



## Committee on Pro-Life Activities

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### RESPECT LIFE MONTH STATEMENT October 2024

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities

We are living in an exciting time of revival. Our National Eucharistic Congress, and the Eucharistic processions that led to it, involved hundreds of thousands of Catholics who will never be the same. The revival continues, and is so needed, especially in our efforts to defend human life.

Jesus, truly present in the Eucharist, gives us the fullness of life. He calls each of us to respect that gift of life in every human person. While we live in a society that often rejects those who are weak, fragile, or vulnerable, they are the most in need of our care and protection. Pope Francis reminds us that “every child who, rather than being born, is condemned unjustly to being aborted, bears the face of Jesus Christ, bears the face of the Lord, who even before he was born, and then just after birth, experienced the world's rejection.”<sup>1</sup>

The law and millions of our brothers and sisters have yet to recognize this reality. We thankfully no longer live under the regime of *Roe v. Wade*, and our elected officials are now empowered to reduce or end abortion. But what we now see is that fifty years of virtually unlimited abortion has tragically created a national mindset where many Americans have become comfortable with *some* amount of abortion. This allows the abortion industry to continue to provide *any* amount of abortion. Given this challenge, the U.S. bishops have affirmed that, while it is important to address all the ways in which human life is threatened, “abortion remains our pre-eminent priority as it directly attacks our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, destroying more than a million lives each year in our country alone.”<sup>2</sup>

In a tragic way, abortion has become the pre-eminent priority for others as well. We see many politicians celebrating the destruction of preborn children, and protecting access to abortion, even up until the moment of birth. Few leaders are standing up to limit the harm of chemical abortion (abortion pills) to mothers and children, which is now the most common form of abortion. And heading into the November elections, as many as ten states face gravely evil ballot initiatives that would enshrine abortion in their state constitutions.

Pope St. John Paul II's words resonate today: “we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the ‘culture of death’ and the ‘culture of life’ ...we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life.”<sup>3</sup>

And so we need a revival of prayer and action:

- We must renew our commitment to work for the legal protection of every human life, from conception to natural death, and to vote for candidates who will defend the life and dignity of the human person.
- We must call for policies that assist women and their children in need, while also continuing to help mothers in our own communities through local pregnancy help centers and our nationwide, parish-based initiative, [\*Walking with Moms in Need\*](#).
- We must likewise continue to extend the hand of compassion to all who are suffering from participation in abortion, through the Church’s abortion healing ministries like [\*Project Rachel Ministry\*](#).
- Most importantly, we must rededicate ourselves to fervent prayer on behalf of life.

I invite all Catholics to join me in a concerted effort of prayer between now and our national elections, by daily praying our Respect Life Month “*Prayer for Life to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament*”:

*Jesus, you came that we might have life—and have it in abundance. Together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, you form us in our mothers' wombs and call us to love you for all eternity. As your most precious gift of human life is attacked, draw us ever closer to your Real Presence in the Eucharist. Dispel the darkness of the culture of death, for you are the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. By the power of your Eucharistic Presence, help us to defend the life of every human person at every stage. Transform our hearts to protect and cherish all whose lives are most vulnerable. For you are God, forever and ever. Amen.*

Through the graces of this revival, may we witness, work, and vote so that all children in the womb will be protected in law and welcomed in love, and that all mothers and families will be strengthened by our support and accompaniment.

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge  
Bishop of Arlington  
Chairman  
USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities

For information on October *Respect Life Month*, visit <https://www.respectlife.org/>.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, “Address of Holy Father Francis to Participants in the Meeting Organized by the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations,” September 20, 2013 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana).

<sup>2</sup> *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, Introductory Letter, p. 8 (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), no. 28.