

“I am the resurrection and the life,” says the Lord. (John 11:25)

“The Gospel of Life is something concrete and personal, for it consists in the proclamation of the very person of Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God who from all eternity receives life from the Father, and who has come among men to make them sharers in this gift.” (EV 29)

Jesus receives eternal life from the Father. He has come among men to make us sharers in this gift.

That’s a quote from a letter written by a man that we older Catholics remember well. He was born during the Spanish Flu epidemic of the last century.

Here’s another passage from his letter about the Gospel of Life:

“Through the words, the actions, and the very person of Jesus, man receives the complete truth about the value of human life. Through Christ, man can accept and fulfill completely the responsibility of loving and serving, of defending and promoting human life. The Gospel of Life has been written in the heart of every man and woman, echoing in every conscience from the beginning, from the time of creation itself.”

He then quoted Vatican II:

“Christ confirmed with divine testimony that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death and to raise us up to life.”

Pope John Paul II wrote this letter and coined the phrase: Gospel of Life. This week we marked the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul’s letter.

Pope Francis has emphasized the Gospel of Life message repeatedly. For example, a couple years ago, Pope Francis said to an international association of Catholic health-care professionals:

“Your being Catholic entails a greater responsibility, by contributing to the recognition of the transcendent dimension of human life, the imprint of God’s creative work from the moment of conception. This is a task of the new evangelization that often requires going against the tide. The Lord is counting on you to spread the Gospel of Life.”

Since the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, our nation has had an open wound, literally. Thousands of innocent and defenseless people have bled to death at the hands of abortionists every day. And the wound never heals, because only the truth can heal it.

This is NOT the reactionary and old-fashioned Church, rejecting something new and modern. It’s the other way around. Roe v. Wade is based on old,

debunked ideas. Abortion is nothing new; the ancient pagans practiced it.

Violence and cruelty go way back.

The NEW thing is Jesus Christ's Gospel of Life. Every human being has immeasurable value and dignity. And God has given us a task: Love your neighbor as you love yourself. Which means: Love yourself, your own life—because God has given it. And love your neighbor with the same love, for God's sake.

I think we can see clearly how the Gospel of Life offers us the point-of-view we need to get us through the coronavirus crisis. We suffer social isolation, and we have to make many sacrifices. But we do so serenely. Because we affirm the priceless value of every individual human life.

This principle guides the worthy practice of medicine, as well as the decisions made by public officials to protect and preserve innocent people's lives.

Yes, a day will come when all of us will have to go to meet the Lord, by dying. We Christians do not fear death. We do not regard it as the greatest possible evil. We commend our deceased loved ones to God, looking forward to the resurrection of the dead. Being pro-life does not involve pretending that death doesn't come for us all, in God's time.

But Pope John Paul's letter explained clearly how the Fifth Commandment binds us. Not only must we refrain from murder. We must also use all the skills we

possess, to foster the advancement of every human life. Not only may we never act to destroy anyone's life, we also may never omit to care for anyone who needs such care.

God has entrusted human life to us, not as something we fully understand and can master, but as a mystery that we humbly attend to and care for. Jesus Christ's Gospel of Life can and will give us the firm foundation that we need to understand our role in this crisis. When we live by the Gospel of Life, we will prosper. That is: we will prosper in the most important way: morally. We will build up the bonds of trust that hold communities together.

Our job as Catholics is: to stay focused on the message, to stay prayerful about it, and to live always in communion with the good and gentle Savior Who came into this world that we might have life.