

Archbishop Lori: Dobbs case 'energizing the movement' of pro-life advocates

At the end of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' fall assembly in November, held in his own Archdiocese of Baltimore, Archbishop William E. Lori succeeded Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, as chairman of the organization's Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

Days after he became chair, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments regarding the legality of a Mississippi law that prohibits most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Pro-life advocates say the case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, provides the strongest chance in decades to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned.

Related reading: [Despite optimism in the pro-life movement, 'the war is not yet won'](#)

Following the oral arguments, the USCCB released a statement from Archbishop Lori, who said: "In the United States, abortion takes the lives of over 600,000 babies every year. *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* could change that. We pray that the court will do the right thing and allow states to once again limit or prohibit abortion, and in doing so protect millions of unborn children and their mothers from this painful, life-destroying act. We invite all people of goodwill to uphold the dignity of human life by joining us in prayer and fasting for this important case."

In a recent interview with Our Sunday Visitor, Archbishop Lori spoke about the optimism surrounding *Dobbs*, as well as what the pro-life committee has in store to care for pregnant women and the unborn in 2022 and beyond.

Our Sunday Visitor: What is your assessment of the pro-life movement currently?

Archbishop William E. Lori: It is an exciting and positive time to be part of this movement that respects and advances the dignity of every human life.

The potential outcome of the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* decision is energizing the movement, because we are hopeful about seeing positive changes in the legal landscape that will allow us to take significant actions toward protecting preborn children and their mothers from the devastation of abortion.

We also see an increase in efforts to care for mothers facing challenging or difficult pregnancies. A great example of this is the national Walking with Moms in Need initiative, which is empowering dioceses and parishes across the country to analyze what help is there locally and to fill the gaps in reaching out to, and caring for, vulnerable pregnant women.

Our Sunday Visitor: The understanding of fetal viability is changing with recent scientific advances. One [survey](#), which includes most U.S. hospitals with the ability to offer care for very premature babies, found the number offering active treatment for infants born at 22 weeks grew from 26% in 2007 to 58% in 2019. Are you hopeful that these demonstrations of an earlier viability of life will reenergize and/or refocus the pro-life movement?

Archbishop Lori: Absolutely. It is beautiful to see the miracles performed every day by doctors to save these young and precious lives. The developments in modern medicine and technology are a gift, and they help us all to recognize the humanity of unborn children.

There is a great lack of public education about what these preborn babies look like and what they are capable of. No one seeing a 3D ultrasound could call a preborn child a mere "clump of cells."

Our Sunday Visitor: As chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, what are your plans for this ministry in 2022 as the abortion landscape changes?

Archbishop Lori: We plan to be prepared politically and legislatively to support all efforts to protect human life. All are welcome to sign up for our updates at respectlife.org as we seek to pray and advocate for a better world for women and their preborn children.

Also, we are preparing to serve the practical needs of pregnant and parenting women in need, particularly by promoting Walking with Moms in Need in dioceses and parishes across the country. Anyone can find out more about this initiative and bring it to their parish by going to walkingwithmoms.com

Our Sunday Visitor: What are your thoughts about *Dobbs* and its potential impact?

Archbishop Lori: The pro-life movement is of course very excited about the *Dobbs* case, which is the first significant opportunity with the potential to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in generations.

While it is impossible to speculate what will happen, we pray that the Supreme Court will do the right thing and allow states to once again limit or prohibit abortion, and in doing so protect millions of unborn children and their mothers from this tragedy.

Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals and Orthodox Christians are joining together to pray and fast for this case. We invite all people of good will to uphold the dignity of human life by joining us in prayer and fasting at prayfordobbs.com

Our Sunday Visitor: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently said it's [lifting long-standing restrictions](#) on

abortion pills, clearing the way for doctors to prescribe the drugs online and have them mailed to patients or sent to local pharmacies. What do you think about this move and the challenge it poses to efforts of the pro life movement?

Archbishop Lori: The FDA ought to be protecting the lives and health of American women and children, instead of loosening safety standards and sacrificing them to the interests of an unscrupulous industry. Not only does this decision further the tragic taking of preborn lives, but it does little to care for the well-being of women in need.

We must continue to advocate to our leaders at every level of government to stop promoting the devastating cruelty of abortion and to instead promote policies that recognize and uphold the value of both mother and child.

We also must be consistent in showing what chemical abortion really is – the painful destruction of an innocent human life, and a devastating trauma to women.

Our Sunday Visitor: This decision by the FDA really does seem like it opens the door to abortion by mail. What are your views?

Archbishop Lori: This development does show great disrespect for life, both the life of the child and the child's mother. Millions of preborn children have been killed, and untold numbers of women have been harmed by the trauma of at-home abortion.

Many women are unaware of the physical and psychological consequences to choosing chemical abortion, and lack informed consent. Chemical abortion, procured by mail, leaves women more vulnerable and more alone than ever – enduring a physically painful and emotionally traumatic experience in their home, without medical attention or follow-up care.

This decision to take their child's life is irrevocable. No

one should be left to make this devastating choice, thinking that it is their best option.

As Catholics, we care for both mother and child, and seek to support policies that respect everyone's life and health. We also seek to serve women, offering help with the medical care and services they need to bring their children into the world in safety, and help them long after their children are born.

Joseph R. LaPlante writes from Rhode Island.

WALKING WITH MOMS IN NEED

Pregnant and parenting moms in need are in our parishes and our neighborhoods. As Pope Francis reminds us, our parishes need to be "islands of mercy in the midst of a sea of indifference." Everyone in the parish community should know where to refer a pregnant woman in need.

The 25th anniversary of *Evangelium Vitae* ("The Gospel of Life") gave us a wonderful opportunity to begin to assess, expand, and communicate resources to pregnant moms and families in need. Parishes are invited, through the support of their bishop and pastor, to join this nationwide effort entitled, *Walking with Moms in Need*.

To support this initiative, the Pro-Life Committee is developing educational, pastoral and action-oriented resources for parish use, including:☐

- Tools for documenting an inventory of local resources for pregnant mothers in need.
 - Ideas for improving parish responses.
- Prayers for building a culture of life and a civilization of love.
 - ☐Reflections on the teachings of *Evangelium Vitae*, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and *Laudato si'*.

For more information, visit walkingwithmoms.com.