

## **“I CAME SO THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE”**

### ***Respect Life Reflection: 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday B***

During the Easter Vigil liturgy, the single flame of the Easter candle shines through the darkness. That small flame spreads as each person's candle is lit and the light of Christ is shared with others. Before we know it, the entire Church is ablaze with the warm glow of candlelight, and the darkness disappears.

Each one of us are called by God to be that light of Christ that breaks through the darkness. We are called to be his disciples, continually transformed by our encounter with him in the Eucharist and sharing in his mission. Jesus came that we might have *life*. (Respect Life Sunday)

In our first reading today, God said: “It is not good for man to be alone”. We are created by God, in His image, for relationship – relationship with Him and with one another. We are created to be interdependent and to care for one another, especially those who are most vulnerable or going through difficult times. The Gospel reminds that the sacrament of marriage is meant to be lasting forever, because what God has united, man should not separate. This was God's plan for man. Unfortunately, in our society, we have the stigma of separations, with all the suffering involved, not only for the spouses, but for their children as well.

We are called to put our love for one another into action, and doing so is our path to holiness and closeness with God. Eg. A person who has a terminal illness and fears being abandoned in his or her time of suffering; or aging parents or grandparents who need increased help and reassurance of loving support; or a woman who is pregnant in difficult circumstances and doesn't have a support network. In what way our love for life can be put in action? How can we respond?

We live in a society that rejects those who are weak, fragile, or vulnerable. Yet, it is precisely within these conditions that a person is

most in need of our care and protection. Pope Francis reminds us that “every child who, rather than being born, is condemned unjustly to being aborted, bears the face of Jesus Christ, the Lord, who even before he was born, and then just after birth, experienced the world's rejection.” The U.S. bishops have affirmed that, while it *is important to address all the ways in which human life is threatened*, “abortion remains our pre-eminent priority as it directly attacks our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, destroying *more than a million lives each year* in our country alone.”

As Pope St. John Paul II wrote, “we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the ‘culture of death’ and the ‘culture of life’, we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life.” In the face of challenges such as abortion and physician-assisted suicide, we may feel that we are not equipped to the task of overcoming the darkness. Yet, we are not alone. Jesus’ parting message is, “I am with you always, until the end of the age”

The God who became man to save us still dwells among us. For Christ is “*the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*” (Jn 1:5). He is the one who overcame death and continually raises us to new life. Jesus knows what it is like to suffer. In times of difficulty, when we may be tempted to reject God’s gift of life, we can unite our suffering to Jesus and lean on him for strength. He remains close to us always, seeking us out in each moment of our lives.

Jesus gave his very flesh to give us the gift of eternal life and invites us to the most profound experience of this gift in our celebration of the Eucharist. When we meet Jesus in the Eucharist, *this encounter has the power to change us*. The Eucharist has the power to transform the depths of our hearts and the heart of our culture. United to the power of his Eucharistic Presence, may we work to ensure that each person has life, - and has it in abundance. Amen.