



## **WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE**

**EYE ON THE CAPITOL**  
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### **WELCOMING THE UNBORN AND THE UNDOCUMENTED ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF ROE V. WADE**

By John Huebscher, Executive Director

January 22 marks the beginning of the fourth week of 2007. It is also the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, the US Supreme Court decision that guaranteed the right to abortion in the United States.

More than a million abortions are performed in the US each year. Some years the total approached 1.5 million. The number of abortions since Roe now exceeds 40 million. Each January 22 we ponder anew the loss of lives un-lived, of human dignity denied, of human potential unrealized over these past 34 years.

Yet even as we consider the moral tragedy of the lives turned away since 1973, we confront the moral challenge of welcoming other lives at our doorstep. For in a mystery beyond our understanding, the same American society that said “no” to millions of unborn children is asked to say “yes” to millions of undocumented immigrants.

By most accounts there are more than 10 million such men, women and children in the US today. Except for the process by which they migrated, nearly all are law-abiding residents, hard workers, devoted to their families, and good neighbors.

Each of these immigrants is equal in their humanity to the unborn children lost to the culture of Roe v. Wade. Each is endowed with personal dignity. Each holds the potential to enrich our nation.

Yet, as is the case with the unborn, we are tempted by the notion that our nation can't afford their presence, that their cost to our future is too high if we allow them to remain.

How will Catholics and others committed to the value of human life answer such arguments?

In his recent message on the annual World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Benedict offers this guidance.

“In a globalized society ... the reality of migration should never be seen as a problem but rather as a great resource in humanity’s journey,” he noted.

Recalling the example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the Pope reminded us of “the image of God that is held in the heart of each human family even when it is weakened and sometimes scarred by life’s experiences.”

“In this misfortune experienced by the Family of Nazareth,” he went on, “(...) we can catch a glimpse of the painful condition in which all migrants live, especially, refugees, exiles, evacuees, internally displaced persons, those who are persecuted. We can take a quick look at the difficulties that every migrant family lives through, the hardships and humiliations, the deprivation and fragility of millions.”

Pope Benedict invites us to see the bond that ties the image of God to human vulnerability—a bond a cross time and place. But this vulnerability is also a resource that is worth the risk of welcoming others into our lives.

Seen this way, we can’t divorce the cause of human life in the womb from the cause of vulnerable life in our midst. We can’t sustain the premise that 40 million aborted children are an unrealized blessing if we don’t stand against the proposition that one-fourth as many immigrants are an unacceptable burden.

That is why the Catholic voice proclaiming the cause of the unborn is the same voice proposing justice for immigrants. Both are worthy causes for “faithful citizens.”

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