

RESPECT LIFE MONTH: PREACHING FOR LIFE

Suggested observance:

Respect Life Sunday, October 5, 2014

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

- ☞ *Isaiah 5:1-7 – A vineyard owner tended his vineyard (symbolic of Israel), but when the vineyard yielded bad fruit, he declared that he would “make it a ruin.”*
- ☞ *Philippians 4:6-9 – St. Paul encourages the Philippians to make their requests known to God with thanksgiving, free from anxiety, to think about what is excellent and good, and to continue to do what they have learned from him.*
- ☞ *Matthew 21:33-43 – Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard owner whose tenants killed his son when he sent his son to obtain the produce.*



- Each October is set aside by the bishops of the United States as Respect Life Month, a time to particularly reflect on life issues and to pray for and promote greater respect for all human life. This year’s theme is “Each of us is a masterpiece of God’s creation,” adapted from Pope Francis’ 2013 Day for Life greeting.
- Imagine yourself pausing in quiet wonder in front of a beautiful piece of art. Now think of the artist who created that masterpiece with painstaking care and precision, stepping back to admire his work. Each of us is a masterpiece, created by God with purpose and tenderness. We are each loved so intensely and are each of such great worth that we cannot even comprehend it.
- Pope Francis, who has captivated the world with his humility and compassion, shows through his actions that “even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect” (2013 Day for Life Greeting).

The Respect Life Program, sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, started in 1972 and begins anew each October—the month set aside by the U.S. bishops as “Respect Life Month.” The program calls attention to numerous human life issues and the way in which each touches on the sanctity and dignity of human life.

Dioceses and parishes are encouraged to participate during October and throughout the year in promoting greater respect for all human life through special liturgies and events.

The USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities publishes materials each year that are particularly designed to be helpful to priests, parish groups and other organizations in these efforts. (See: www.usccb.org/respectlife).

- We want to be part of a society which has the affirmation and protection of human rights as its primary objective and boast. Yet many of those who are weak and vulnerable are pushed to the periphery by society.
 - Example A: A large percentage of children pre-diagnosed as having Down syndrome are never given the chance to live outside their mothers' wombs.
 - Example B: "Barbara [Wagner, a retired school bus driver,] had been in remission from her lung cancer. When it recurred, her oncologist wanted her to be given a drug that (statistically) would increase the chance of her being alive in one year by 45%. The State of Oregon denied this treatment stating that her prognosis wasn't good enough to warrant expensive medication to treat her cancer. Yet in the same letter denying coverage for her medication, the State offered full coverage (100%) for her assisted suicide." (2012 Respect Life Program, "Life Matters: Doctor-Assisted Death by Suicide")

- The Lord is inviting us to respond. We are called to *act*, not with anxiety or with doubt, but with confident trust in and dependence on God. We are called to care for ourselves and for others.
 - Example A: In a 2005 study, 73% of women undergoing an abortion said not being able to afford a baby now was a reason for the abortion. How might we support mothers facing unexpected pregnancies?
 - Example B: Many suffer after the loss of a child to abortion. By seeking healing or by sharing the possibility of healing with others, we can respond with hope in His mercy. If you or someone you know has been affected by an abortion, remember that God's greatest desire is to forgive. Contact Project Rachel Ministry for help, or visit hopeafterabortion.com (en español: esperanzaposaborto.com).
 - Example C: "We should each be prepared for those difficult situations when medical decisions must be made" (2014 Respect Life Program, "Advance Medical Directives: Planning for Your Future"). Are we aware of the various advance medical directives documents and the problematic issues that come with some of them? Do we know what the options are that are in keeping with Catholic teaching on the dignity of each person?

- We are each called to witness, in our own way, to the powerful and life-transforming love of Christ and to the respect and reverence that is due to each person as a "masterpiece of God's creation."

- How is God calling us to witness to these truths in our daily lives?