

'Protect, respect all human rights'

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

In this Bicentennial year, it is important that America reaffirm the commitment to safeguarding human dignity and human rights on which our nation was founded. The Declaration of Independence expressed a basic truth of our Judaeo-Christian heritage — "that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The history of America has been the story of a young nation engaged in demanding efforts and sometimes heroic sacrifices to guarantee all men and women freedom, equality, and protection of their fundamental human rights.

In recent years, there has been a stepping back from that basic commitment and an erosion of respect for human life. It is seen in acts of violence that destroy human life, in situations of social injustice and discrimination that diminish the enjoyment of the nation's advantages, in those instances in which some people are deprived of the opportunity to be educated or to find decent employment. But the most powerful example of the loss of respect for human life is the present situation of permissive abortion which allows the destruction of more than one million unborn children each year.

The religious traditions of our people and the Constitutional structure of our system of justice affirm respect for human life and promise protection thereof. To make sure this promise is fulfilled, the nation needs a reaffirmation of our basic commitment on the part of each citizen and a determined effort by our elected leaders to amend the Constitution.

In the final analysis, amending the Constitution to protect human life at every stage of its existence is the only decisive way to guarantee that "this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom," and that everyone, including unborn children, will enjoy full protection of their unalienable rights.

Therefore, I ask you today to make your own personal commitment and pledge yourself to exercise your religious and social responsibilities conscientiously in ways that will safeguard and respect these principles and rights for every human being.

One way of fulfilling this responsibility I would suggest is to work in pro-life activities in the Archdiocese. If you can do this, please fill out the form in the bulletin and return it in the collection basket next Sunday. These forms will be sent to the Archdiocese Pro-Life Coordinator. You will be contacted when your assistance is needed, and you may be sure that your efforts will be blessed by God for such an affirmation of both your Christian beliefs and your duty as a citizen.

With every best wish and a blessing, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

William D. Borders

Archbishop of Baltimore

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