

October 1, 2026

A Renewed Commitment to a Culture of Life: Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of Ohio on the Protection of Children in the Womb and Accompaniment of Women

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man [and woman] to make him share in his own blessed life” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1). All human life is a gratuitous gift from the hand of our loving Creator.

The Church in the United States gives particular attention to God’s great gift of life and our responsibility to this gift in the month of October. Threats to human life and dignity require a coherent and compassionate public witness. The foundation of our Church’s social doctrine—that all human life, from conception to natural death, possesses God-given dignity—compels us vigorously to defend the unborn child, resist any efforts to legalize physician-assisted suicide, and work toward ending the use of the death penalty in our state.

This October, we want to raise awareness about the tragic increase in abortions in Ohio following the 2023 passage of the amendment enshrining abortion in our state constitution and encourage solidarity with unborn children and their mothers through prayer and action. Since 2024, the total number of [abortions in our state](#) has increased by 15%, with approximately 21% of women who obtain abortions being from other states.¹

Much of this increase can be attributed to the ease of access to abortion pills that are prescribed virtually and obtained through the mail, according to the Ohio Department of Health.¹ As the Food and Drug Administration continues to enable this practice, the throwaway culture thrives unabated and unseen in the isolation of one’s home. This ease of access can make it more difficult for women facing challenging pregnancies to encounter the people and resources who can help them consider alternatives and receive support before and after the child’s birth. As has already [happened in our state](#), an abuser can obtain these drugs and force a woman into aborting her child unknowingly.² Reduced medical oversight may increase the risk that a woman does not receive vital care should complications occur.

Regardless of the decisions of our national political leaders to maintain the status quo or the limits of Ohio law to protect both the child in the womb and the mother, the Church’s mission remains unchanged. We must do our utmost to protect and defend the weakest and most vulnerable: innocent babies in the womb. We must contribute our voice in the public square to insist that human dignity is not contingent upon a person’s abilities, wealth, or position in life. The unborn, elderly or terminally ill, and even those who committed a heinous crime are beloved by God and worthy of our advocacy to protect their lives.

St. James warns against a faith that offers sentimental words and prayers to a brother or sister in need while doing nothing to provide for their concrete needs (cf. James 2:15–17). We must heed this warning seriously. Prayer must lead to accompaniment; conviction must inspire charity.

1. Ohio Department of Health – [Induced Abortion Report 2025](#)

2. WTOL 11 Article – [Toledo-area doctor sentenced to 6 months in forced abortion-drug case, Sept. 11, 2026](#)

As bishops, we want to call ourselves and our faithful to serious self-reflection because the credibility of our pro-life witness depends on our fidelity to the Church's teaching on the Gospel of Life in proclaiming truth in charity and, in large part, upon whether those most in need can experience a Church of compassion that is willing to remain steadfastly with them, especially in their most desperate and fearful moments. Our Christian witness is incomplete if we raise one hand to proclaim, "no abortion," without stretching out the other in compassion toward mothers in need, or say, "no assisted suicide" without providing support for the sick, lonely, and homebound. We must accompany them like the Good Samaritan, concretely sharing the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must have the courage to encounter those who are vulnerable rather than waiting for them to come to us.

As Christians, it is important to ask ourselves essential questions:

- Would a woman facing a challenging pregnancy believe she could turn to a local parish to receive Christ's love, material support, and compassionate accompaniment? Or would a frightened father-to-be find other men willing to journey with him, mentor him, and support him in accepting his responsibilities?
- Does a woman or man carrying the wounds of a past abortion experience know that they can still turn to the Church as a place of forgiveness, hope, and healing?
- Would a widow or widower who just received a terminal diagnosis know that their parish will walk with them as they approach the end of life?
- Do our actions express our belief that no human is beyond the possibility of repentance and reconciliation with God and that their life also has dignity?

As bishops, we are deeply grateful for you who are the leaders and volunteers within parish ministries and in our communities who support pregnant women, moms in need, the elderly, and those in prison. Your work demonstrates that it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness of our culture. You are missionaries of Jesus Christ, who tells us that we serve God when we love those in need. "Do not let your hearts be troubled" (John 14:1) by a society that prizes efficiency and rugged individualism over personal accompaniment. In moments of discouragement, recall that the victory of life is already won in Christ. Your labor is not in vain.

Each of us is called to participate in building a culture of life—through prayer, service, and faithful witness to the Gospel in every sphere of society. We invite all Catholics throughout Ohio to renew their commitment to prayer and action for the protection of human life and the flourishing of families through:

Prayer and Worship

- Initiatives of prayer, fasting, and Eucharistic devotion for the protection of life.
- Integrating respect for human life into liturgical and devotional life, using resources provided by the USCCB's [Office of Pro-Life Activities](#).

Parish-Based Pastoral Engagement

- Promotion of programs such as [Walking with Moms in Need](#) to assist pregnant and parenting mothers and families and [Project Rachel Ministry](#) to assist women and men with healing after abortion.

- Formation of parishes as centers of education, accompaniment, and support.
- Collaboration with local ministries serving pregnant and parenting mothers, the lonely and those who are suffering, and those in prison.

Public Witness and Advocacy

- Encouragement of faithful citizenship rooted in Catholic Social Teaching.
- Continued collaboration with the Catholic Conference of Ohio and the USCCB in advocating for policies that protect life, support families, provide for the elderly in need, and end the death penalty.

In our times, many offenses against the sanctity of human life often go unseen. The increase in abortions in Ohio underscores this fact. However, we are not driven to despair. We trust that where sin and sorrow abound, grace abounds all the more. (cf. Romans 5:20)

May each of us respond anew to Christ's call to love and serve the least among us, so that together we may build a society in which every human life is welcomed, cherished, and protected from conception to natural death.

With you in Christ Jesus,



The Most Rev. Robert G. Casey
Archdiocese of Cincinnati



The Most Rev. David J. Bonnar
Diocese of Youngstown



The Most Rev. John Michael Botean
Romanian Catholic Diocese of Canton



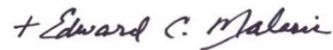
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The Most Rev. Earl K. Fernandes
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The Most Rev. Edward M. Lohse
Diocese of Steubenville



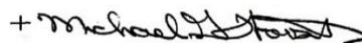
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The Most Rev. Michael Woost
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