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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

**A Message from Archbishop Henning, Bishop McManus, Bishop da Cunha, and Bishop Byrne for
the Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful of Massachusetts**

In June during his Apostolic Visit to Spain, our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV delivered an appeal to defend human dignity and protect life from conception to its natural end. “Every legislative task,” he said, “ultimately confronts a decisive question: what conception of the human person inspires laws, and what kind of society do those laws build?”

Just two months after the Holy Father’s address, Massachusetts passed one of the most expansive and permissive abortion laws in the nation, telling us what kind of society they desire for Massachusetts: one which leaves its most vulnerable citizens—children in the womb and their pregnant mothers—at perilous risk. This law is a tragedy, and the Catholic legislators who helped to enact it have caused grave scandal.

The Prioritizing Patient Access to Care Act permits abortion throughout pregnancy for any reason, and it allows these grisly procedures—dangerous to mothers and cruel to their unborn children—to be performed in non-hospital settings. Laws function as teachers. This new law falsely teaches that human beings who are ill or inconvenient are not worthy of life; that motherhood can be incompatible with women’s freedom, well-being, and flourishing; and that no viable alternatives to abortion exist in the face of difficult diagnoses.

Alternatives do exist. A 2023 peer-reviewed article published in the *Cureus Journal of Medical Science* found that 60% of women considering an abortion would choose life if they had more material and emotional support. We want to help women and families to choose life! We invite every expectant mother in distress to ask us for help. We ask that elected officials and healthcare providers—especially those whose consciences are rightly troubled by the new law—work to ensure that life-sustaining care for vulnerable children in utero and that mothers and fathers who feel alone and overwhelmed have all they need to welcome and raise their children with confidence.

The Lord Jesus Christ saw the forgotten and reached out to the neglected. As Bishops, we call upon all to see the dignity of the poor, the unborn, the sick and the elderly. No one is expendable, no one is a burden. All have a sacred God-given dignity. The foundation of social justice is this inviolable dignity of the human person. The Prioritizing Patient Access to Care Act unjustly condemns to death our most vulnerable children and pits a mother against her own child.

In his Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo teaches: “Human dignity does not depend on a person’s abilities, wealth or position in life, nor on the right or wrong choices made; instead, it is a gift that precedes and transcends each person, endowed by God as an expression of his unfailing love.” There is no stage of development or characteristic which would render a child unworthy of life—even if that life will be short or require palliative care.

May Our Lord Jesus Christ protect us all from harm, may He inspire us with self-giving love, and may He guide our civil leaders to enact laws which protect and promote the dignity of every person from conception to natural death.

What Can We Do?

Each year, Respect Life Month offers the opportunity to renew our reverence for life and take concrete actions to witness to the beauty and sanctity of this foundational gift of the Lord. Here are some of the concrete actions you might consider this year:

We Pray. First and foremost, we pray. With the passage of this bill our leaders and our Commonwealth have failed in the duty to uphold the sacred dignity of every human life. In prayer, we seek the mercy of a loving God for our failures and for this sin against His Law of Love. We pray for our civil leaders that the Lord will give them wisdom and strength to do their duty to protect life and uphold the common good.

We Witness. As disciples, we are also called to give witness. We urge you to contact your representatives and make known your desire for just laws which protect every person in this state.

We speak up There is also an effort underway to pause and even possibly overturn this immoral law. We encourage you to take part in this effort and raise your own voice in opposition to the law and in favor of life.

We walk with families Scripture commands us “Choose life that you may live” (Deut. 30:19) A culture of life requires families, parishes, and schools to live that reverence for life. We need families who form their sons and daughters in the summons to promote and defend life. We need ministries that accompany and support women and families in crisis. In our state with such a radical law, it is more important than ever for us to make clear our desire to welcome and nurture the gift of life.

For further information and resources, see links below:

Repeal188.com is a resource hub and statewide referendum campaign launched to suspend and repeal Massachusetts' Chapter 188 abortion expansion, please visit: www.repeal188.com

For respect life and pregnancy support resources available in the Diocese of Fall River, please visit:

www.fallriverfaithformation.org/respect-life/

www.fallriverfaithformation.org/respect-life/support-services/walking-with-moms-in-need/

www.fallriverfaithformation.org/the-faustina-center/