“Do not forget the works of the Lord!”

Homily by Most Reverend John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo

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March for Life – 1st Friday
Washington D.C.

“Do not forget the works of the Lord!” This verse that we just sang from the responsorial psalm reminds us of the great works that God can accomplish in our midst. And with that in mind, I want to thank all of you for being here for this Mass, and for making this pilgrimage to Washington for the March for Life. I know it’s a sacrifice, but your presence shows that North Dakota believes in life, and that we stand with God who is the author of all life.

The Gospel we just heard from Mark is dramatic. Jesus is teaching a large crowd in the house where he is staying, and four men carry a paralytic to him. They want to place him before Jesus so he can be healed, but there is no room to get in through the door. So, they open up the roof and lower the paralyzed man down to place him before Jesus. I would imagine the owner of the house wasn’t too pleased to see them breaking through his roof, but look at the miracle that happened. The paralyzed man was forgiven for his sins, and he was healed. He got up from his mat, went home, and lived the life that God had given him.

There’s an important detail in this event that we shouldn’t miss. The man on the mat was paralyzed. He couldn’t walk, he couldn’t get around on his own, so he depended on others to carry him. He could never have gotten to Jesus for healing without help. The four men obviously cared for him; they loved him enough to carry him to Jesus. And they were persistent. They could have noticed the crowd and just given up. They could have shrugged their shoulders and said, “Why bother trying, what’s the use?” But they didn’t give up, they showed daring and creativity. They did anything they could to bring their friend to Jesus, so that he might be blessed and healed, so that his life would be restored. And because of their help, Jesus was able to work a miracle.

My friends, we are in that story. We are like the four men who carried their friend to our Lord. Just as in the Gospel, we have a vast number of brothers and sisters who count on us to carry them and support them. They are even more helpless than the paralyzed man. They are tiny, fragile, and voiceless. They are our unborn little brothers and sisters who have no one to defend them but us. So when we march through Washington today, with thousands of others, we are carrying these little ones just as the paralytic was carried by his friends in the Gospel. We carry them when we stand up and give witness to the sacredness of life. We carry them when we pray for an end to abortion and for the unborn, as well as for the elderly, the disabled, and the sick. We carry them whenever we support a pregnant mother who is struggling or a family that is going through difficulties. We carry them whenever we work to restore a culture of life in our nation. We carry them with us because they cannot help themselves.

There is another point from the Scripture that we have to remember too. As the psalmist tells us: “Do not forget the works of the Lord!” We are doing an important work here today, and we cannot give up. But we cannot do it on our own. This is God’s work first and foremost. In the Gospel, the four men could bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus and even lower him down through the roof, but only Jesus could heal him. Only Jesus could work the miracle and restore him to the life that God desired him to have. And the same is true for us today. We are praying so that God will work a miracle in our country. We’re praying that he will soften the hearts and open the eyes of those who don’t yet recognize the gift and the sacredness of every human life. We are praying that our most helpless brothers and sisters will have a chance to live the life that God has prepared for them. We are praying that God will convert and transform our entire nation, and bring forth a culture of life in our hearts, in our communities, from one coast to the other. And we celebrate the Eucharist to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the saving love that can overcome the culture of death that has such a hold on our nation. Our
march today will be a powerful sign to everyone we meet that we stand for life, and each of you is a sign of hope, but it is God who does the real heavy lifting! We must entrust this work to him, so once again, “Do not forget the works of the Lord.”

As we walk today through the streets of our nation’s capital, let us remember that we are giving witness to the world that every life is precious, no matter how small or helpless, and we will keep coming back until every life is protected. But we are also carrying our unborn brothers and sisters with us in our hearts, carrying them to our Lord, placing them before him, and celebrating the gift of life. May God continue to do great things, and bring the culture of life to fullness among us.