

# Ruling a Victory ... and a Reminder

The good people who operate pro-life crisis pregnancy centers and all who value the sanctity of human life celebrated a great victory this week. The Baltimore City law requiring these centers to post signs stating that they do not provide abortion and contraceptive services was declared unconstitutional by a U.S. District Court judge.

In ruling the law unconstitutional, the judge said the City engaged in “viewpoint discrimination” because it disagreed with the pregnancy centers’ message, and that the ordinance was not “narrowly tailored” in a way to survive strict scrutiny. In other words, the judge agreed with our claim that the city targeted these centers simply because they are pro-life.

On the surface, the court’s decision is good news, and will reverberate in other jurisdictions across the country where the likes of Planned Parenthood touted the Baltimore City ordinance as the first in the country. Let’s hope that the ruling will inhibit their efforts to promote similar laws aimed at putting pro-life pregnancy centers out of business and leading women in crisis pregnancies to abortion factories.

However, it is also a telling reminder of the many challenges that exist – including those presented by our own state government – which pose a threat to some of the fundamental beliefs we hold dear and which we, therefore, have a duty to defend. While each of these issues is not of the same gravity as the taking of an unborn life, they warrant our concern in keeping with traditional Catholic teaching.

The institution of marriage is under assault in our state, as 58 delegates and 18 senators in the Maryland General Assembly have introduced a bill to redefine marriage, which, if passed, could have devastating consequences for our children and for our society, the foundation of which is the nuclear family. We can take heart in Senate President Mike Miller’s comments last week that marriage is a blessing from God and hope that others among us will make their voices heard and legislators will respond by protecting this sacred institution for the benefit of society.

There are consistent challenges to the conscience protections that exist to allow

Catholic professionals, such as doctors and nurses, as well as people of other faiths, to act in accordance with their faith-formed consciences when carrying out the duties of their profession.

The attempt to regulate pro-life crisis pregnancy centers in Baltimore occurred only after Planned Parenthood failed to have similar legislation enacted at the state level just a few years earlier.

Our Church must remain consistent in our pro-life ethic, even when many Catholics find it difficult to accept Church teaching on issues like the death penalty and immigration.

Although the application of Maryland's death penalty has been somewhat limited, it is still on the books and therefore still poised to take a life. Because we have the means to protect the citizens of our state from those who have committed unspeakable acts of violence and evil without extinguishing life, we must leave vengeance to God and end this barbaric and outdated practice.

As some state legislators look to the new immigration law in Arizona and call it "model" legislation, our U.S. Bishops have rightly labeled it "draconian" because of the broad powers it gives local authorities to arrest individuals suspected of being in the country illegally. While the Church agrees that laws must be respected, the family must also remain our concern. We support real immigration reform at the federal level – not draconian state-level laws that seek to fill the void through inadequate policing measures – and call for an immigration system that both promotes the good of the family and encourages compliance with the law.

Living out our faith, whether convenient or not, is our baptismal calling. It is being true to who we say we are every Sunday. While we are comforted in the outcome of this most recent challenge to the work of those who seek only to help women choose life, we cannot become complacent in our duty to advance the causes of our faith: to serve the poor and vulnerable, build up the common good and respect human life and dignity.

*Join Maryland's bishops and hundreds of fellow Catholics on Presidents' Day – Monday, February 21 – for the 27th annual Catholic Lobby Night in Annapolis and*

*make your voice heard. For more information, visit [www.mdcathcon.org](http://www.mdcathcon.org).*