



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

"The world doesn't need what women have, it needs what women are." ~ Edith Stein

August 26, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Today, the United States recognizes an important milestone. One hundred years ago, women gained the right to vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution. This amendment was the culmination of decades of steadfast advocacy, often in the face of violence and discrimination, by heroic women from all walks of life throughout our nation.

As we celebrate this landmark achievement, we also acknowledge that many obstacles still must be overcome to achieve full recognition of the dignity of all women in our society.

Given the contributions of women to the electorate over the last century, it seems almost inconceivable that so many did not support women's suffrage 100 years ago, including some of our predecessors. We express our deep gratitude for the women who devoted their lives to fighting for the dignity of women at a time when this was considered unacceptable.

The life of the Church in Maryland and, indeed, throughout our nation and world, has been enriched by women of the greatest caliber, women who have left their mark not only on the Church, but on all aspects of civilization. These women, and countless others, continue to inspire new generations of girls and women to share their unique gifts in service to the Church and for the common good.

As we mark this historic occasion, we also recognize the many hurdles women continue to confront as they live out their vocations.

We must remain vigilant to ensure that all women are treated with respect, acceptance and sincerity in the home, church, and workplace. We recall the prophetic words of St. John Paul II, who in his *Letter to Women*, said, "...there is an urgent need to achieve real equality in every area: equal pay for equal work, protection for working mothers, fairness in career advancements, equality of spouses with regard to family rights and the recognition of everything that is part of the rights and duties of citizens in a democratic State" while at the same time recognizing that "...much remains to be done to prevent discrimination against those who have chosen to be wives and mothers."

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In *Christ is Alive*, Pope Francis calls forth respect for women and acknowledgement that we as Church must recognize our own history: “[A] living Church can react by being attentive to the legitimate claims of those women who seek greater justice and equality. A living Church can look back on history and acknowledge a fair share of male authoritarianism, domination, various forms of enslavement, abuse and sexist violence.”

He goes on to note the desire of young women in the Church to have women role models and mentors. To this end, we are grateful in a particular way to the women who serve in leadership positions in our own (arch)dioceses, parishes, schools, and Catholic ministries for the witness and encouragement they provide to young people as women of faith, intelligence and leadership. We hold up, as well, all women who provide their children and our society a loving witness to the beauty of family life.

Our gratitude will never fully capture the heartfelt love we have for the many women in our own lives who have left an indelible mark on our character and vocations, beginning with our heavenly mother Mary. The enduring example of womanhood that Mary provides is a guiding light for all women; it is the ultimate example of unconditional love, sacrifice, strength, grace, and perseverance.

It is our desire that the next 100 years of our nation’s history will serve as a time of continued progress that never fails to recognize the God-given dignity of all women. The voices and contributions of women are needed now more than ever as we seek to build a culture that recognizes that *all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights* and those rights must be protected and preserved.

We pray that all people of good will, will join us in celebrating this momentous anniversary for women in the United States and may God’s grace continue to bless all women as they seek to live out their vocations.

In Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore

Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory
Archbishop of Washington

Most Reverend W. Francis Malooly
Bishop of Wilmington

Most Reverend Roy E. Campbell Jr.
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington

Most Reverend Mario E. Dorsonville-Rodriguez
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington

Most Reverend Michael W. Fisher
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington

Most Reverend Bruce Lewandowski, CSSR
Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore

Most Reverend Denis J. Madden
Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Baltimore

Most Reverend Adam J. Parker
Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore