

Respect Life Sunday Homily prepared by Cardinal McElroy

Today's second reading from the letter to Timothy speaks of the courage that we must have in proclaiming our testimony to Jesus Christ in an often hostile world. "So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord...but bear your share of the hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God."

The Church asks us to focus this weekend upon the comprehensive commitment to human life that is a vital part of the Gospel message and Catholic teaching. We are called to understand that every human life is an incredibly precious gift from our Creator, which we are called to treat as sacred in every dimension of our lives. It is this commitment to the sacredness of human life that lies at the heart of the Church's call to protect unborn children, to feed the hungry and provide decent housing, to oppose the death penalty and protect the elderly and the disabled from being discarded or terminated in our society.

And that call to defend the sacredness of human life in all of its dimensions demands that we have the courage to proclaim the Gospel in our lives as citizens and believers, despite the cost and difficulties of doing so in our polarized world.

This year in California, we are called in a very specific way to reject the pathway of making illegal virtually all limitations on abortion. Proposition 1, which would enshrine in the state constitution the ability to have late-term abortions and abortions for purposes of gender selection, as well as subsidizing abortion for people who do not even live in California, is absolutely incompatible with the Gospel call to protect all human life. And we must witness to that contradiction in our role as citizens.

The very excruciating issue of abortion calls us to balance the challenging problems of women who are pregnant with the lives of unborn children. Proposition 1 simply obliterates the moral reality of the unborn child in striking this balance. As people of faith, we must not accept such a logic.

Instead, we must work within our society to build a comprehensive framework that genuinely protects and builds the dignity and sacredness of human life in its fullness, at every stage and for every person.

That is why Catholic teaching points to the identity of human life as a gift from God. It is as grace that we have all received the gift of our lives as the foundational right that is the source of every blessing we know in our world. And it is this same sense of giftedness that frames our understanding that every member of the human family is equal in dignity and must be treated in this manner.

We live in a harsh world that on so many levels denies the graced identity of the life which is our most fundamental blessing. The realities of economic exploitation, human trafficking, euthanasia and the abandonment of the elderly all inflict grave harm upon individuals created in the image and likeness of God and coarsen our society so it becomes more and more dehumanizing.

The words of the letter to Timothy compel us to speak against these evils in our society, and so demand public policies and laws that oppose violations of human life and dignity.

And the letter to Timothy also compels us to oppose Proposition 1 on this year's ballot, in the clear understanding that it destroys every possible legal protection for unborn children in our state.

I pray that the Lord will bless our state and our nation in the coming months, and that together we might build a more just and more humane society in our midst.