



DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

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Office of the Bishop

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

All social goods flow from a culture that rightly has as its source the respect for the sanctity of human life. This is why I, along with many others, was disheartened to hear about recent decisions to expand abortion services in the province. Every civil right we enjoy is founded on the most fundamental right—the right to life from conception to natural death.

In a 2018 letter, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops noted, “Canada today is one of the only countries in the world in which abortion continues to be permitted at every stage of pre-natal development, and for any motive.”¹ True investment in women would see an increase in services that help women safely carry their pregnancies to term, including proper medical care, psychological support, the basic necessities of life, access to education, assistance with childcare and job protection. Accompaniment and care for both mother and child will help to alleviate the crisis without any loss of life. This is how we truly love and support women – being pro-life means being pro-woman.

We must be rooted in truth and never tire of proclaiming it, including the undeniable scientific data showing that human life does in fact begin at conception. Cardiac tissue starts to pulse at around 5-6 weeks of pregnancy, which can be registered as a heartbeat on an ultrasound. This is why we can say without hesitation that abortion stops a beating heart. It has never been more urgent to speak up on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves.

I am so grateful for the good work of pro-life organizations in our diocese including New Brunswick Right to Life and Birthright that help continue the important work of education on the value of life from conception to natural death, keeping the public informed on these issues, and serving women in unexpected pregnancies. On the second Sunday of Advent, our annual Diocesan Pro-Life collection in support of these and other pro-life organizations will be taken up in the parishes. By educating and advocating on behalf of the most vulnerable members of our society these organizations play a vital role in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of life.

You can contribute to this special collection on the weekend of December 7-8 using envelopes marked, “PRO-LIFE OFFERING”. Your prayerful and financial support will help promote respect and protection of human life at all stages, from conception to natural death. I urge you in charity to respond generously.

It has never been more important to pray for our elected officials, to support the work of pro-life organizations, and to make our voices heard. Let us pray unceasingly that the fundamental right to life will be protected, valued, and upheld.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the unborn – pray for us!

Yours in Jesus with Mary,

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

November 25, 2024

¹ https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Statement_30th_anniversary_Morgentaler_Decision_-_EN.pdf