

Monday, October 26, 2020

## **RESPECT LIFE REFLECTION**

### **Praying for an end to abortion**

Archbishop Andrew Bellisario, C.M.

Thank you for joining me this evening in prayer.

This evening we will pray the rosary, have some time for adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and conclude our prayer with benediction.

October is “Respect Life Month.” Therefore, our intentions this evening will be to pray that all people may come to a deeper respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death, and in particular, we will pray for an end to all abortion, and that the unborn will be accorded legal protections that is their right.

In their document, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the Catholic bishops of the United States declared: “There are some things we must never do, as individuals or as a society, because they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor. Such actions are so deeply flawed that they are always opposed to the authentic good of persons. These are called “intrinsically evil” actions. They must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned. A prime example is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia. In our nation, “abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others” (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 5).

The bishops wrote a new introductory letter for *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* last November. In it, they write “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. At the same time, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty and the death penalty.”

Last October, I wrote an article for our diocesan newspapers entitled, “The Gospel of Life and the Holy Rosary.” This article will be the foundation of our reflection this evening as we pray the Joyful mysteries of the Holy Rosary. Saint John Paul II, in *Evangelium vitae* writes “*We need to bring the Gospel of life to the heart of every man and woman and to make it penetrate every part of society.*”

Praying the rosary is an integral part of pro-life initiatives such as Life Chain and Forty Days of Prayer for an End to Abortion. The mysteries of the rosary that we meditate on in this beautiful prayer help us to focus on the dignity of human life. This evening, I invite you to meditate on

the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary with me. And to do so in light of our commitment to respecting the dignity and the value of human life. We need to pray for our conversion of heart.

### **Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary**

#### **The First Joyful Mystery: The Annunciation of the Lord**

*“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”* Luke 1:30

Regardless of the circumstances of their conception, every child is blessed by God. Against the so-called wisdom of the world that too often regards an unborn child as a burden or even a threat, we believe that the life of every child is a blessing and a gift from God. We see this in the response of Mary to the news that she will be a mother. Despite her fear and apprehension at finding herself pregnant outside of marriage, she says yes to her future child, relying on the trustworthiness and faithful love of God. As followers of Christ, our task is to reach out to women who find themselves in fearful and difficult circumstances like Mary’s. And through our kind and compassionate support allay their fears and help them to experience in their lives, the love, and the favor of God announced to Mary.

#### **The Second Joyful Mystery: The Visitation**

*“At the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.”* Luke 1:44

Elizabeth speaks of her unborn child in her womb as an infant. Isn’t it interesting that new parents always announce: “We’re expecting a baby!” In daily life, we will naturally ask an expectant mother: “When is the baby due?” Or, “Do you know if the baby is a boy or a girl?” Or, “Have you felt the baby kick yet?” So often the humanity and personhood of innocent unborn children are deliberately obscured by false rhetoric that dehumanizes them. This makes it easier to remain passive or indifferent to the fate of unborn children. They are uniquely vulnerable because they are invisible and (at least as the law now stands) have no rights that society is obligated to respect.

#### **The Third Joyful Mystery: The Nativity of Jesus**

*“...the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”* Luke 2:7

Mary was a poor woman who gave birth to Jesus in a barn because there was no room for her and her husband. In too many instances, poor, pregnant women are forced to choose between their unborn child and descending even deeper into poverty.

In his epistle, James says, it is not enough to say to someone hungry and ill-clad, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” (James 2:16), but then do nothing to help them. It is not enough to say something similar to women in crisis pregnancies considering abortion. Respecting life means protecting innocent, unborn children. Respecting life means working to help create a society that ensures that every woman in a crisis pregnancy has the support they need to raise and nurture their child.

### **The Fourth Joyful Mystery: The Presentation in the Temple**

*“Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’”* Luke 2: 34-35

It should not surprise us that our Church’s uncompromising defense of the sanctity of life from conception to natural death is a sign of contradiction throughout our country. Abortion is and remains a bitterly divisive issue in our society. But we cannot escape the truth that both natural law and divine revelation condemn as an intrinsic evil the killing of the innocent. The unjust killing of millions of unborn children is a moral evil that cries out to heaven.

Mother Teresa, quoting Mahatma Gandhi, taught, “The true greatness of a society can be judged by how it treats the poorest and the most vulnerable.” Our society’s attitude to life issues in general and abortion, in particular, reveals so much about who we are and for what and whom we cherish.

### **The Fifth Joyful Mystery: The Finding of Jesus at the Temple**

*“...his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.”* Luke 2:51b-52

In our country, it is a tragic fact that abortion is a legally protected right. But that does not lessen the moral gravity of this awful procedure, which is in every circumstance objectively wrong. We must continuously work towards adopting laws that protect the rights of the unborn. Ultimately, the solution to abortion is found in the conversion of heart and mind that leads us to turn away from sin.

Let us imitate the example of Mary and ponder the beautiful mystery of life and the gift of every child, who, if we choose life, may, like Jesus, “advance in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.”

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R./ That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.