



Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

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LIVE THE GOSPEL OF LIFE *Respect Life Month Statement, October 2020*

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As Catholics in the United States, we will soon mark our annual observance of October as Respect Life Month. It is a time to focus on God's precious gift of human life and our responsibility to care for, protect, and defend the lives of our brothers and sisters.

This year's theme, "Live the Gospel of Life," was inspired by the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *The Gospel of Life*. Pope John Paul's masterfully articulated defense of the right to life for children in their mothers' wombs, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the marginalized is more relevant today than ever before.

This past November, the U.S. bishops reaffirmed that "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." While we noted not to "dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty, and the death penalty," we renewed our commitment to protect the most fundamental of all human rights – the right to live.

This past January, I shared with Pope Francis that the Bishops of the United States had been criticized by some for identifying the protection of the unborn as a pre-eminent priority. The Holy Father expressed his support for our efforts observing that if we fail to protect life, no other rights matter. Pope Francis also said that abortion is not primarily a Catholic or even a religious issue, it is first and foremost a human rights issue.

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. May we strive to imitate Christ and follow in his footsteps, caring for the most vulnerable among us. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, may Our Lord grant us the grace to live courageously and faithfully his Gospel of life.