



# LIVE THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

"to imitate Christ and follow in his footsteps"

*The Gospel of Life 51*

Twenty-five years ago, Pope St. John Paul II wrote that the Gospel of life is at the *heart* of Jesus' saving message to the world (*Evangelium vitae* 1). In taking on human flesh, dwelling among us, and sacrificing his very life for our redemption, Christ reveals the profound dignity of *every* human person. This God-given dignity does not change with our stage of life, abilities, level of independence, or any other varying circumstance.

Rather, it is rooted in the permanent fact that each of us is made in the image and likeness of God, created to share in the very life of God himself. The human person is a "manifestation of God in the world, a sign of his presence, a trace of his glory" (EV 34). And we must reflect this truth in how we act and how we treat one another.

The truth of the Gospel of life is at the foundation of who we are as followers of Christ. In his earthly life, Jesus provided the perfect model for how we are to love our neighbor and live out the Gospel call: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40).

Jesus calls each of us to "care for the other as a person for whom God has made us responsible" (EV 87). The Gospel of life is intrinsic to the whole Christian life and foundational to the decisions we make on a daily basis. For, "the Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and

the Gospel of life are a *single and indivisible* Gospel" (EV 2, emphasis added).

In his encyclical on the Gospel of life, Pope St. John Paul II recognizes the full range of threats against human life, from poverty and malnutrition to murder and war. He places particular emphasis, however, on threats to life at its beginning and end—precisely when it is most in need of protection. In modern times, children in their mothers' wombs and those approaching the end of their lives are certainly among the "least of these" in our world's estimation. Practices such as abortion and assisted suicide tragically reject the truth that human life is always to be cherished and defended with loving concern.

As the Church celebrates the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope St. John Paul II's prophetic encyclical, let us reflect on how we personally live out the Gospel: *Do I talk about and act towards others as I would talk about and treat Jesus himself? Do I inform myself of the Church's teachings and engage in the civic arena as first a follower of Christ? Do I support and advocate for laws and policies that protect and defend human life? Do I help pregnant and parenting mothers in need? Am I ready to support a loved one nearing death?*

Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, may Our Lord grant us the grace to truly and courageously live his Gospel of life.

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### **LIVE THE GOSPEL OF LIFE**

#### *Respect Life Month Statement, October 2020*

Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities

As Catholics in the United States, we will soon mark our annual observance of October as Respect Life Month. It is a time to focus on God's precious gift of human life and our responsibility to care for, protect, and defend the lives of our brothers and sisters.

This year's theme, "Live the Gospel of Life," was inspired by the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *The Gospel of Life*. Pope John Paul's masterfully articulated defense of the right to life for children in their mothers' wombs, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the marginalized is more relevant today than ever before.

This past November, the U.S. bishops reaffirmed that "the threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed." While we noted not to "dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty, and the death penalty," we renewed our commitment to protect the most fundamental of all human rights – the right to live.

This past January, I shared with Pope Francis that the Bishops of the United States had been criticized by some for identifying the protection of the unborn as a pre-eminent priority. The Holy Father expressed his support for our efforts observing that if we fail to protect life, no other rights matter. Pope Francis also said that abortion is not primarily a Catholic or even a religious issue, it is first and foremost a human rights issue.

The Gospel of Life provides a blueprint for building a culture of life and civilization of love. The important work of transforming our culture begins by allowing the Gospel of Christ to touch and transform our own hearts and the decisions we make. May we strive to imitate Christ and follow in his footsteps, caring for the most vulnerable among us. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, may Our Lord grant us the grace to live courageously and faithfully his Gospel of life.