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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

August 15, 2023

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On June 24th, 2022, the United States Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, thus ending five decades of legal abortion in the United States. But this decision by no means marks an end to the controversy that swirls around this critical matter. Now the states are debating this issue with even greater urgency than before the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision. Sadly, New Mexico has become a haven for those who want an abortion, creating an ever-growing challenge for the Catholic Church and for those who hold that human life in the womb is sacred and worthy of protection.

This does not mean that the Church is blind to the challenges of those who face an unwanted pregnancy. On the contrary, the Catholic Church has many programs and agencies that journey with those who are contemplating an abortion and with those who decide to bring their babies to full term. I applaud those who support pregnant mothers in this way. Furthermore, we reach out to those who seek healing from the hurt of their past actions, assuring them of our prayers, support and the comfort of God's mercy.

However, since life is the highest value for us as human beings, we cannot ignore the importance of coming to the defense of life in the womb. How can we have a concern for the environment, for healthcare, for the poor and the immigrant, if not for the fundamental value of life itself. However, the issue is that when it comes to abortion, we see that the rights of the mother are in conflict with the rights of the unborn. There are those who claim that only the mother has rights as if we were talking about the baby in the womb as part of the woman's body. The Church teaches that the baby in the womb is an unrepeatable, unique human life, nourished by the mother but completely distinct from the mother. Hence, the right to life of


the unborn cannot be ignored or made subservient to the rights of the mother. We must do all that we can to support the mother and to help her sustain the right to life of her child. To do otherwise is to go down a slippery slope and to relegate human beings to being no more than property, as in the antebellum South where people were sold as slaves. It was wrong then, and it is wrong now for any human being to think that human lives are properties that can be owned, traded, or destroyed. If the right exists for one person to terminate another human life, at what point is the line drawn? At what point do we withhold life-giving medicine, at what point do we justify genocide, at what point do we allow murder?

As a Church, we must continue to fight against the terrible sin of abortion. And we must also look at the economic, social, and psychological reasons that cause people to seek an abortion. Poverty is one of the most common of these causes. As Catholics, we must do all we can to eradicate these driving forces behind abortion.

All this demands that we change hearts. It is important to educate others but unless we change hearts, the pro-life movement will not succeed. It is the beat of our hearts that is the source of each person's life breath. It is the sharing of our hearts that unites us in love. It is the depth of feeling in our hearts what is morally right that encourages us to hope. A heartless person, a heartless policy, a heartless society is dead, without life and love. Our challenge is to change hearts in order to change culture. And we can only face that challenge by grounding our efforts in prayer, prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Bishop Wall, Bishop Baldacchino and I agreed to join in consecrating our dioceses to the hearts of Jesus and Mary so that all of New Mexico would be supported by divine grace in our efforts to promote and protect human life.

Therefore, I invite you, my brothers and sisters, to join me in consecrating ourselves, our archdiocese, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, asking for the graces we need to protect, support and honor human life. In doing so, I am confident that we will move our State of New Mexico to have a change of heart when it comes to protecting human life in the womb and beyond. May God bless us all now and always.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Wester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend John C. Wester
Archbishop of Santa Fe