



# THE PASTOR'S DESK

## January 17, 2010 - March for Life

### Dear Parishioners,

This Friday is the annual March for Life in Washington. This is not your typical “protest march.” The word “protest” means “to put to the test.” The March for Life tests at least two things. First, it puts the culture of death to the test. How long can our society avoid the truth about abortion? The witness of so many people of many ages and states of life shows that the dignity of human life is alive in the hearts of so many people. Can a truth with so many witnesses be ignored forever? Second, it tests our courage and faith. Can we continue to witness even though our voices seem to fall on deaf ears? We live in a sinful world where the voice of truth is, in many cases, easily drowned out or ignored. So many times, the eradication of a terrible injustice has taken much time and patience. The pro-life movement is no different. Why this deafness to the voice of truth?

Well, the short answer is sin. But, the sin behind this denial of the right to life is particularly grave. It is the first of all sins: pride. Pride is the sin that makes us think we are God. When we claim control over the innocent lives of other human beings, we are claiming to be God. We are claiming the freedom of God, but without His justice. Claiming the freedom to act in every situation in any way I deem best for myself, will cause me to commit grave injustice. When freedom is rightly understood, justice does not impede or limit my freedom, it rather directs it and focuses it toward its highest good. The freest act we can perform is the giving of ourselves for the good of another person. When I forego my own good in this life for the good of another, I am acting in perfect freedom. I am not impeded in any way even by my own earthly desires. Of course, in our relationship with God, seeking the greatest good for others actually draws us closer to our greatest good: holiness and salvation. Living the life of grace and seeking salvation do not limit our freedom by making us submit to a lot of external rules and commandments, rather, it places freedom in its widest context. This is the mystery of the Cross. He who seeks to save his life (that is, use it to advance his own plans and desires), will lose it. He who loses his life (that is, freely offers it to God in charity for the good of others), will save it.

We face a culture which believes that freedom is lived out only by seeking our own good and fulfilling our own desires, even if this means that someone must lose his life in the process. We need to always remember, and to remind our society, that every innocent human life exists for its own sake. This means that no one has to justify his life, no matter what stage of human life the person is in. We do not have to pass some kind of “usefulness” or “convenience” test. All of us have been, or will be, “useless” or “inconvenient” to someone else at some stage in our lives. That we can submit someone else’s right to life to criteria of my own choosing is a terrible moral evil. Unfortunately, this evil is becoming standard procedure in many areas of our society.

Pope John Paul II saw all of this in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life). In paragraph four

he writes:

*Unfortunately, this disturbing state of affairs, far from decreasing, is expanding: with the new prospects opened up by scientific and technological progress there arise new forms of attacks on the dignity of the human being. At the same time a new cultural climate is developing and taking hold, which gives crimes against life a new and-if possible-even more sinister character, giving rise to further grave concern: broad sectors of public opinion justify certain crimes against life in the name of the rights of individual freedom, and on this basis they claim not only exemption from punishment but even authorization by the State, so that these things can be done with total freedom and indeed with the free assistance of health-care systems.*

*All this is causing a profound change in the way in which life and relationships between people are considered. The fact that legislation in many countries, perhaps even departing from basic principles of their Constitutions, has determined not to punish these practices against life, and even to make them altogether legal, is both a disturbing symptom and a significant cause of grave moral decline. Choices once unanimously considered criminal and rejected by the common moral sense are gradually becoming socially acceptable. Even certain sectors of the medical profession, which by its calling is directed to the defense and care of human life, are increasingly willing to carry out these acts against the person. In this way the very nature of the medical profession is distorted and contradicted, and the dignity of those who practice it is degraded. In such a cultural and legislative situation, the serious demographic, social and family problems which weigh upon many of the world's peoples and which require responsible and effective attention from national and international bodies, are left open to false and deceptive solutions, opposed to the truth and the good of persons and nations.*

*The end result of this is tragic: not only is the fact of the destruction of so many human lives still to be born or in their final stage extremely grave and disturbing, but no less grave and disturbing is the fact that conscience itself, darkened as it were by such widespread conditioning, is finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between good and evil in what concerns the basic value of human life.*

Please consider coming out to support the March for Life. If you cannot do so, please offer your prayers for the success of the March. Be always ready, too, to speak in a patient, charitable, and persuasive manner for the right to life of all God’s children.

**God bless, Fr. LaHood**

**Note:** The annual **March for Life**, begins at noon with a rally at the National Mall and 7th Street and then proceeds with a march down Constitution Avenue ending in front of the Supreme Court. The best way to get there is by Metro to Archives/Navy Memorial, Smithsonian, or L’Enfant Plaza, then head for the Mall.