



The Holy See

***LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II
TO CARDINAL BERNARD LAW
ARCHBISHOP OF BOSTON (U.S.A.) ***

*To my Venerable Brother
Cardinal Bernard Law
Archbishop of Boston*

As you, your Brother Bishops and great numbers of the faithful from throughout the United States gather at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to pray for an end to the tragedy of abortion in your country, I assure you of my spiritual closeness and my sharing in your concern for the continuing holocaust of innocent human lives. The 25th anniversary of the decision which effectively legalized abortion on demand in the United States is a call to people of goodwill to reflect seriously on the devastating consequences of that step. Now is the time for recommitment to the building of a culture of absolute respect for life from conception to natural death.

As the experience of the past 25 years has shown, legalized abortion has been a destructive force in the lives of many individuals, especially women who are often left alone to bear the deep sorrow and regret which follow the decision to destroy the life of an unborn child. But the proliferation of procured abortions has also had deleterious effects on society at large, not least in a weakening of respect for the life of the elderly and the infirm, and a coarsening of the moral sense. When the killing of the innocent is sanctioned by law, the distinction between good and evil is obscured and society is led to justify even such clearly immoral procedures as partial-birth abortion.

Amid the grave threats to human dignity and freedom represented by abortion, euthanasia and other crimes against God's gift of life, it is a positive sign of the times that, through the efforts of a broad spectrum of concerned citizens, there has been a gradual mobilization of consciences in support of life. As part of this great affirmation of the Gospel of life, I urge you to continue your praiseworthy efforts to educate people about the evil of abortion, to offer counsel, encouragement and help to women and families in difficult situations, and to continue to seek full legal protection for the unborn.

In particular, I call upon young men and women to involve themselves in this great campaign in defence of God's gift of

life. You are a sign of hope to the Church and the world. Do not be discouraged or afraid! The risen Lord calls us all to proclaim, celebrate and serve life, and he will give us the strength to accomplish his will.

In union with all who have assembled to pray for a new culture of life in the United States and throughout the world, I place this intention before Mary Immaculate, Mother of the Redeemer. As a pledge of joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 29 December 1997.

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