



DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG
Office of the Bishop

February 4, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Like many of you, **I have been sickened at the legislation that was recently passed in New York**, and proposed legislation debated in Virginia. In New York State, The Reproductive Health Act, as it is called, makes it legal to perform an abortion up until the time of birth under certain circumstances. In my opinion, this can be called nothing less than infanticide or murder.

The Catholic Church has always promoted the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. I call on all people of good will to join us in our efforts. **It should be a universal belief on the part of society that each life is precious and is a gift from God.** Then, the right to life will be a fundamental human right that will be protected. I firmly believe that if society fails to protect life at its most innocent and vulnerable stage in the womb, then what guarantee is there that life will be respected and protected at any stage?

I was recently asked what can be done to address this serious matter which threatens the unborn. **I believe that we need to use our right to vote to elect legislators who believe in the sanctity of life and will promote legislation to protect life, not destroy it.** It is incumbent on each of us to know where a candidate for office stands on life issues before casting a vote for them. Among the many issues we may consider before voting, certainly life issues must be at the top of the list.

In addition, I believe that **we need to advocate for the lives of the unborn whenever possible.** I urge you to participate in the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. or the Florida March for Life in St. Augustine, support the many Pregnancy Centers throughout our diocese, and contact lawmakers to let them know that you stand for life and demand the same of them.

Finally, never underestimate the power of prayer to change minds and hearts. **May Mary, Mother of All Life, help us to respect human life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death.** Amen.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Gregory Parkes
Bishop of St. Petersburg