

The Supreme Court has at last decided to allow for the protection of unborn children, and that is a victory for law and justice. But the spiritual battle for life will go on. As people of faith, we will continue to turn to our Lord and pray for a conversion of hearts. We will continue to kneel before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, asking him to protect the unborn and their vulnerable mothers and fathers.

A decision for life

The country and world awoke on June 24 to the news that the U.S. Supreme Court had handed down its decision in the *Dobbs vs. Jackson* case that deals with state laws on abortion. To our amazement and joy, the Court voted to uphold the Mississippi law in question *and finally* to overturn the infamous *Roe vs. Wade* decision from 1973 that invented a right to abortion throughout the United States. That decision had ushered in an era of nearly unbridled abortion in this country and enshrined the grave moral evil of abortion as a sort of super-right which no law or regulation could touch. I've always wondered what the framers of our Constitution would say about such a preposterous notion, but that's a discussion for another day.

We can only be thankful to God for this great step forward in rebuilding a culture of life in our land. *Roe vs. Wade* was the most egregious part of the culture of death that has been steadily gaining ground in this country for many decades. That one tragic decision opened the way for the deaths of more than 62 million unborn children in a nation that declares its commitment to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The death and damage caused by the *Roe* decision have been staggering, and led to a general degradation of our nation and our culture.

This Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe* has been a long time coming. Millions of people have been praying, marching, advocating, and sacrificing for the right to life of every child, including the unborn, and I thank God for their witness and constancy. When others wanted them to go away quietly, they continued to stand their ground, convinced that a day of vindication would come. And, as you know, the Catholic Church has been at the forefront of the pro-life cause. The sanctity of all human life has always been a clear tenet of Catholic teaching, and we as a Church have devoted enormous spiritual, human, and material resources to this truth. The pro-abortion lobby would like to convince you that the Church only cares about the child before birth, but then abandons both mother and child afterwards. This has always been a lie, and it still is. Apart from the government, the Church in this country is the largest provider of care and services to people in need, and that includes assistance to children, mothers, and families. In the Diocese of Fargo, I think of the exceptional work done by Catholic Charities of North Dakota and the St. Gianna Maternity Home. I think of the various women's pregnancy centers in our diocese that respect the sanctity of life, as well as the pro-life initiatives of many of our parishes. No one should doubt the Church's commitment to life.

It is important to realize, however, that even after this landmark Supreme Court ruling, our work is not done. It will still be necessary to defend and work for pro-life laws in our own state and throughout the nation. Even though North Dakota can now become a sanctuary for the lives of unborn children, other states will still continue to protect the practice of abortion. Politicians, the mass media, and many cultural leaders will push harder for even more extreme pro-abortion laws and regulations, and the pro-life cause will come under even greater attack. Already we have seen a crescendo of violence against churches and pro-life pregnancy centers around the country. One U.S. senator even threatened that all pro-life pregnancy centers should be shut down. We need to take these threats and attacks seriously and do what we must to defend our people and property. But rather than responding with bitterness, we must respond with peace, determination, and faith. The evil one tries to sow discord, so we must respond with prayer, mercy, and compassion. And now we will also need to redouble our efforts to assist women and couples who face challenging pregnancies. Through initiatives like Walking with Moms in Need, we must renew our commitment to the mothers and families who need help bringing a new life into the world. We must support them and accompany them so they know that they are not alone and realize that abortion is never their only alternative. In fact, now we must work even harder to make abortion unthinkable.

The Supreme Court has at last decided to allow for the protection of unborn children, and that is a victory for law and justice. But the spiritual battle for life will go on. As people of faith, we will continue to turn to our Lord and pray for a conversion of hearts. We will continue to kneel before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, asking him to protect the unborn and their vulnerable mothers and fathers. We will pray in reparation for the vast numbers of lives lost and for the healing of all victims of abortion: infants, parents, families, and yes, even abortion providers. We will keep praying, and fasting, and marching for life until every life is recognized as sacred. Our most powerful weapon is the Lord Jesus himself, who entered this world as an infant, who faced death and rose to new life. And we should turn also to Mary, the Mother of our Lord, who intercedes for every mother and child in the womb.

This is our time to create a new culture of life in America. May we continue to pray and work for the cause of life, so that every child, created in the image and likeness of God, will be given a chance to live and grow as a cherished member of our human family. Let us go forward with hope, courage, and compassion, giving thanks to God for the beautiful gift of life.