

## Pregnant with Hope: Dignity for Mothers and Mothers-to-Be

*Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose feast we celebrate on December 12, appeared to St. Juan Diego as a young mestiza woman, part Aztec and part Spanish. The image of her includes a black band around her waist, which was a sign of pregnancy in Juan Diego's culture.*

*As we remember the trials faced by Our Blessed Mother as she waited in expectation for Jesus' birth, let us resolve to make our society more welcoming and supportive of women bearing new life in our time.*

Our Diocesan Public Policy Committee is asking parishes to focus their advocacy efforts this winter on the **Women's Equality Act**. This set of proposals introduced in the New York State legislature includes nine life-affirming points that support the human dignity of women and girls.

Among these are policies to **end workplace discrimination against pregnant women and mothers.**

One of these points would require employers to *provide reasonable accommodation for pregnant women.*

State Senator Kemp Hannon, sponsor of this measure explained the situation this way:

"It is shocking to see many pregnant women still being denied equal treatment in the workplace. Pregnant women are all too often forced to choose between their health and their job, when both could be maintained with modest adjustments, such as extra bathroom breaks, water breaks, and sitting rather than standing. This legislation will ensure employers provide the same reasonable accommodations to women with verifiable pregnancy-related conditions as they do for other individuals in need of reasonable accommodations."

This proposal would especially support low-wage workers who feel powerless at their worksites and who fear that even asking for modest accommodations could get them fired. And it would give all mothers-to-be fair and respectful treatment as they carry precious human lives.

Once women give birth, they can continue to face unfair treatment at work. Another point in the Women's Equality Act would *outlaw workplace discrimination against people with children.* It would make it illegal for employers to deny work or promotions to people because they have children.

This would particularly support working mothers, as women with children are less likely to be recommended for promotion and tend to receive lower salaries compared to men in similar jobs, and even compared to women who don't have children. This discrimination against mothers translates into greater financial hardships for themselves and their children. We'll be advocating for these life-affirming provisions of the WEA in our Public Policy petitions this coming February.



*Our Lady of Guadalupe  
"She was great with child....."*

## Equal Pay for Equal Work!

Did you know that in our state, it's legal for your boss to fire you for discussing your salary with your co-workers? This means that employers can get away with paying women less than men for doing the same job, since it can be so difficult for a woman to compare her male counterparts' wages to her own. We do know that in New York State women earn only 84% of what men earn. That wage gap is even higher for African-American and Latina women workers.

The *Equal Pay for Equal Work* provision of the Women's Equality Agenda would address this issue by

1. Closing a loophole in New York State's equal pay law that allows employers to justify paying female employees less than men for equivalent work
2. Outlawing "workplace wage secrecy" policies that forbid employees from discussing their wage rates with each other
3. Increasing damages up to 300% of unpaid wages for victims of willful violations of this law, which can serve as a deterrent to this type of discrimination

Differences in pay stack up against women over the course of their lives, affecting their ability to provide for their families while working and affecting their Social Security benefits when retired. This measure would help to eliminate unfair treatment and uphold the dignity of women. Our New York State Catholic Bishops Conference joins with many other organizations in supporting this provision in the Women's Equality Act.

## *Praying and Marching for Life*



Bishop Matano and Rochester delegation at 2014 March

**January 22, 2015** will mark the 42nd anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision, legalizing abortion in our country. To mark this sad occasion, tens of thousands of people will gather in Washington D.C. for the annual **March for Life**.

Busses will leave from various points around our diocese the night before the March. Come join Bishop Matano, who'll lead our delegation, as we stand up for the dignity of human life. Contact Diocesan Life Issues Coordinator Suzanne Stack at 585-328-3210 ext.1304 or [sstack@dor.org](mailto:sstack@dor.org) for information on reserving a seat on a bus from your region.

Along with making the trip to D.C., you can also show your support for the sanctity of all life, especially for unborn children, by joining with Bishop Matano at the **Mass for Life**, which he will celebrate on **Sunday, January 18, at 2:00 PM** at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester. A reception will follow Mass, hosted by the Knights of Columbus.

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