with no regard to the well-being of others − in particular to the very lives of the most vulnerable among us, unborn babies.

So, my dear Family of Faith, let us not lose heart. Let us open our hearts, be at Peace, and heed Jesus' directive to "not be afraid".

However, we have work to do. The tried-and-true spiritual directives of the early Saints continue to be what we must do: **work and pray**.

Let us recommit ourselves to **work** by defending and protecting human life in all that we do, and to vote for those in future elections who will do the same. Let us do all that we can to protect, defend and respect human life at every point along the life spectrum, from conception to natural death.

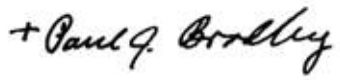
In addition to work, I would ask every Catholic, and every person of strong Faith, to **pray** fervently. I strongly suggest we all commit ourselves to praying the beautiful prayer known as the "Memorare" at least once each day, and perhaps multiple times a day, moving forward.

In addition, I would ask every Catholic to redesignate Friday of every week as the day of abstaining from meat, or whatever food product that would serve as a bit of sacrifice for you from now and moving forward. If you are already doing so, I would ask that you would designate that sacrifice for the intention of respect for human life

Dear Friends, Jesus has revealed to us that following Him and living in His ways is not an easy path; it will be filled with challenges, and on occasions, setbacks, sometimes from our own human failings, and at other times because of society's very sad choices. But we must remain people who continue "*waiting in Joyful Hope*" for the coming of our Lord at the end of all time, and as He comes to us each and every time we celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Jesus is the Hope that never disappoints. And He is the reason for our Hope. He is the Light that shines in the darkness, and no darkness, even the darkness of this Amendment, will ever extinguish it.

So, may the Peace of Jesus, our Hope, be with you now and always.

Faithfully yours in Christ,



Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known
that anyone who fled to thy protection,
implored thy help,
or sought thy intercession,
was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence
I fly unto thee,
O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To thee do I come,
before thee I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in thy mercy hear and answer me.
Amen.

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