

DAY OF PRAYER AND PENANCE FOR ABORTION

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In 2002 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, with approval from the Holy See, established Jan. 22 as an official day of prayer and fasting for all the dioceses of the United States. The bishops wanted to have a day when the whole Church of the United States offer acts of penance to make reparations for the sin of abortion, and pray to end abortion.

Jan. 22 was chosen because it marks the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the court decision that legalized abortion, resulting in over 44 million abortions in the United States since it was handed down 32 years ago. The USCCB has asked for this day to be commemorated in several ways including celebrating the approved Mass, "For Peace and Justice," on the 22, unless it falls on a Sunday, in which case the day of atonement is commemorated on Monday Jan. 23.

The bishops' conference has also provided resources that include recommendations for fasting and a guide for a Holy Hour with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

"We are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life," Pope John Paul II said in his Encyclical, Evangelium Vitae, no. 28. "We find ourselves not only 'faced with' but necessarily 'in the midst of' this conflict: we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life."

"We have to realize this is a huge sin in our country and in the world," said May Oliver, a pro-life speaker and Respect Life director at Epiphany of Our Lord in Plymouth Meeting. "If we continue to accept abortion in our culture, we're in trouble. We won't end this battle without intense prayer and fasting."