



## THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PHOENIX

### Statement from Bishop Olmsted on Pastoral Letter from Archbishop Cordileone Addressing the Human Dignity of the Unborn, Holy Communion and Catholics in Public Life

**May 6, 2021**

PHOENIX — The following statement is from the Most Rev. Thomas J. Olmsted, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix, on San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone’s pastoral letter, “Before I Formed You in the Womb I Knew You”:

In his Pastoral Letter, “Before I Formed You in the Womb I Knew You,” Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone offers a powerful defense of the Church’s teaching on the dignity of all human life, which logically and morally requires a consistent condemnation of abortion. I recommend the Letter highly to all the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Phoenix, and all people of good will who desire to know why the Church cannot and will not change her traditional defense of motherhood and the most vulnerable in the womb.

As the Archbishop makes clear, the Church’s teaching on life is based on the principle of *love in truth* — this teaching is intrinsically connected to the social and moral doctrine that moves Catholics to serve the poor, fight for justice, and worship our loving God. Indeed, from the moment of fertilization in our mother’s womb, each of us is a bearer of His Holy Image, and thus the bearer of unalienable rights. There is no confusion in embryological science about the beginning of each human life, and it has been catastrophic for our nation that our laws have become divorced from this fundamental truth, protecting only some human beings and not others.

It is a false compassion that treats the killing of an innocent child in the womb as “help” for a mother in need. It is a false courage that condemns the sins of the past while the gravest evil of the present is treated as an “issue” of legitimate disagreement among Catholics. And it is a false patience and pastoral concern that, year after year, stays silent or speaks in abstractions while the slaughter continues with the full endorsement of Catholic politicians under our spiritual care as bishops. Such “patience” is false because it is bereft of love and truth, and thus unmasks rather a deadly apathy towards one who professes the Catholic faith but whose public embrace of abortion puts his or her eternal soul at risk of damnation, and risks dragging untold numbers into hell by their example.

No, abortion is not the “only issue,” but it is, as Pope Francis told my brother bishops, the “preeminent issue.” Woe to us bishops if we do not speak clearly about the grave evil of abortion, and the consequences of any Catholic who participates in the act or publicly supports it by word or action. As Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver put it in a recent and excellent article:

*When the church minimizes the danger of an unworthy reception of the Eucharist, she fails to properly love those who continue to jeopardize their souls. Trading “civility” and “engagement” for eternal life is not a good trade, and it is especially negligent for me, as a bishop, to remain quiet when people I am called to love may be endangering their eternal souls. This is a danger to them and a danger to me.*

I thank Archbishop Cordileone and Archbishop Aquila, as well as all my brother priests and bishops who voice their loving concern not only for unborn children and their parents, but for those who have been led to believe that they can publicly disagree with the Church on abortion while continuing to claim their Catholic Faith and receive Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, it is an obligation and an act of love to proclaim and point out this truth in charity.

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