



Statement of Bishop William Patrick Callahan on U.S. Supreme Court Ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson* June 24, 2022

In response to the Supreme Court of the United States issuing its ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, Bishop William Patrick Callahan issued the following statement:

We welcome today’s ruling by the Supreme Court, as we continue to proclaim a vision for our society that upholds the truth that every human life is sacred and inviolable—a society in which the legal protection of human life is joined to profound care for mothers and their children.

We intend our Catholic parishes to be places of welcome for women facing challenging pregnancies or who find it difficult to care for their children after birth, so that any mother needing assistance will receive life-affirming support and be connected to appropriate programs and resources where she can get help. These include numerous Pregnancy Resource Centers within the boundaries of our diocese and across the state, as well as the Pregnancy Support Services and Adoption Services of our own Catholic Charities. We will do everything in our power to raise awareness of, and to strengthen, that network of compassionate care.

We will continue to support laws that ensure the right to life for unborn children, along with legislation that ensures that no mother or family lacks the basic resources needed to care for their children, regardless of race, age, immigration status, or any other factor.

In addition, recognizing that more than 65 million children have died from abortion in the U.S. since *Roe v. Wade*, leaving an untold number of women, men, and families suffering in the aftermath, we also commit to reach out in healing ministry to those wounded by the trauma of abortion.

In these ways and more, the Catholic Church will continue to witness to the sanctity of all human life, from conception to natural death, and to work to build a true culture of life in our nation, a culture that lovingly embraces and supports mothers and children before and after birth, along with their families. In the midst of life’s sufferings and challenges, we will strive always to be channels of the love of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

“[E]very human life, unique and unrepeatable, has value in and of itself; it is of inestimable value. This must always be proclaimed anew with the courage of the Word and the courage of actions. It calls us to solidarity and fraternal love for the great human family and for each of its members.” – Pope Francis on the 25th Anniversary of *Evangelium Vitae* (March 25, 2020)

Understanding the *Dobbs* Decision



Background

In the wake of the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision's historic overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, attacks against the ruling have paid little attention to the actual merits of the constitutional argument. Yet the task of the Supreme Court is to decide cases guided by the Constitution, not a desired outcome. Further, those who argue against overturning nearly 50 years of precedent must acknowledge this is not the first time the Court has ruled that a past decision was in error. As one of multiple examples, the Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 thankfully overturned its 1896 decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which had endorsed a racist "separate but equal" principle of segregation for American public schools.

As for *Roe v. Wade*, even the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who was clearly an abortion-rights advocate, took issue with its reasoning, calling it "heavy-handed judicial intervention" that had "provoked, not resolved, conflict." And Harvard Law School's Laurence Tribe wrote of *Roe* that, "behind its own verbal smokescreen, the substantive judgment on which it rests is nowhere to be found."

Key Quotes from the *Dobbs* Decision

With that background in mind, consider a few quotes that follow, from the *Dobbs* majority opinion. A link to the full text of the decision – well worth reading – can be found at www.diolc.org/respect-life.

"We hold that *Roe* and *Casey* must be overruled. The Constitution makes no reference to abortion, and no such right is implicitly protected by any constitutional provision, including the one on which the defenders of *Roe* and *Casey* now chiefly rely—the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment." "Not only was there no support for such a constitutional right until shortly before *Roe*, but abortion had long been a *crime* in every single State."

Respect for Court precedent (*Stare decisis*)... "does not compel unending adherence to *Roe*'s abuse of judicial authority." "*Roe* was egregiously wrong from the start. Its reasoning was exceptionally weak, and the decision has had damaging consequences. And far from bringing about a national settlement of the abortion issue, *Roe* and *Casey* have enflamed debate and deepened division."

"It follows that the States may regulate abortion for legitimate reasons, and when such regulations are challenged under the Constitution, courts cannot 'substitute their social and economic beliefs for the judgment of legislative bodies'....These legitimate interests include respect for and preservation of prenatal life at all stages of development; the protection of maternal health and safety; the elimination of particularly gruesome or barbaric medical procedures; the preservation of the integrity of the medical profession; the mitigation of fetal pain; and the prevention of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, or disability."

What this means for Wisconsin, and for us as Catholics

For Wisconsin, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* means a statute from 1849 is now back in force, which prohibits abortion except to save the life of the mother. Planned Parenthood, which has had abortion facilities in Milwaukee, Madison and Sheboygan, has already stopped performing abortions in the state. Governor Tony Evers called a special session for June 22, seeking to repeal the abortion ban, but he was opposed by the Republican-controlled Senate and Assembly, and the attempt failed.

As Catholics, we heed above all the call to be channels of Christ's love, articulated by Bishop Callahan in his June 24 statement, the call to help build "a culture that lovingly embraces and supports mothers and children before and after birth, along with their families." One way is through the many pregnancy resource centers supported in our diocese (see www.diolc.org/pregnancy-resources for a list).