



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE + ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON + DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

Set Out in Haste Clergy Resources

Bulletin Announcement:

Bishops' statement on support for pregnant women

One of the most powerful testimonies to the culture of life is support of pregnant women in need. In the new statement "Set Out in Haste," the Maryland bishops discuss the need to reach out to pregnant women, as well as review recent proposals that target pregnancy resource centers, which provide pregnant women with emotional and material support. To learn more about this issue, and how you can help, please read the bishops' statement in today's bulletin, or visit www.mdcathcon.org.

Pulpit Announcement:

The Maryland bishops have issued a new statement, "Set Out in Haste," which discusses the need to reach out to pregnant women in need, and highlights recent proposals that single out pro-life pregnancy centers for harassment. To learn more, please see the bishops' statement in today's bulletin.

Homily Notes

- **The Lord is especially close to women in difficult pregnancies.**

(The Annunciation, the Visitation, Matthew 1:18-25)

The circumstances of Mary's pregnancy with Jesus and Elizabeth's pregnancy with John were difficult, yet these women's loving acceptance of God's will allowed great things to happen. Some young women today find themselves in unplanned or otherwise difficult pregnancies. God is especially close to these women and offers them His grace (and the friendship of Mary and Elizabeth) to guide them through what may be a hard time in their lives. He always brings good out of difficult situations.

- **Service to a pregnant woman in need was the first act of Christian charity.**

Luke 1:39-56 (The Visitation)

The Virgin Mary's outreach and service to her pregnant cousin Elizabeth, who was left vulnerable by advanced age and a husband temporarily left mute, is the first act of Christian charity recorded in the Scriptures. Mary undertook this work "in haste" after learning that she was chosen to be the Mother of Christ. Not only did the Blessed Mother simply reach out to Elizabeth, but she "remained with her about 3 months" to minister to her many needs.

- **The example of the Virgin Mary remains relevant for us today as we encounter pregnant women left vulnerable by poverty, fear, and abandonment.**
(*The Visitation and Matthew 25*)

Women today may find themselves left vulnerable in a crisis pregnancy because it was unplanned, they were abandoned by the baby's father, rejected by family, or otherwise feel that they do not have adequate emotional or material resources to choose life. Through concrete assistance to these women, we have the opportunity to imitate the Virgin Mary's compassionate outreach to her cousin. In doing so, we also fulfill Christ's direction in Matthew 25 to treat the "least of these brothers" as we would Christ Himself.

Abortion in Maryland

Legislative proposals that single out pregnancy resource centers could impede their efforts in providing services to pregnant women in need. This is devastating, especially considering that Maryland is home to some of the highest abortion rates in the nation:

- Between 2000 and 2005, the national abortion rate *declined* 9 percent. During that same time, the abortion rate in Maryland *rose* 8 percent.
- Maryland's abortion rate is *38 percent* higher than the national abortion rate (31.5 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age in MD vs. 19.4 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age nationally).
- 29 percent of Maryland pregnancies end in abortion.
- 37,590 abortions were performed in Maryland in 2005, or nearly 103 per day.

Source: Alan Guttmacher Institute, State Facts About Abortion: Maryland, January 2008.

Maryland is also home to one of the most abortion-permissive laws in the country, having in 1992 approved a state version of the Freedom of Choice Act. Maryland has:

- No parental consent law
- No meaningful parental notification law
- No mandatory waiting period
- No regulation of abortion clinics as surgical facilities
- No abortion reporting requirement
- No sonogram availability requirement
- Allows Medicaid funds to be used for abortion in all cases, not just those of rape, incest or life of the mother.

Our president and other leaders have called for "common ground" on abortion. Singling out pregnancy centers only because of their pro-life mission violates that common ground, and demonstrates a loss of acceptance of new life which Pope Benedict (see quote below) says often leads to a "withering away" of society as a whole.

Pope Benedict XVI on the duty to serve those in need:

"Love—*caritas*—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries

out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable.” – *Deus Caritas Est*, p. 28.

“*Openness to life is at the centre of true development.* When a society moves towards the denial or suppression of life, it ends up no longer finding the necessary motivation and energy to strive for man's true good. If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of a new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away. The acceptance of life strengthens moral fibre and makes people capable of mutual help. – *Caritas in Veritate*, p. 28

Pope John Paul II on outreach to pregnant women and their unborn children:

“By virtue of our sharing in Christ's royal mission, our support and promotion of human life must be accomplished through the service of charity, which finds expression in personal witness, various forms of volunteer work, social activity and political commitment. This is a particularly pressing need at the present time, when the ‘culture of death’ so forcefully opposes the ‘culture of life’ and often seems to have the upper hand.” – *Evangelium Vitae*, p. 87.

“Newborn life is also served by centers of assistance and homes or centers where new life receives a welcome. Thanks to the work of such centers, many unmarried mothers and couples in difficulty discover new hope and find assistance and support in overcoming hardship and the fear of accepting a newly conceived life or life which has just come into the world.” – *Evangelium Vitae*, p. 88

Prayers of the Faithful

For women experiencing a crisis pregnancy, that the friendship of the Blessed Mother and the love of the Christian faithful will provide them with the support they need to choose life.

For the staff and volunteers of pregnancy resource centers and all those who serve pregnant women in need, that the Holy Spirit will guide and sustain them in their work.

For lawmakers and all those entrusted with the public good, that a sincere appreciation of the gift of life and compassion for the vulnerable will direct their efforts to build a just society.

Pregnancy Resources

- **Real Choices Maryland** – www.realchoicesmaryland.org. Website that provides a pregnancy center locator and contact information for all of Maryland’s pro-life centers.
- **Gabriel Network** – 1-800-ANGEL-OK (1-800-264-3565). Statewide network offering emotional and material assistance, including housing, to pregnant women in need.
- **Archdiocese of Baltimore**
 - Catholic Charities Pregnancy Support – 410-659-4050, decision@cc-md.org
 - Post-Abortion/Project Rachel – 1-800-286-4224, www.project-rachel.net/
- **Archdiocese of Washington**
 - http://www.adw.org/service/pregnant_help.asp
 - Post-Abortion/Project Rachel - 301-982-2008
- **Diocese of Wilmington** - Catholic Charities Pregnancy Counseling - 1-877-225-7870