



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

January 20, 2009

To the people of the Diocese of Grand Rapids:

My dear friends,

Thursday, January 22 marks the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized unrestricted abortion in our country. It was a sad day in the history of our nation. When he visited the United States last year, Pope Benedict XVI encouraged us to be clear in our beliefs, act consistently with them and be animated in our efforts to transform our culture. During his homily at St. Patrick's Cathedral he said, "The Church...is called to proclaim the gift of life, to serve life, and to promote a culture of life. ..."

Over the years many pro-life groups, individual parish communities, pregnancy resource centers, Catholic Charities agencies and others have provided practical assistance, education and support to women facing difficult pregnancies. Other dedicated and faith-filled people pray, march, counsel, and work with legislators. Their efforts have brought about considerable results. 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. Their pro-life work has raised awareness and, as a result, more citizens are willing to step outside the status quo and declare that they are pro-life.

On the anniversary of the tragic Roe v. Wade decision, we remember in a special way those who work tirelessly to uphold and defend the dignity of all human life – especially the unborn. It is gratifying and hopeful to see young people and other representatives from our diocese actively take up the cause of life through participation at the Annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. this year. I thank all the students who are attending the march including those from our Catholic high schools, Aquinas College and Grand Valley State University; members of the Right to Life groups, and the many individuals and parish groups participating from our diocese. These representatives along with all those supporting every stage of human life, from conception through natural death, provide courageous witness for all Christians.

As we continue our work to protect human life, I invite you to pause in prayerful thanksgiving for those who work unselfishly to support and sustain God's greatest gift – the gift of life itself.

With gratitude and prayerful good wishes,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Bishop of Grand Rapids