

**Saint Martin of Tours Church**  
**440 Saint Martin Road**  
**Vine Grove, Kentucky 40175**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Life is a gift to be welcomed with love and preserved with care not only for children, but for all human beings.

As children most of us had read to us, or read for ourselves, the creation stories in the Bible. For me, one of the most memorable lines has always been: “Then God said ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’” (Gen 1:26). He did. God made us in His image and likeness. He gave us a share in His dignity that no one can ever take away. Even when we are at our worst, and our likeness to the Divine has so dimmed that it is hard to see, it is still there. God’s love makes it so.

Our dignity – an inalienable gift from God – is the basis of all our human rights. And, as the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* tells us, “the right to life, from conception to its natural end ... is the condition for the exercise of all other rights.” (Par. 155).

Much contemporary thought, however, including views held in very high places in government and academia, frames human reality very differently than do we. Many, unfortunately, do not affirm the dignity of all human beings from conception to natural death, with the very young and the old, the sick and the challenged not being as highly valued as the rest of humanity. Those who hold such views on human dignity often arrive at decisions that we must look upon as being tragically wrong.

*Roe v. Wade*, and *Doe v. Bolton* the 1973 U. S. Supreme Court decisions making abortion on demand legal, have made it difficult, if not impossible, to enact legal protection for the unborn. At the time of these decisions, the majority of the justices said they could not determine when human life begins. Others have concluded that the unborn are not human beings. And as a result, 1 to 1.5 million unborn human lives are lost each year to abortion.

Recent legislation approving tax funding for human embryonic stem cell research must be based upon the conclusion that embryos are either not human or that there is a gradation among human beings with some humans being of far less value than others. Our culture increasingly risks being marked by what Pope Benedict XVI refers to as “indifference... toward what is and is not human.” Envisioning and creating a culture of life, a culture that will reject abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty and any other intrusion on the right to life is a moral mandate.

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Our Church's message about the innate, immeasurable and inalienable worth of every human being is consistent. It is also a message that applies to the area of health care reform. For centuries health care has been part of the Church's ministry. It has built and staffed hospitals, clinics and nursing homes around the world and throughout the United States. Today, the Church provides health care, purchases health care and picks up the pieces of a sometimes – failing health care system serving the sick and uninsured in our emergency rooms, shelters and on the doorsteps of our parishes. The Church brings both strong convictions and everyday experience to the public debate on health care reform.

Any health care reform should: 1) protect human life and dignity from conception to natural death and in doing so it must specifically exclude coverage for abortion; 2) provide conscience protection for medical workers and health care institutions; 3) offer accessible, affordable and quality health care to all citizens with special concern for the poor; and 4) restrain costs and spread them equitably across the spectrum of payers.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I am asking you to join me in prayer during October – Respect Life Month – that the Holy Spirit will move the hearts of all Americans to create a culture of life in our great country. Pray for those who have had their lives ended that they may find eternal peace with God in Heaven. Pray for those in leadership in our country and our Church that they may be strong defenders of life. Pray that we may come together to work to increase our own and our nation's reverence for life. Pray for guidance as we strive to use our talents to protect life from conception until natural death. Pray that we may see in every human smile, a loving God who is inviting us to see life as a gift to be welcomed, treasured and preserved with care always. Pray for life.

God Bless,

The Reverend Anthony L. Chandler  
Pastor