

Evangelium Vita more current than ever

25 March 2020

Pope Francis

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Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Twenty-five years ago today, on this very date, 25 March, when the Church marks the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, Saint John Paul ii promulgated the Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, on the value and inviolability of human life.

The bond between the Annunciation and the “Gospel of Life” is close and profound, as Saint John Paul emphasized in his Encyclical Letter. Today we find ourselves reviving this teaching within the context of a pandemic that threatens human life and the world economy. It is a situation that makes the words with which the Encyclical begins ever more demanding. Here they are: “The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus’ message. Lovingly received day after day by the Church, it is to be preached with dauntless fidelity as ‘good news’ to the people of every age and culture” (n. 1).

As with every proclamation of the Gospel, this too should firstly be witnessed. And I think with gratitude of the silent witness of many people who, in various ways, are doing everything they can in serving the sick, the elderly and those who are alone and most destitute. They put into practice the Gospel of Life, like Mary who, having accepted the Angel’s announcement, went to help her cousin Elizabeth who was in need.

Indeed, the life that we are called to promote and defend is not an abstract concept, but rather it is always manifested in a person in flesh and blood: a baby who has just been conceived, a marginalized poor person, a sick person who is disheartened or in a terminal ill state, one who has lost their job or cannot find one, a rejected or marginalized migrant.... Life manifests itself tangibly in people.

Each human being is called by God to enjoy the fullness of life; and, is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church, every threat to human dignity and life cannot but have an effect on her heart, on her maternal ‘womb’. To defend life is not an ideology for the Church. It is a reality; a human reality which involves all Christians, precisely because they are Christian and because they are human.

Unfortunately, attacks against people’s dignity and life still continue in our epoch, which is the age of universal human rights. Indeed, we are facing new threats and new forms of slavery, and laws do not always protect the weakest and most vulnerable human lives.

The message of the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* is thus more current than ever. Aside from the emergencies like the one we are experiencing now, it is a case of taking action on the cultural and educational level in order to transmit to future generations, the attitude of solidarity, care and welcome, in the full knowledge that the culture of life is not the exclusive heritage of Christians, but rather belongs to all those who, working to build fraternal relationships, recognize the value of each person, even when they are fragile and suffering.

Dear brothers and sisters, every human life, unique and unrepeatable, has value in and of itself; it is of inestimable value. This must always be proclaimed anew with the courage of the Word and the courage of actions. It calls us to solidarity and fraternal love for the great human family and for each of its members.

Thus, with Saint John Paul ii, who wrote this Encyclical Letter, I reaffirm with renewed conviction the appeal he addressed to everyone 25 years ago: “respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life! Only in this direction will you find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness!” (Encyclical Letter, *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 5).

Appeal

In a short while, at midday, we Pastors of the various Christian communities, along with the faithful of various confessions, will spiritually join together to invoke God with the Lord’s Prayer. Let us unite our voices in a plea to the Lord in these days of suffering, as the world is being greatly tried by the pandemic. May our kind and merciful Father grant the unanimous plea of his children, who in trusting hope, turn to his omnipotence.

I also renew to all my invitation to spiritually participate via the means of communication in the moment of prayer that I will preside the day after tomorrow, on Friday [27 March] at 6:00 pm on the parvis of the Basilica of Saint Peter. Listening to the Word of God and the Adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament will be followed by the

Urbi et Orbi Blessing connected to the Plenary Indulgence.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media, as we continue on our Lenten journey towards Easter. Upon you and your families, I invoke the strength and peace that come from our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

I offer a special greeting to young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. Today, on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, I entrust everyone to the Mother of Jesus and Our Mother. May she who said that “yes” in Nazareth, help you to say “yes” every day to the Lord, who asks you to welcome him and to follow him in all the concrete situations that you are experiencing. May God Bless you.