



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

February 11, 2019
Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...” (Jeremiah 1:5)

At the very heart of our beliefs about who we are and why we exist, is a message of love. God creates us out of love. Out of love, He redeems us by the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus. He calls us to an eternal destiny with Him because He loves each sacred human life, created in His image.

That we are created in God’s image is reaffirmed in our nation’s Declaration of Independence, reminding us that we “are endowed by [our] Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are **Life**, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The **right to life** is the foundation and starting point for every other God-given human right. When that right is attacked or denied, all other rights and liberties begin to crumble.

You are probably aware that on January 22, 2019, the 46th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* (the Supreme Court decision that declared an absolute constitutional right to abortion), Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York signed into law the “Reproductive Health Act”, which he himself called “the most aggressive” abortion law in the country. It was then “celebrated” by his lighting up One World Trade Center and the Alfred E. Smith Building in Albany.

It is our obligation as citizens and as Catholics, to be well informed and to make our voices heard in the public square when evil and injustice threaten the sacred gift of life at any stage.

On a human level, this gruesome law should be appalling to people of every faith, or no faith. The Reproductive Health Act allows for abortion on demand with no restrictions throughout all of pregnancy. ***This means that as a choice, an abortion could be performed on a full-term infant as the mother is going into labor.***

This law might also open the door to taking away conscience protections from medical personnel, and could be used to force doctors, nurses and other medical staff to perform or to assist in abortions. Governor Cuomo claims that he is protecting women’s rights, when in fact, this law endangers the lives of women by allowing non-physicians to perform abortions, and it removes any objective standard of care due to the patient.

The Act has also removed criminal penalties when an unborn child is deliberately targeted for death in a crime. Two and a half weeks after the bill became law, the Queens District Attorney said he could not prosecute a man for the stabbing death of his unborn child in the womb of his girlfriend, because of the passage of the Reproductive Health Act.

Unimaginably, the law also repeals protections for infants who are accidentally born alive during the course of a failed abortion. This amounts to infanticide, the killing either by direct

means or by neglect of an infant who is alive outside the womb. The law is silent on reducing the pain and suffering of infants, especially those being aborted late term.

Brothers and sisters, this law is an abomination that cries out to Heaven for justice. We cannot be silent in the face of such a blatant attack on the most vulnerable among us. I invite you to do several things:

1. **Stay informed and educated** regarding these issues and the battles ahead of us, such as assisted suicide and legalized surrogacy. Two outstanding resources available to you are:
 - The New York State Catholic Conference on the web at <https://www.nyscatholic.org>.
 - The Diocese of Rockville Centre Respect Life Office and web page: (516) 678-5800 Extension 381 or on the web at <https://respectlife.drvc.org>
2. **Get involved.** Both web pages listed above offer easy links to contacting your elected representatives. Let the Governor and our other elected officials know that this Act violates the dignity of the human person and that you do not support it.

Get involved in the efforts already underway at your parish, such as Respect Life Committees. In addition, our Diocesan Respect Life Office can direct you to ways that you can support and promote the sanctity of life locally, on Long Island.

3. **Pray.** Pray the Holy Rosary. Ask the intercession of Our Blessed Mother Mary, Protector of Mothers, Defender of Life and the Family, to strengthen us so that we may be compassionate, courageous witnesses to the truth. Ask also for the intercession of Saint Thomas More, patron of statesmen, politicians, lawyers and judges, who lost his life for refusing to renounce his conscience and give in to the tides of political power and privilege.

Pray for our elected officials and for all people and pray that our politicians come to understand their profound obligation to defend the most defenseless among us. Any Catholic who actively supports an attack on the sacredness of life, chooses to place him or herself in grave moral danger and outside of the Communion of the Church. We pray for their souls, for a spirit of repentance, for a return to the truth of the love of God. It is God's love that formed each one of us in our Mother's womb.

A civilization that not only will not protect, but actually celebrates an attack on its most vulnerable members is morally bankrupt and stands on the verge of collapse. We pray for the courage of the martyrs, that an awakened spirit of evangelization and voices raised together will move hearts and minds, and call us back to our God-given senses, to the God who made us, who loves us, and who offers us our eternal destiny in love.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us!

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John O. Barres". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre