



# CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

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## SAN FRANCISCO DE ASIS

Committed to living and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ within the Catholic tradition, we are blessed to have as our patron saint someone who continues to call us to reach out to others in charity and compassion.

### **Church of**

### **St Francis of Assisi**

1114 Third Street SE

Rochester, MN 55904

507.288.7313

<http://stfrancis-church.org>

### **Parish Center Hours:**

Mon-Thurs: 8:00AM - 3:30PM

Friday: 9:00AM - 3:30PM

### **Weekday Mass:**

Monday - Friday 7AM

### **School Mass:**

Tuesday 9:15AM

### **Weekend Mass:**

Saturday 4:30PM

Sunday 8AM, 10AM

### **In Spanish:**

Sunday 12PM

### **Misa En Español:**

Domingo 12PM

### **Pastor**

Rev. Jim Berning

### **Parochial Vicar**

Rev. Luis Vargas

### **Deacon**

Mr. Terry Smith



"Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? ...  
Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar  
and to God what belongs to God."

- Matthew 22:21

## FROM THE DESK OF FATHER BERNING



**"WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD ALWAYS FOR ALL OF YOU,** remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father..." - Thessalonians 1:2-3

**WORLD MISSION SUNDAY.** Today is World Mission Sunday and we join Catholics all around the world as one community of faith. Through our prayers and financial support, we bring the Lord's mercy and love to the most vulnerable communities in the Pope's missions. In a world where so much divides us, World Mission Sunday rejoices in our unity as missionaries by our Baptism, as it offers each of us an opportunity to support the life-giving presence of the Church among the poor and marginalized in more than 1,111 mission dioceses.

**OCTOBER IS RESPECT LIFE MONTH.** This year, as we celebrate Respect Life Month, we commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encyclical of St. John Paul II, "Evangelium Vitae: Living the Gospel of Life." To promote respect for life means working for the fundamentals of a dignified life, such as access to health care, affordable housing, quality education, and an environment protected for future generations. We are called to work for the common good - to enhance human life and ensure that the dignity of life is always respected. Let us all live the "Gospel of Life" together and always let others do the same with us.

**"THE ROOT OF JOY IS GRATEFULNESS..." - BROTHER DAVID STEINDL-RAST**  
I thank all of you who have kept up your support of our parish these past months. It is needed and greatly appreciated. The Finance Committee met this week and discussed our fall stewardship campaign - quite a challenge with all the uncertainties right now. We also discussed ways to help offset the loss of our parish Fall Festival income in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus. Please know we are deeply grateful to all of you who are dedicated to selfless stewardship - prayer, service and finance - which sustains and strengthens the life of our parish. More information will be forthcoming. Be assured of my daily prayers for you and your families.

**CMA 2020 GOAL.** Thank you so much for helping us go over our goal! Any monies received over our goal are returned to us 100% to restore and refurbish stain-glassed windows and update our security. Blessings to all!

**LIVESTREAM MASSES.** We have received questions about watching our weekend Mass online. Please know that you don't need a Facebook account to watch a livestream Mass via our website's link to our Facebook page. Masses that are live-streamed publicly can be watched by anyone. Our Facebook page is also a great way to stay connected to our parish family. So stay safe and healthy and continue to join us prayerfully online! We LITERALLY cannot be the CHURCH without you!

**ST. JOHN PAUL II.** On October 22, the Church commemorates the Feast of St. John Paul II. On this day in 1978, he officially began his pontificate. In his homily on October 22, 1978, he repeated the refrain "Be not afraid!" - and calling for Christian courage. Today, we remember his first words to all of us: **"BE NOT AFRAID!"**

**FR JIM BERNING**

## Welcome

Welcome to the Church of St. Francis of Assisi. Our church has helped to bring Jesus Christ to the city of Rochester since 1937. We seek to foster the spiritual growth of our parishioners through the celebration of the Sacraments, catechesis, community life, and personal prayer. Like our patron saint, we strive to rebuild the Church and to console the heart of Jesus by serving our neighbors in need.

## Parish Contacts

### Parish Center Office

(507) 288-7313

### Pastor (x 202)

Rev. Jim Berning

### Parochial Vicar (x 203)

Rev. Luis Vargas

### Deacon (x 208)

Terry Smith

### Parish Administrator (x 204)

Sarah Kinsman

### Office Manager (x 201)

Michelle Ibarra

### Financial Secretary (x 205)

Debbie Worden

### Director of Music/Liturgy (x 301)

Zack Stachowski

### Faith Formation (x 207)

Mark Nuehring

### St. Francis of Assisi School

(507) 288-4816

### Principal

Barb Plenge

### Trustees

Bruce Anderson

Rosemary Bengal

### Knights of Columbus

Dale Frank

### Calvary Cemetery

Steve Flynn, Director

(507) 273-0140

### Catholic Charities

(507) 287-2047



**EL MILAGRO DEL BEATO CARLO ACUTIS**

Carlo Acutis, el ciberapóstol de la Eucaristía, quien fue beatificado este pasado 10 de octubre en Asís (Italia), gracias a un milagro obrado por su intercesión en Brasil, donde un niño resultó curado de una grave enfermedad.

El niño del milagro se llama Matheus. Él padecía una malformación congénita conocida como páncreas anular. Su madre, Luciana Vianna, rezó durante cuatro años por su sanación.

Luciana cuando se enteró de que la reliquia de Carlo estaría en la parroquia, vio la oportunidad para pedirle al "nuevo santo" el milagro con el que tanto soñó. Y comenzó a dedicar novenas al adolescente italiano hasta el día de la Misa en la que estaría la reliquia.

Cuando le llegó el turno para venerar la reliquia, Luciana se encontraba en el pasillo de la iglesia acompañada de su padre, quien pidió llevar a Matheus en sus brazos. Mientras se acercaba a la reliquia, el abuelo del niño se inclinó para besar la reliquia, pero Matheus puso su brazo para detenerlo.

Al niño le habían explicado que la petición se hacía en el corazón, pero él pidió en voz alta dejar de vomitar.

Cuando Luciana preguntó a su hijo qué había pedido, Matheus la sorprendió respondiendo que ya estaba curado gracias a Carlo Acutis. Ya en casa, el niño pidió comer. Después de que Matheus termino de comer, Luciana esperó a que el niño vomitara la comida, pero eso no sucedió.

La madre esperó un mes hasta estar segura de que su hijo podría comer normalmente. "Los médicos me explicaron que permanecería delgado por un tiempo, pero ya estaba ganando altura" y peso.

Luciana ve en el milagro una oportunidad para evangelizar. "Antes, ni siquiera usaba mi teléfono celular, era reacia a la tecnología. Carlo cambió mi forma de pensar, era conocido por hablar de Jesús en Internet, y me di cuenta que mi testimonio sería una forma de evangelizar y dar esperanza a otras familias. Hoy entiendo que todo lo nuevo puede ser bueno, si lo usamos para bien", afirmó.



**MASS INTENTIONS**

For the Week of October 19, 2020

MON Oct 19	7:00 AM	Healing for Greg Payne
TUE Oct 20	* 9:15 AM	Dan Conlan †
WED Oct 21	7:00 AM	Juanita Foster †
THU Oct 22	7:00 AM	Stephen Frazer †
	** 7:00 PM	President Donald Trump
FRI Oct 23	7:00 AM	John Tazuell
SAT Oct 24	4:30 PM	Wendy Hagan †
SUN Oct 25	8:00 AM	Michael Long †
	10:00 AM	Nathan Holtegaard †
	** 12:00 PM	Pro Populo

\* School Mass \*\* Spanish Mass

**MASS INTENTIONS**

If you have a desire to remember someone who has passed away or simply in need of some extra prayers, Mass Intentions are available every day for our weekday Masses and on the weekends. You are welcome to stop by the Parish Office and schedule a Mass intention during normal office hours.

**Readings for the week of October 18, 2020**

Sunday: Is 25:6-10a/Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 [6cd]/Phil 4:12-14, 19-20/Mt 22:1-14 or 22:1-10  
 Monday: Gal 4:22-24, 26-27, 31—5:1/Ps 113:1b-2, 3-4, 5a and 6-7 [cf. 2]/Lk 11:29-32  
 Tuesday: Gal 5:1-6/Ps 119:41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48 [41a]/Lk 11:37-41  
 Wednesday: Gal 5:18-25/Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6 [cf. Jn 8:12]/Lk 11:42-46  
 Thursday: Eph 1:1-10/Ps 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4, 5-6 [2a]/Lk 11:47-54  
 Friday: Eph 1:11-14/Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 12-13 [12]/Lk 12:1-7  
 Saturday: Eph 1:15-23/Ps 8:2-3ab, 4-5, 6-7 [7]/Lk 12:8-12  
 Next Sunday: Is 45:1, 4-6/Ps 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10 [7b]/1 Thes 1:1-5b/Mt 22:15-2

**Las lecturas de la semana del 18 de Octubre de 2020**

Domingo: Is 25, 6-10/Sal 23, 1-3. 3-4. 5. 6 [6]/Flp 4, 12-14. 19-20/Mt 22, 1-14 o 22, 1-10  
 Lunes: Gal 4, 22-24. 26-27. 31—5, 1/Sal 113, 1-2. 3-4. 5 y 6 -7 [cfr. 2]/Lc 11, 29-32  
 Martes: Gal 5, 1-6/Sal 119, 41. 43. 44. 45. 47. 48 [41]/Lc 11, 37-41  
 Miércoles: Gal 5, 18-25/Sal 1, 1-2. 3. 4 y 6 [cfr. Jn 8, 12]/Lc 11, 42-46  
 Jueves: Ef 1, 1-10/Sal 98, 1. 2-3. 3-4. 5-6 [2]/Lc 11, 47-54  
 Viernes: Ef 1, 11-14/Sal 33, 1-2. 4-5. 12-13 [12]/Lc 12, 1-7  
 Sábado: Ef 1, 15-23/Sal 8, 2-3. 4-5. 6-7 [7]/Lc 12, 8-12  
 Domingo siguiente: Is 45, 1. 4-6/Sal 96, 1. 3. 4-5. 7-8. 9-10 [7]/1 Tes 1, 1-5/Mt 22, 15-21

## Faith Formation

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT FAITH FORMATION IS BACK!

This coming Wednesday, Faith Formation for 3rd grade – 8th graders will kick-off for the fall. PLEASE encourage anyone you know who has school-age children to register them for classes.

Some of us may remember Faith Formation being called religious education and, others, who are a few years older, remember it as C.C.D. This mysterious acronym meant many things for many people, but officially, "Confraternity of Christian Doctrine" was an association established at Rome in 1562 for the purpose of providing religious education for public school children. Since the Vatican Council II in 1965, we have seen CCD evolve to just religious education, and now, more recently, "Faith Formation."

Faith Formation tries to convey that coming to faith is more than education about something, but rather deepening a relationship with Jesus, who is at the center of our faith. Head knowledge is important, and we try to share as much as we can in 1 ½ hours, once a week, in an age-appropriate way, but helping students come to appreciate Jesus' unconditional love for them, is crucial as they grow up in a very secular world.

I recently heard Bishop Quinn at a Confirmation homily share that being Catholic today is like going up a down escalator. This analogy certainly conveys the challenge of truly living out your faith.

Most students like fun and adventure. Please encourage students you know to participate in this fun, adventure of deepening their discovery of our beautiful Catholic faith, by participating in Faith Formation. You can register via our website, under the Faith Formation tab. Please email me questions at [youthminister@stfrancis-church.org](mailto:youthminister@stfrancis-church.org). God Bless!

- **Mark** ([youthminister@stfrancis-church.org](mailto:youthminister@stfrancis-church.org))

Report on Stewardship Giving		
Fiscal Year July 2020 - June 2021		
	Sept 2020	Year to Date
Envelopes/Check/Cash	23,586.00	97,229.47
Electronic Giving	19,952.67	61,932.16
Children	9.00	31.00
Offertory	2,527.45	8,107.10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>46,075.12</b>	<b>167,299.73</b>
Budget	50,583.33	151,749.99
<b>Over/(Under) Budget</b>	<b>(4,508.21)</b>	<b>15,549.74</b>

## Music and Liturgy

### MusicNotes

**DIGITAL WORSHIP AIDS.** I am pleased to be able to provide digital worship aids for use at weekend liturgies. These worship aids are designed to be used on mobile devices like phones or tablets. These worship aids will contain the order of service, the readings, prayers, and the songs we'll be using at liturgy. I hope that these will help to facilitate more active engagement and participation at liturgy. The links for the worship aid will be sent out through our parish email and posted to our parish website and Facebook page (@stfrancisrochmn). Additionally, placards with QR codes can be found in the Gathering Space. Depending on your phone (this won't work if your phone is very old), generally all you need to do is scan the QR code with your camera app, and a link to the worship aid should pop up. Thanks!

### IMPORTANT UPDATE FOR ALL LITURGICAL MINISTERS.

Beginning in November, we'll be returning to Ministry Scheduler Pro for the scheduling of liturgical ministries. All current readers, ministers of hospitality, Eucharistic ministers, and altar servers: you should have received an email on 9/2/20 with important instructions about updating your profile. Contact Zack Stachowski with any questions.

**MASS LIVESTREAM.** We have recently switched to livestreaming the Sunday 8AM Mass in English in addition to our regular livestream of the 12PM Mass in Spanish. The stream is hosted on our parish Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/stfrancisrochmn](https://www.facebook.com/stfrancisrochmn). You do NOT need to log-in or subscribe to Facebook to access our parish page. You need only browse to the link above to access everything our page offers. It's possible Facebook may prompt you to sign up, but you do not have to do this.

- **Zack** ([litfranc@stfrancis-church.org](mailto:litfranc@stfrancis-church.org))

## School News



✘ This week is Bus Safety Week. Thank you to our school bus drivers!

✘ The weekly Mass will be celebrated on Tuesday, October 20th at 9:15 am.

✘ Picture Retake day is Thursday, October 22nd. Students needing their pictures retaken may come

out of uniform. Please return your original pictures that day.

✘ Friday, October 23rd is Student Council sponsored "Socktober" - wear your favorite colorful, crazy socks with your uniform.

## A NOTE FROM THE DEACON

### THE EXISTENCE OF GOD?

Have you ever wondered whether God exists? We are taught since we were little children that God indeed exists. Some days it is easy to believe that God does exist, but other days and times in our lives, it seems that God is very far away from us. We may at times even doubt that God exists.

The Church teaches us that when we seek God, there are certain ways of coming to know Him. The first way is from what we experience in the world. Have you ever seen a beautiful sunset or scene and felt your heart being raised to God? Maybe you are fond of music, and after hearing something very beautiful, your mind was lifted to God. Perhaps you have mused on the order of the universe; how the universe follows a pattern day in and day out, year in and year out, season in and season out. Even the facts that the earth stays in orbit year after year, and has just the right combination of gasses, gravity, vegetation and animal life to support human life may have caused you to realize that the order in the universe must have been caused by intelligence rather than random happenings.

The other way we can come to know of God's existence is through our own personal experiences. When we are open to truth, are struck with beauty, when we recognize our sense of moral goodness, when we hear the voice of our conscience, when we long for the infinite, or when we desire happiness that we can't seem to grab onto in this life, these are all signs that we have a spiritual soul.

This spiritual soul is not a material thing because it is not an organ in our body that can be found or studied. The Church teaches us that our souls are created by God and given to us to help lead us to the end for which God created us. It is from this soul that our capacity to love, our will to do the right thing, our desires for beauty, goodness and truth come. This is why we aren't satisfied very long with material goods.

So, in this journey through life, don't be discouraged by the gap between what your heart truly desires and the reality of things as they actually are, but remember that God has put these desires into your soul in order to lead you to Him. Strive to love God and your neighbor to the best of your ability.

Deacon Terry



### PRAYER BEFORE AN ELECTION

Lord God,  
as the election approaches,  
we seek to better understand  
the issues and concerns that  
confront our country, and how the  
Gospel compels us to respond  
as faithful citizens in our community.

We ask for eyes that are  
free from blindness  
so that we might see each other  
as brothers and sisters,  
one and equal in dignity,  
especially those who are victims of  
abuse and violence,  
deceit and poverty.

We ask for ears that will hear the  
cries of children unborn and  
those abandoned,  
Men and women oppressed  
because of race or creed,  
religion or gender.  
We ask for minds and hearts  
that are open to hearing the voice  
of leaders who will bring us closer  
to your Kingdom.

We pray for discernment  
so that we may choose leaders  
who hear your Word,  
live your love, and keep  
in the ways of your truth  
as they follow in the steps of  
Jesus and his Apostles  
and guide us to your Kingdom  
of justice and peace.

We ask this in the name of  
your Son Jesus Christ and  
through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prayer-before-an-election>

**CATHOLIC TEACHING: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.**

Catechism of the Catholic Church - paragraph 2240: Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes, to exercise the right to vote, and to defend one's country.

**Register to Vote:** Complete the form online, at the Olmsted County Elections Office, or in-person on Election Day. Bring proof of your current address, or someone to vouch for your address.

**Vote Early by Mail:** Apply for an absentee ballot online ([mnvotes.org](http://mnvotes.org)) or by mail (applications were mailed to registered voters in early June).

Return: US Mail. Ballots must be postmarked by Nov 3. Drop Box: Olmsted County Elections Office (address below) Sept 18-Nov 2 from 8am-5pm or Nov 3 by 3pm

**Vote Early in-Person:** Starts Sept 18 from 8am-5pm.

Olmsted County Elections Office, 2122 Campus Drive SE, Door A, Rochester, MN 55904

**Go to the Polls:** Tuesday, Nov. 3 from 7am-8pm. Find your polling place online: [pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us](http://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us). Wear a mask. Be prepared for socially-distanced lines.

**ROCHESTER ROSARY RALLIES.** Please join us in public prayer for our state and country's elections, conversion and peace on the Sundays leading up to the election. These rallies will be held near the Rochester Government Center at the corner of 4th Street SE and 3rd Avenue SE at 3PM, the Divine Mercy Hour. We encourage all to step out in faith and courage to publicly pray for our state and country. Bring your family and friends. May our united prayers through Mary find the heart of Jesus. For more information, contact:

Mary Amiot at [mamiot@hotmail.com](mailto:mamiot@hotmail.com) or 507-287-6481 or Janela Hubka at [daveandjanela@gmail.com](mailto:daveandjanela@gmail.com) or 507-282-6090.

- ✘ **SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18**
- ✘ **SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25**
- ✘ **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1**

**CAN YOU HELP OUT?** We are looking for volunteers that can help us with our various liturgical ministry areas - hospitality, readers and ministers of Holy Communion. Our aim is to have enough volunteers so that no one person is being relied on every single week. We ask all of you who are healthy to consider volunteering! MSP is our online tool for scheduling our Ministry Volunteers. You can check your schedule, request a substitute, change your availability on your computer or on your phone. Please call the Parish Office at 288-7313 if you can help or have any questions. Thank you in advance for your support. We appreciate you!



**CAESAR AND THE KING: SCOTT HAHN REFLECTS ON THE TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

The Lord is king over all the earth, as we sing in today's Psalm. Governments rise and fall by His permission, with no authority but that given from above (see John 19:11; Romans 13:1). In

effect, God says to every ruler what He tells King Cyrus in today's First Reading: "I have called you ... though you knew me not."

The Lord raised up Cyrus to restore the Israelites from exile, and to rebuild Jerusalem (see Ezra 1:1-4). Throughout salvation history, God has used foreign rulers for the sake of His chosen people. Pharaoh's heart was hardened to reveal God's power (see Romans 9:17). Invading armies were used to punish Israel's sins (see 2 Maccabees 6:7-16).

The Roman occupation during Jesus' time was, in a similar way, a judgment on Israel's unfaithfulness. Jesus' famous words in today's Gospel: "Repay to Caesar" are a pointed reminder of this. And they call us, too, to keep our allegiances straight.

The Lord alone is our king. His kingdom is not of this world (see John 18:36) but it begins here in His Church, which tells of His glory among all peoples. Citizens of heaven (see Philippians 3:20), we are called to be a light to the world (see Matthew 5:14) - working in faith, laboring in love, and enduring in hope, as today's Epistle counsels.

We owe the government a concern for the common good and obedience to laws - unless they conflict with God's commandments as interpreted by the Church (see Acts 5:29). But we owe God everything. The coin bears Caesar's image. But we bear God's own image (see Genesis 1:27). We owe Him our very lives - all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, offered as a living sacrifice of love (see Romans 12:1-2).

We should pray for our leaders, that like Cyrus they do God's will (see 1 Timothy 2:1-2) - until from the rising of the sun to its setting, all humanity knows that Jesus is Lord.

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A warm **WELCOME** is extended to all who come to the Church of St. Francis of Assisi! We are grateful to our faithful parishioners & welcome our neighbors & guests who are visiting us. We want you to know that you are always welcome here!

## LIVING THE GOSPEL OF LIFE IN 2020

The Catholic Spirit | Bishop Andrew Cozzens | September 24, 2020

**When St. Teresa of Kolkata received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, as everyone was watching to see what this saintly woman from the slums of India would say about peace, she shocked the world when she said, "The greatest destroyer of peace today is the cry of the innocent, unborn child. For if a mother can murder her own child in her own womb, what is left for you and for me to kill each other?"**

She repeated the same line in front of President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton at the national prayer breakfast in 1994. She also added: "Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion."

This year as we celebrate Respect Life Sunday (Oct. 4), we commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landmark pro-life encyclical of St. John Paul II, "Evangelium Vitae: Living the Gospel of Life." Interestingly, St. John Paul II has the same insight as St. Teresa of Kolkata. He says there can be no "true peace unless life is defended and promoted." And he explains why: "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. A society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized. Only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential goods of society, such as democracy and peace."

It is in the light of the prophetic voices of these two saints that we can come to understand the voting advice the U.S. bishops approved last November in their statement on the upcoming election: "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."

Of course, this does not mean that there are not many other ways that we are called to respect and defend life. As the bishops also say in their statement: "At the same time, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty and the death penalty."



If you read "Evangelium Vitae" by St. John Paul II, which I highly recommend you do, you will find this full picture of what it means to respect life, which includes condemnations of euthanasia, racism and the death penalty as well as the Church's concern for the poor, the immigrant and the environment. To be pro-life means we must work against all these evils because we proclaim a culture that welcomes and holds up the inherent dignity of each human life regardless of race, creed, sex, special need, age or nationality. Each life is directly willed by God from the moment of conception until natural death and he desires each person to live with him in eternity. And yet the weakest and the most vulnerable have a special claim on our help, especially those who are too young to have a voice of their own. As St. John Paul II says, "Today there exists a great multitude of weak and defenseless human beings, unborn children in particular, whose fundamental right to life is being trampled upon.... Such attacks strike human life at the time of its greatest frailty, when it lacks any means of self-defense."

This evil, which we perhaps have grown too accustomed to because it has been legal for 57 years, claims more innocent lives than any other in our culture. Almost 1 million abortions happen in our country every year; that is more than 2,000 a day. (And this only counts the surgical abortions and not those done by chemical "contraceptives" that often also cause abortions.) The attitude that treats the inestimable gift of a human

life as a choice to be disposed of continues to teach our children that not every human being has inherent dignity and that violence and death may be the answer to their problems.

As Pope Francis has made clear, "This defense of unborn life is closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right. It involves the conviction that a human being is always sacred and inviolable, in any situation and at every stage of development. Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems. Once this conviction disappears, so do solid and lasting foundations for the defense of human rights, which would always be subject to the passing whims of the powers that be" ("Evangelium gaudium," No. 213). We will not end racism and violence, we will not heal our culture of death, until we become a culture that recognizes the inherent dignity of the unborn child...

During this Respect Life month, the Church appeals to every Catholic, and every member of society, as St. John Paul II did 25 years ago: "In the name of God: Respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life! Only in this direction will you find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness!"

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