

**Remarks at the Illinois March for Life Rally  
March 21, 2023**

**Lincoln Statue in front of the Illinois State Capitol Building  
Springfield, Illinois**

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear pro-life friends:

As Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Springfield here in our Illinois State Capital, I am joined by Bishop Michael McGovern of the Diocese of Belleville, Bishop Louis Tylka of the Diocese of Peoria, Bishop Ronald Hicks of the Diocese of Joliet, Bishop Joy Alappatt of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas, and Bishop Mark Bartosic, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago. We are accompanied by scores of pro-life priests, deacons, consecrated religious and lay Christian faithful from Archdiocese of Chicago and the Dioceses of Rockford, Joliet, Peoria, Belleville and Springfield, and the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas. Before coming here, we began our day in prayer, because we recognize our human efforts are limited, but we truly believe Mary's response to the Archangel Gabriel that "nothing will be impossible for God" (Luke 1:37).

We have gathered here from all across the Land of Lincoln because the lives of unborn babies in our State of Illinois are threatened as never before. Since the United States Supreme Court decision last year in *Dobbs v. Jackson* overturned the 1973 decision of *Roe v. Wade* and rightfully returned the question of the legality of abortion back to the states, Governor J.B. Pritzker, Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton, Attorney General Kwame Raoul, Speaker of the House Emanuel “Chris” Welch, and Senate President Don Harmon, along with many other in Illinois State government, have unequivocally expressed their unabashed desire to expand abortion rights and make Illinois an abortion-friendly haven. Every year over 10,000 out-of-state residents come to Illinois for abortions, often at taxpayer expense, and that number has been increasing dramatically since June of 2022.<sup>1</sup> In states such as ours, we cannot relax our pro-life efforts now that *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned. On the contrary, we must step up our struggles to counter the evil forces of death.

Our nation is divided today over the question of abortion as it was in the nineteenth century over the question of slavery. On June 16, 1858, Abraham Lincoln, before whose statue we gather, gave his famous “house divided” speech in the Hall of Representatives of the Old State Capitol here

in Springfield, Illinois. He started by quoting Our Lord Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 12, verse 25: "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Mr. Lincoln explained, "I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved -- I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, echoing Mr. Lincoln, we should all say, "I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half pro-abortion and half pro-life. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved -- I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other."

As people of faith, we come here in peace, prayerful asking the members of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of our Illinois State government to "harden not your hearts" as we read in Psalm 95:8. May you find compassion for the lives of the most vulnerable among us, the sacred human lives of unborn babies.

Thank you for listening to me, and may God bless you!

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<sup>1</sup> “Gov. Pritzker Signs Sweeping Reproductive Rights Protections Into Law,” Office of the Governor Press Release, January 13, 2023, accessed online at <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.25906.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham Lincoln, House Divided Speech, Springfield, Illinois, June 16, 1858, accessed online at <https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/house.htm>.