

Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington

Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, Divine Worship, Marriage and Family, & Respect Life

-Deacon Phil Lawson – Fairfax, VT -Catholic Diocese of Burlington

Good Afternoon, I offer this testimony for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington where I oversee the Respect Life Office, on behalf of the 118,000 Catholics in our state, where we seek to be a people of life; advocating on behalf of the most vulnerable, recognizing the sacred dignity of every life from conception to natural death. I also speak as a husband, a father of 6, an ordained deacon, soccer coach, and volunteer at Joseph House in Burlington.

Like most Vermonters we quietly go about our lives and do our best to help others. And we have no desire to impose our way of life or religion on others- but there are times when the threat to life is so egregious that we are compelled to speak out publicly, especially on behalf of those who have no voice or are viewed as unwanted.

This is not simply a Catholic issue, but a social justice issue. In the context of the broad reach of this proposed legislation, we stand in solidarity with other Vermonters of all faiths or no faith, to bear witness to the fundamental truth that in the third trimester the mother carries a viable life that can live independent of the womb. Terminating this life for any reason or no reason at all is simply just wrong. This is infanticide.

Wesley Smith, author and senior fellow at the Discovery Center notes that if this bill passes, “...I do believe it will become the most radical abortion legalization statute in the world.”

Is this really the best we can do? Is this really what Vermont wants to be known for? Is this what the good people of Vermont really desire? Is this the best we can do for the most vulnerable, including those coerced into abortion, those targeted for abortion because of their gender, or possible cognitive or physical disabilities? Can't we instead find ways to love and support all life?

Life should not and cannot be legislated out of existence. I do not understand this—this law takes us to a very dark place, not a place of life, but a place of darkness. On behalf of Catholics throughout this state and all people of good will, I urge us to recover our senses, and be a people that affirms and advocates on behalf of the sacred dignity of life not one that seeks new ways to eliminate it.

Deacon Phil Lawson
Executive Director of Evangelization, Catechesis, Divine Worship, Marriage and Family, & Respect Life