

October marks our annual observance of Respect Life Month. This year's theme is "Live the Gospel of Life" in honor of the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's Encyclical about the Gospel of Life.

25 years ago, I was studying to be a priest and my Mother gave me a copy of the Pope's then brand-new teaching letter *Evangelium Vitae* on the Gospel of Life. I recall reading it little by little while I sat in church in quiet before the Blessed Sacrament. "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."ⁱ That quiet, prayerful reading helped me to better understand the dignity of every human being especially the unborn. And it has informed my own thoughts on life for the last quarter of a century.

The most basic human right is the right to life. The Declaration of Independence calls this an inalienable right. It is given by God and no one has the right to take it away. Sadly, we live in a society that has forgotten this. When life is most vulnerable, it is most defenseless. A child in the womb has no voice and no vote, and thus others must speak up to protect them. The elderly at the end stages of life are also vulnerable as are people with disabilities and the marginalized. A defense of life also includes speaking out against racism, protecting the environment, addressing poverty, and seeking an end to the death penalty. Every life is a sacred gift from God, and we need to do all we can to help our society appreciate life as a gift from God from the very start to the very end.

On the 2nd of October, we observe the Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels. Angels are powerful intercessors particularly suited to strengthen our prayers on behalf of human life.ⁱⁱ In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us "angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father" (18:10). From the birth in Bethlehem to his Ascension, Jesus was surrounded by the adoration and service of angels... They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, [and] strengthen him in his agony in the garden" (CCC 333). On Easter morning, they proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection. And they are present to welcome him home as he ascends to heaven.

As with Jesus, so to with every human life. Life from beginning to end is surrounded by the watchful care and intercession of guardian angels. "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life" (CCC 336). Perhaps you have thought about your own guardian angel, but did you ever consider asking someone else's guardian angel for help. We can ask the guardian angel of the child in danger of abortion to intercede to God for protection from death. We can pray for "the angels to illuminate the mind of a mother who is tempted to have an abortion with the light of Christ's love for her and her child. We can also ask the angels to fight the demons that surround abortion facilities." Mothers and fathers who have been involved in an abortion often suffer long after the choice. We can also "pray for the angels to send God's comfort and healing" to them.ⁱⁱⁱ

Guardian angels are invisible spiritual beings. We cannot see them although sometimes we may sense they are guiding us to make a good decision or protecting us from a real and present danger. Our ultimate destiny is to share in the very life of God. In the life to come, the invisible will become visible. We will have the opportunity to see these guardian angels assigned by God to protect us and all of humanity. In the meantime, we can work alongside them to respect life and promote it. "How fitting to turn to the angels for assistance with spreading the pro-life message since they were the first proclaimers of the Gospel of Life!"^{iv}

ⁱ Naumann, Joseph. Respect Life Month Statement, October 2020.

ⁱⁱ McClusky, Mary, Angelic Assistance, March 1, 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} Ibid