



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

January 15, 2007

To the people of the Diocese of Grand Rapids:

My dear friends,

Monday, January 22 marks the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized unrestricted abortion in our country. It was a sad and dark day in the history of our nation. Pope John Paul II reminded us in the *Gospel of Life* that “it is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop.”

The anniversary of this tragic decision also calls us to remember in a special way the many people who work tirelessly to uphold the dignity of all human life – especially the unborn. These dedicated and faith-filled people pray, march, work with legislators, and counsel. Their efforts have born considerable fruit. They have saved lives and changed hearts and minds. Because of their resolve, there are fewer abortions each year and fewer doctors willing to perform them. Due to the awareness raised as a result of their pro-life work, more citizens are willing to step outside the status quo and declare they are pro-life. Over the years many pro-life groups, individual parish communities, pregnancy resource centers, catholic social service agencies and others have provided practical assistance and support to women facing difficult pregnancies.

In my name and on behalf of the church, I extend heartfelt appreciation to the many persons in our diocese who work in pregnancy resource centers, offer practical assistance and alternatives to abortion and educate in this regard, so human lives may be protected, cherished and not be destroyed. They labor quietly and ecumenically, never seeking recognition of any kind.

It is further gratifying and hopeful to see our young people take up the cause of life. Among others, Students for Life members from West Catholic High School, Catholic Central High School and Grand Valley State University will travel to Washington D.C. to participate in the “National Prayer Vigil for Life January 21-22. I admire their witness and ask that you keep them in your prayers.

Our work to protect human life and to end abortions is far from over. However, as the journey continues, I invite you to pause in prayerful thanksgiving for those who work unselfishly to support and sustain God’s greatest gift to us—the gift of life itself.

With gratitude and prayerful good wishes,

Most Rev. Walter A. Hurley
Bishop of Grand Rapids