

A message from the bishops of Ohio on the sanctity of human life



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Peace be with you! As Catholics, we are committed to protecting the sanctity of human life no matter the circumstances or stage of development. We live this out by, among other things, accompanying the poor and needy, refugees and immigrants, prisoners on death row, young mothers and children.

In Ohio, the dignity of life in its earliest stages is threatened by groups proposing an amendment to Ohio's Constitution for the November 2023 ballot that would enshrine and expand abortion at the expense of protections for preborn children and women. The Church must not be silent and cannot remain on the sidelines when confronted with such a clear threat to human life. This proposal demands a response, and we strongly encourage Catholics and all people of good will in Ohio to work against including the proposed amendment for the November ballot and, if it appears on the ballot, vote against the amendment to prevent countless deaths of preborn, innocent children.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis reminds us that "Our defense of the innocent unborn ... needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development" (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, No. 101). Our commitment to protecting and promoting life includes providing resources and accompanying women during and after pregnancy through our numerous social service agencies, schools and parishes. This commitment also includes rejecting abortion expansion, which only perpetuates a throwaway culture that does not value human life.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio will be collaborating with statewide organizations, and diocesan respect life offices will be seeking volunteers to help coordinate a campaign at every parish. More information and materials will become available as we mobilize to oppose the proposed amendment on the November 2023 ballot.

We, the Catholic bishops of Ohio, stand with you, our faithful, in our commitment in the name of

the Lord of Life, to each human person from conception to natural death. Let us unite in fasting and offering this prayer:

God our loving Father, grant wisdom to those who govern us, compassion and courage to those who work to defend human life, and safety and care to every human being. For you alone who formed us in our mothers' wombs and who call us home to heaven, are God, for ever and ever. Amen. †

'Protect Them Both' campaign aims to defeat abortion expansion amendment

The Diocese of Cleveland is participating in Protect Them Both, a major campaign opposing the proposed Ohio constitutional amendment seeking to expand abortion rights beyond the state's current (though not yet enforced) six-week/heartbeat marker. The diocese is rolling out the campaign in collaboration with the Catholic Conference of Ohio, Protect Women Ohio, local pregnancy resource centers, parish collaboratives and Right to Life organizations.

During the initial phase, the goal is to pray ceaselessly and provide resources to educate parish communities, schools and organizations — including those in ministry and the faithful — about the proposed amendment and what can be done to defeat it. Protect Women Ohio, the coalition of groups opposing the amendment, started its campaign by running television and digital messages.

Educational flyers and prayer cards will be delivered to every parish by early May. These resources are provided by the Catholic Conference of Ohio in collaboration with the directors of the offices for human life and the support of all Ohio bishops.

The campaign will ramp up during voter registration drives at some parishes. Also, pro-life platforms like radio station AM 1260 The Rock — which airs several weekly programs centered on building a culture of respect for life — will continue the momentum.

The diocesan website, dioceseofcleveland.org, offers a variety of resources and a link to "Protect Them Both" on the Ohio Catholic Conference's website.

The Catholic Church stands ready to assist and accompany all women dealing with unexpected pregnancies through services such as Walking with Moms in Need or the many pregnancy resource centers located in the eight counties of the Cleveland Diocese.

For information, resources or prayer cards, email mvoncarlowitz@dioceseofcleveland.org.

With you in Christ Jesus,

Most Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr | Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Most Rev. Edward C. Malesic | Diocese of Cleveland

Most Rev. Michael G. Woost | Diocese of Cleveland

Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas | Diocese of Toledo

Most Rev. Jeffrey M. Monforton | Diocese of Steubenville

Most Rev. J. Michael Botean | Romanian Catholic Eparchy of St. George in Canton

Most Rev. Earl K. Fernandes | Diocese of Columbus

Most Rev. David J. Bonnar | Diocese of Youngstown

Most Rev. Bohdan J. Danylo | Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St. Josaphat in Parma

