

Diocesan Information



MOST REVEREND
MICHAEL R. COTE, D.D.

Diocese of Norwich
Office of the Bishop
201 Broadway
Norwich, Connecticut 06360
(860) 887-9294

September 16, 2019

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Each October, the Catholic Church in the United States celebrates Respect Life Month to proclaim the immeasurable value of every person from conception to natural death. The theme for Respect Life Sunday (October 6th) is, Christ Our Hope: In Every Season of Life. We live in a world that needs hope. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God is the source of our hope, and as St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans, "hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church in number 1700 affirms that "the dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God." This has been a core belief in the church from the very beginning. Psalm 139:13-14 affirms: "You formed my inmost being: you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made: wonderful are your ways!" This letter proposes the dignity of the human person "in every season of life," from conception to natural death. Life seems to be under attack at its most vulnerable stages - from the unborn child to the elderly. Laws expanding abortion rights and physician assisted suicide reflect a culture that has lost hope.

This is where we need to follow the example of Abraham, our father in faith. Pope Francis, in his book On Hope, highlights the importance of Abraham. He says "Saint Paul, in Romans, reminds us of the great figure of Abraham to show us the way of faith and hope. Of him the Apostle writes, 'He believed, hoping against all hope, and so became the father of many nations' (Romans 4:18)." Elsewhere, Pope Francis writes: "Hope opens new horizons, making us capable of dreaming what is not even imaginable. This hope invites us to enter the darkness of an uncertain future and to walk through and into the light. It is beautiful, the virtue of hope; it gives us great strength to walk in life."

Pope Francis is calling us to accompany people on the margins of society - the frightened pregnant mother who has lost hope, the migrant crossing the border in search of a better life, the elderly person full of pain and facing a terminal diagnosis. Each of these people need us to be witnesses of hope - in every season of life. As Saint John Paul II noted in the encyclical The Gospel of Life: "The Gospel of Life is for the whole of human society. To be actively pro-life is to contribute to the renewal of society through the promotion of the common good. It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop."

We need to be ardent defenders of the right to life as we promote the common good. Thank you for bringing hope to those in need and for all you do to foster a culture of life in our Diocese.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop of Norwich