

Proclamation 5430 of January 15, 1986

National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America was founded with a ringing affirmation of the transcendence of human rights. Our Declaration of Independence proclaims that the rights to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" are not a grant from the government, but a gift from the Creator; and we declared that the same Divine Providence in which the new Nation placed its "firm reliance" imposes on government a solemn duty to respect and secure these fundamental rights.

Yet, on January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States struck down our laws protecting the lives of unborn children. At that time there were those who predicted confidently that in time Americans would come to accept the Court's decision and the "new ethic" that it reflects. History has proved them wrong. Each year the terrible toll of more than a million innocent human lives has weighed more heavily on the conscience of America.

Each year remarkable advances in prenatal medicine bring ever more dramatic confirmation of what common sense told us all along—that the child in the womb is simply what each of us once was: a very young, very small, dependent, vulnerable member of the human family. When Americans demand legal protection for human life, we are simply being true to our most basic principles and convictions. We are reaffirming the self-evident truths set forth in our Declaration of Independence. Indeed, we are reaffirming the consensus of civilized humanity by recognizing that children need special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.

Those who champion the right to life know the harsh pressures and the profound anguish that drive some women to consider abortion. The most moving testimony to our reverence for human life has been the generous, even heroic efforts made by so many religious and charitable organizations to help women with problem pregnancies and to facilitate the adoption of infants into families eager to give them love and care.

Those who work to restore legal protection to the unborn do so with the knowledge that they have gone to the defense of the weak, the silent, the endangered. But that is not something new. Whenever disasters have endangered human life, we Americans have always responded swiftly and selflessly.

Respect for the sanctity of human life has not died in America. Far from it. With every passing year it shines ever more brightly in the hearts of more and more of our citizens as they come to see the issue with greater clarity in all of its dimensions. As we carry this message to our courts, our legislatures, and our fellow citizens, let us never be discouraged. Let us put our trust in God, the Lord and Giver of Life, the Creator Who endowed us with our inalienable rights. May we soon rejoice in the day when reverence for human life is enshrined as surely in our laws as in our hearts.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Sunday, January 19, 1986, 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 15th day of Jan., in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and tenth.

RONALD REAGAN

Proclamation 5431 of January 18, 1986

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This year marks the first observance of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a national holiday. It is a time for rejoicing and reflecting. We rejoice because, in his short life, Dr. King, by his preaching, his example, and his leadership, helped to move us closer to the ideals on which America was founded. We reflect on his words and his works. Dr. King's was truly a prophetic voice that reached out over the chasms of hostility, prejudice, ignorance, and fear to touch the conscience of America. He challenged us to make real the promise of America as a land of freedom, equality, opportunity, and brotherhood.

Although Dr. King was an uncompromising champion of nonviolence, he was often the victim of violence. And, as we know, a shameful act of violence cut short his life before he had reached his fortieth birthday.

His story is well-known. As a 26-year-old minister of the Gospel, Dr. King led a protest boycott of a bus company that segregated blacks, treating them as second-class citizens. At the very outset he admonished all those who would join in the protest that "our actions must be guided by the deepest principles of our Christian faith. Love must be our regulating ideal." Otherwise, he warned, "our protest will end up as a meaningless drama on the stage of history . . . shrouded with ugly garments of shame." Dr. King's unshakable faith inspired others to resist the temptation to hate and fear. His protest became a triumph of courage and love.

Almost 30 years ago, on January 30, 1956, Dr. King stood amid the broken glass and splinters of his bombed-out front porch and calmed an angry crowd clamoring for vengeance. "We cannot solve this problem through retaliatory violence," he told them. Dr. King steadfastly opposed both the timid and those who counselled violence. To the former, he preached that "true peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice." To the latter, he said that "in the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds."

Dr. King's activism was rooted in the true patriotism that cherishes America's ideals and strives to narrow the gap between those ideals and reality. He took his stand, he once explained, "because of my love for America and the sublime principles of liberty and equality on which she is founded." He wanted "to transform the jangling discords of our Nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood."

The majesty of his message, the dignity of his bearing, and the righteousness of his cause are a lasting legacy. In a few short years he changed