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National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 1987

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In 1973, America's unborn children lost their legal protection. In the 14 years since then, some twenty million unborn babies, 1.5 million each year, have lost their lives by abortion—in a nation of 242 million people. This tragic and terrible toll continues, at the rate of more than 4,000 young lives lost each day. This is a shameful record; it accords with neither human decency nor our American heritage of respect for the sanctity of human life.

That heritage is deeply rooted in the hearts and the history of our people. Our Founding Fathers pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor in the Declaration of Independence. They announced their unbreakable bonds with its immutable truths that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Americans of every succeeding generation have cherished our heritage of God-given human rights and have been willing to sacrifice for those rights, just as our Founders did.

Those rights are given by God to all alike. Medical evidence leaves no room for doubt that the distinct being developing in a mother's womb is both alive and human. This merely confirms what common sense has always told us. Abortion kills unborn babies and denies them forever their rights to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Our Declaration of Independence holds that governments are instituted among men to secure these rights, and our Constitution—founded on these principles—should not be read to sanction the taking of innocent human life.

A return to our heritage of reverence and protection for the sanctity of innocent human life is long overdue. For the last 14 years and longer, many Americans have devoted themselves to restoring the right to life and to providing loving alternatives to abortion so every mother will choose life for her baby.

We must recognize the courage and love mothers exhibit in keeping their babies or choosing adoption. We must also offer thanks and support to the millions of Americans who are willing to take on the responsibilities of adoptive parents. And we must never cease our efforts—our appeals to the legislatures and the courts and our prayers to the Author of Life Himself—until infants before birth are once again afforded the same protection of the law we all enjoy.

Our heritage as Americans bids us to respect and to defend the sanctity of human life. With every confidence in the blessing of God and the goodness of the American people, let us rededicate ourselves to this solemn duty.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Sunday, January 18, 1987, as National Sanctity of Human Life Day. I call upon the citizens of this blessed land to gather on that day in homes and places of worship to give thanks for the gift of life and to reaffirm our commitment to the dignity of every human being and the sanctity of each human life.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 16th day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

Ronald Reagan