



A ZCBC Pastoral Statement

To be read at all Masses on Sunday, 8 February 2026.

An Appeal to Conscience: Defending Innocent Lives

4 February 2026

In a few days' time, our Senators shall sit, deliberate and vote on a Bill that seeks to permit the deliberate termination of unborn life by allowing abortion on demand, even for girls below the age of majority. We have reached a moment that calls for a serious re-examination of our moral compass as a nation.

It is a moment in which the progress made in affirming the sanctity of human life through the repeal of the death penalty risks being undermined by legislation that would sanction the destruction of life at its most vulnerable stage. As Saint John Paul II reminded the world: *"A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members; and among the most vulnerable are surely the unborn."*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches with clarity and consistency: *"Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion... Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or as a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law"* (CCC 2271).

It is therefore the responsibility of every society to protect prenatal life, and the solemn duty of legislators to adopt laws that favour childbirth over abortion. Just as no human being has the moral authority to sentence another to death, no woman or man should be given legal permission to destroy the life of a child already existing in the womb. From the moment of conception, that child is a human being in the process of maturation and deserving of protection.

Zimbabwe's current law permits abortion only in narrowly defined and exceptional circumstances. The proposed amendments seek to remove these limits and make abortion readily available, including without the knowledge or consent of parents or guardians in the case of minors, and even without spousal involvement. This represents a grave trivialisation of an act that entails the deliberate ending of a human life solely because that life is incapable of defending itself.

Such a shift departs from established legal safeguards and undermines the dignity of the family by weakening parental responsibility and spousal mutual support, eroding the sanctity of marriage and potentially contributing to further social and relational breakdowns at a time when divorce cases are already rising at a worrying rate.

Furthermore, the Bill disregards the profound psychological, emotional and moral consequences that accompany abortion. While counselling may be offered, it cannot erase the deep wound left by the intentional destruction of a defenceless human being. We therefore reaffirm the perennial teaching of the Church: *“From the moment of conception, life must be guarded with the greatest care, while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes”* (Gaudium et Spes, 51).

As Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, we acknowledge our duty to speak clearly in defence of life at every stage and in every circumstance. In our time, abortion has emerged as a fundamental human rights issue that confronts all people of good will, not only believers.

Those who revere human life as a gift from God, who created us in His image and likeness, have compelling reason to oppose the legalisation of the elimination of unborn children. No African, no Zimbabwean, and no adherent of the great religious traditions can support abortion without undermining the moral foundations upon which our societies and faiths are built. The commandment *“You shall not kill”* admits no exception for convenience or social pressure.

What, then, do we ask of our legislators? We ask that you uphold your constitutional responsibility to protect the right to life of unborn children to the maximum degree possible. By voting against this Bill, ensure that State laws and administrative policies do not facilitate or normalise abortion. We further express our willingness to work with you in developing supportive legislation that offers morally acceptable alternatives to abortion, including robust prenatal care, counselling, and sustained support for vulnerable women and children.

We thank all those – of faith or none – who have consistently sought to protect unborn life and the life of the mother, as well as women who have carried pregnancies to term under difficult circumstances, and legislators who have worked to strengthen protections for life.

We appeal to all Christians and all people of good will to take a firm stand against this proposed Bill, which strikes at the heart of our African and Christian moral heritage. Abortion cannot be used as a means of resolving conflict over a child already living in the womb of its mother.

We therefore call upon all Christians to commit themselves to prayer for the protection of human life from the moment of conception. As we give thanks for the repeal of the death penalty in Zimbabwe, let us also pray that children still hidden in the womb will not suffer the same fate simply because their faces are unseen and their voices unheard.

Human life is sacred. Abortion is a grave moral evil.

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+Most Rev. R. C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare — ZCBC Vice President

+Rt. Rev. Raphael M. M. Ncube, Bishop of Hwange — ZCBC Secretary & Treasurer

+Most Rev. Alex Thomas, S.V.D., Archbishop of Bulawayo

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+Rt. Rev. Raymond Mupandasekwa, C.Ss.R., Bishop of Masvingo & Administrator of Chinhoyi Diocese

+Rt. Rev. Eusebius J. Nyathi, Bishop of Gokwe