



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics



January 2022

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Dear Friends for Life,

VIRTUAL/LOCAL MARCH FOR LIFE 2022

Abortion is the most dire human rights issue of our time. The somber reality is that in the last 50 years *more than 60 million* lives have been extinguished before they were even allowed the chance to be born. This is not exclusively a Catholic or Christian issue. It is a *human rights* issue that transcends age, color, sex, development, ability, ethnicity etc. ***Without the fundamental right to life, there are no other rights.*** And so, we march for each and every unrepeatable human life, created in the image and likeness of God, to be protected in the womb from the very moment he or she begins at fertilization and until the natural end in this world. ***Equality begins in the womb.***

This year, we will mark the 49th March for Life once again as a local/virtual event due to multiple pandemic-associated concerns. Understandably, these extended limitations are disappointing, but this is also a time we can introduce others to the March for Life. Expanded efforts for our second local March for Life will include a rally at St. Agnes for Catholic high school students, an emphasis on educational resources to incorporate prolife principles into the Catholic school and Religious Education curricula, more durable “Life is sacred!” signs, and our new “Life is sacred!” car magnets that can be used throughout the year.

Also note that a **plenary indulgence** may be gained for participating virtually in the

1. **National Prayer Vigil for Life** at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Thursday, January 20, 2022 from 5:15 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and/or
2. **Closing Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life** at the Cathedral of Saint Matthew on Friday, January 21, 2022, at 8:00 a.m.

provided that you meet all other conditions: detachment from any sin, Sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father. These events will be televised on Catholic Faith Network or you can watch the livestream at www.nationalshrine.org/mass.

Please see www.DRVCMarchforlife.com for the many ways in which you, your friends, family, and community can participate from home or at special events in parishes across the Diocese of Rockville

Centre. Don't forget [9 Days for Life Novena](#) (Jan. 19 to 27) and [Pray for Dobbs](#) on Saturday, January 22. Everyone can do something!

“For, although we are in the flesh, we do not battle according to the flesh, for the weapons of our battle are not of flesh but are enormously powerful, capable of destroying fortresses.” 2 Corinthians 10:4

WHY WE MARCH: *ROE V. WADE* HISTORY AND HOPE

While we refer to related activities as the “March for Life” we should keep in mind that **January 22**, the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, is observed as the **Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children**, even when it does not coincide with the actual March in Washington, D.C. It is “observed as a particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion.” (The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 373). Although we celebrate life and the strides we have made in protecting it, even our local March for Life activities are intended to re-create a pilgrimage experience because there is still a long way to go in building a genuine Culture of Life.

Indeed, the March for Life organization was incorporated as a non-profit entity with the mission to advocate for those not yet born—no exceptions, no compromises—and the commitment to march for life every year until *Roe v. Wade* would be overturned.¹ Although we are still marching 49 years later, this year is a little different as we await the Supreme Court’s decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* which we hope at the very least will chisel away at *Roe v. Wade*.

Since there may be references in the coming months to previous abortion cases heard by the highest court, it is useful to be familiar with some of them. Here is a very brief summary of the most significant abortion-related cases decided by the Supreme Court of the United States.

Year	Case	Decision ²
1973	<i>Roe v. Wade</i>	In this landmark decision, the Supreme Court decided that the State does not have a compelling interest in protecting life until “viability” (when a baby can survive, with or without support, outside of the mother’s womb). It established a three-trimester framework in which abortion access was unrestricted in the first trimester, slightly restricted in the second trimester, and completely restricted in the third trimester except for reasons that threatened the life <i>or health</i> of the mother.
1973	<i>Doe v. Bolton</i>	This was the companion case to <i>Roe v. Wade</i> . Here, the Supreme Court defined “health” (as applied in post-viability exceptions) in the broadest terms to include “...physical, emotional, psychological, familial and the mother’s age” ³ as reasons to justify abortion access. Essentially, this allowed abortion without any rigorous restrictions, including the third trimester.

¹ March for Life. “History of the March” Marchforlife.org <https://marchforlife.org/history-of-the-march/>, (Accessed Jan. 23, 2021).

² Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life. “Supreme Court Abortion Cases” mccl.org <https://www.mccl.org/supreme-court-abortion-cases>, (Accessed Jan. 17, 2022).

Pew Research Center. “A History of key Abortion Rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court” pewforum.org <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/01/16/a-history-of-key-abortion-rulings-of-the-us-supreme-court/> (Accessed Jan. 17, 2022).

Abort73.com. “U.S. Abortion Law: An overview of federal abortion rulings in the United States” abort73.com https://abort73.com/abortion_facts/us_abortion_law/ (Accessed Jan. 17, 2022).

³ *Doe v. Bolton*, 410 U.S. 179. Supreme Court of the United States. 1973.

1989	<i>Webster v. Reproductive Health Services</i>	The Supreme Court abandoned the trimester framework in this case, replacing it with the viability standard for regulating abortion. It also determined that the State has a compelling reason to protect life throughout pregnancy. Although the beginning of life as defined by conception was deemed constitutional, it was not thought to affect access to abortion.
1992	<i>Planned Parenthood v. Casey</i>	In this case, the Court upheld the “right” to legal abortion in <i>Roe v. Wade</i> but permitted pre-viability regulations so long as they would not impose an “undue burden” or substantial obstacles to abortion access (these included a waiting period, informed consent, etc.). Of note, some of the resistance to ruling against <i>Roe v. Wade</i> was rooted in the idea that over the years, people had developed expectations regarding access to abortion such that it was anticipated more harm would be caused by any attempt to undo this precedent even if wrongly based.
2007	<i>Gonzales v. Carhart</i>	In this case, the Supreme Court upheld the ban on partial birth abortion that was codified in the Federal Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act (2003); significantly, this prohibited a specific abortion procedure and did not include a health exception for the mother.
2016	<i>Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt</i>	Here, the Supreme Court struck down two reasonable Texas abortion regulations intended to safeguard women’s health. It deemed as “undue burden” requirements for abortion facilities to match the standards of other ambulatory surgical centers and for doctors performing abortions to have hospital admitting privileges. The latter provision was upheld by the Supreme Court in <i>June Medical Services v. Russo</i> (2020).

IN MEMORIAM

Finally, we mourn the loss of Rev. Paul G. Driscoll, a valiant, dedicated and uncompromising defender of all human life, recognized by many for his visionary leadership in the early days of the prolife movement and throughout his priesthood. Appointed by Bishop Kellenberg in 1969 and serving until 1985, he was the first Coordinator of Human Life for the Diocese of Rockville Centre, the forerunner of what is currently the Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics. I am grateful to Fr. Driscoll’s faithful witness and most especially his priestly vocation.

I wish you all a prayerful, safe and fruitful March for Life experience. May we continue to pray for the legal protection of the unborn but also for the courage, strength and perseverance to accompany the vulnerable at every stage of life.

Every Life is Worth Living⁴

Heavenly Father, thank you for the precious gift of life.

Help us to cherish and protect this gift, even in the midst of fear, pain, and suffering.

⁴ [Prayer-Card-RLP-2015-Eng.pdf \(usccb.org\)](http://usccb.org)

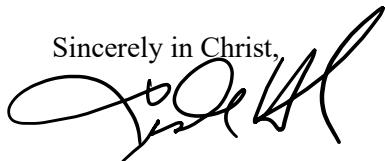
Give us love for all people, especially the most vulnerable, and help us bear witness to the truth that every life is worth living.

Grant us the humility to accept help when we are in need, and teach us to be merciful to all.

Through our words and actions, may others encounter the outstretched hands of Your mercy.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa A. Honkanen".

Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D.