



Diocese of Worcester
Office of the Bishop
49 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

January 2021

My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

January 22, 2021 marks the 48th anniversary of the tragic *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision which, with its companion case *Doe v. Bolton*, legalized abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy in every state in the nation. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (n. 373), designates **Friday, January 22** as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the “Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children”. All the faithful in dioceses throughout the United States of America are called to observe this day in a spirit of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for the violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion.

Forty-eight years of legalized abortion in this country has left an incomprehensible aftermath. With over 62 million lives lost, and countless women and men, mothers and fathers, grandparents, siblings, and friends who have been deeply wounded physically, emotionally, and spiritually by this tragedy, we need now more than ever to re-commit ourselves to defending life. I encourage our diocesan parishes and institutions, and all the faithful, to observe reverently the **Day of Prayer and Penance on January 22nd** both personally and within your communities. Let us unite our hearts and minds through special acts of prayer, fasting, and sacrifice on this day, to uphold the inherent dignity of all human life from conception to natural death.

As we reflect on this unspeakable tragedy, we also recall how the Church for many years has continued to reach out to those who have been so sadly affected by the culture of death, particularly through ministries providing aid to women and families in crisis pregnancies, offering the healing love and mercy of Christ to those wounded by abortion through the ministry of Project Rachel, and by continuing to teach and preach the truth and beauty about love and life that bring authentic freedom and happiness. It is through our fervent prayers accompanied by our charitable works and loving sacrifices that the culture can be transformed.

Let us take this opportunity of the January 22nd Day of Prayer and Penance to renew our resolve to live and proclaim the Gospel of Life. May we respond generously to the challenge Saint Pope John Paul II put forth in *Evangelium vitae*: “A great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world. May an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and Lover of life, from the heart of every believer.” Our active participation in the shared commitment to the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person will with God’s grace, truly work toward the building up of a Culture of Life and a Civilization of Love.

With every prayerful best wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester