



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
**Office of Human Life,
Family and Bioethics**



Jesus Christ Came To Set Us Free

Homily (June 26th) by Very Rev. Michael Duffy, Rector of St Agnes Cathedral



My friends, this week we mark the tenth anniversary of a group founded by Bishop William Murphy here in the Diocese of Rockville Centre: Catholics for the Freedom of Religion. This nonpartisan group seeks to remind us as Catholics about the bedrock of our American society – the freedom of religion. So often in these days we hear about the need for us as Catholics, as people of faith to keep that faith to ourselves. But you and I know that if we are truly living this Catholic faith, it means we cannot, we must not keep it to ourselves. **The faith of Jesus Christ is not something meant to be kept to ourselves, but to be shared, to be shouted from the mountain tops. We allow our faith to impact every part of our lives. It may not always make us popular with the world, but Jesus Christ didn't come to make us popular, he came to set us free!**

My friends, this is why the Church has prayed and worked for an increase of respect for human life, from conception until natural death. I would be remiss if I didn't comment on Friday's announcement from the Supreme Court. **This is a pivotal moment in the history of our nation, a grave wrong and injustice that has cost the lives of millions of innocent children has been undone.** As we have long held and believed, there can be no right to take the life of an innocent. The court has finally concluded the same and has returned the issue to the states and to the people. That means our work has just begun. **As you all know so well, ours is a state with the most radical and anti-life position in the nation.** A child's life can be legally ended up until and including the day of birth for any reason whatsoever. I have to speak plainly to you - that is evil. Permit me to quote Bishop Barres:

"...our work to promote and defend life with humility and compassion must continue stronger than ever. Supported by scientific advances that ever more clearly confirm the life of the unborn child, it is our God-given right and our solemn duty to proclaim the truth about abortion. We continue to work and pray that all hearts will be open to recognizing the sacredness of every human life and make this a world in which abortion is unthinkable."¹

The overturning of Roe is a moment for us a church not to gloat or be triumphant, but for us to double down our efforts in making ours a culture and society that welcomes babies and assists those in need.

The Catholic Church stands at the forefront of this endeavor. If there is anyone listening to me right now who is in need of assistance, who is considering ending their child's life, please come to me. We will help you. There are options available to you. Choose life. Once again, I quote our Bishop:

We renew our commitment to accompany women facing unexpected, challenging, or difficult pregnancies that undermine their confidence to embrace the beauty of motherhood. The Catholic Church stands with expectant mothers in need. We will help

¹ https://www.drvc.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_Bishop_Barres_Dobbs_v_Jackson_Statement.pdf

meet their physical, material, emotional, and spiritual needs, not just before and at birth, but into infancy and beyond. Moreover, for those who have suffered a past abortion, we offer help in healing these wounds as well. We pledge to persevere in prayer, fasting and witnessing to the sacredness of every human life. A network of resources and assistance is ready to help all these expectant mothers in need, regardless of status or ability to pay—but we need your help to grow and sustain a culture of life in the Diocese of Rockville Centre.²

That we have the freedom to express our faith and be influence by it when we vote and live out our public lives is the greatest blessing we have as Americans. Just as those who shout and protest over the most recent Supreme Court decision are molded and formed by a world view and set of beliefs, so to do we. The second reading reminds us that we are made for freedom, and that we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. Some in our society and our government would rather the Church not live this commandment out. Some wish that we as Catholics would stop being catholic when we leave this cathedral building. But we know that is not possible, for our catholic faith is at the core of who we are. Some wish that our students not display their catholic faith or even speak about it in public schools. Some wish that athletes not pray openly before games. Some wish that our catholic hospitals would provide services contrary to our moral principals. Permit me to tell you a chilling fact:

“Recent court filings uncovered by the Catholic Benefits Association show the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is working to establish sweeping sex-discrimination regulations to dismantle the religious-liberty protections in health-care law.

"Discovery of a 74-page legal memorandum attached to a court filing ... revealed that HHS has promised to revise its mandates on health plan coverage and performance to include surgical abortion, cross-sex hormones, gender-transition surgeries, gender-affirming cosmetic surgeries and voice modification ... contraception, abortion drugs and sterilizations,"³ The new mandate "would not only disallow religious exemptions but would have a broad cost and compliance impact on all U.S. employers." (2)

"The forthcoming HHS regulation presents an existential threat to Catholic health care because the penalties to noncompliance will include private enforcement, class-action lawsuits ... The penalties may also include loss of Medicare and Medicaid funding and even imprisonment for noncomplying health care executives," "Such sanctions can shut down any hospital network. ... Such performance mandates will harm health care in the U.S. overall, given that Catholic hospitals provide an estimated 1/6 of hospital beds nationally."⁴

This HHS “super rule” would force catholic hospitals to choose between fidelity to our moral teaching or providing services that compromise that teaching. I can assure you that is not a decision we will be taking. Most Catholics don’t know this. We must raise our voices to our elected leaders and demand our freedom of religion.

My friends, at the end of the day our Gospel asks us how we ought to deal with those who disagree or who challenge us. Ought we to rain fire down on our opponents? The Gospel tells us the Lord himself rebukes that option. **Ours is not a way of condemnation and anger, but a way of life and love. The world is a challenging place, we are in a fraught moment of division in our American society at this very moment. Our mother the Church is an answer to that division.** The Church, which seeks to love and protect her children and bring them all to salvation as a light in the darkness. But we must be allowed to live out these truths. We must be allowed to walk the way of Jesus Christ in the public sphere. We cannot leave our faith at the doors of this

² Ibid.

³ Tom Tracy, Catholic News Service.(1)

⁴ <https://www.ncregister.com/news/exclusive-hhs-plans-new-rule-to-mandate-health-care-providers-comply-with-abortion-and-gender-transition-agendas-with-no-religious-freedom-exceptions>

cathedral, because we have been made for freedom. We live by the spirit and not the flesh. Ours is a way of Life.