



WORD OF LIFE

January 2006

Intercessions for Life

Jan. 2006

- Jan 1st** **THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD**
For all mothers,
and especially those who await the birth of their child:
that through the intercession of the Mother of God
they might grow in love for their child every day;
We pray to the Lord:
- Jan 8th** **THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD**
For all who dwell in the darkness of the culture of death:
that the Holy Spirit might enlighten their hearts
with the light of the truth;
We pray to the Lord:
- Jan 15th** **SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**
For those who live on death rows throughout our country:
that through our prayers they might receive the gift of repentance,
and that all might come to know the value of their lives;
We pray to the Lord:
- Jan 22nd** **THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**
For all who study for the medical profession:
that they might see their vocation as a gift from God,
and that they might grow in the Gospel of Life
as they prepare to heal and restore;
We pray to the Lord:
- Jan 29th** **FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**
For the sick and the suffering,
and especially those near death,
that the wisdom of those who suffer,
and the value of their lives,
might be treasured by all;
We pray to the Lord:

The Feast of the Assumption is a day of joy. God has won. Love has won. It has won life. Love has shown that it is stronger than death, that God possesses the true strength and that his strength is goodness and love.

Pope Benedict XVI (Assumption, 2005)

Roe v. Wade is a travesty – an extreme case of judicial arrogance and constitutional invention – worthy of repeal.

Pro-choice syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer, “Nuclear? No Restoration,” *The Washington Post*, May 13, 2005

The elderly and the sick, the weak and the forgotten, they deserve better than physician-assisted suicide. They deserve better. They deserve the truth that God who created them in God's own image and likeness has endowed them with infinite value and lasting dignity. We need to develop an environment in nursing homes that allows our seniors to experience this truth daily.

Msgr. Michael Shugrue, vicar general, Diocese of Raleigh, homily for Respect Life Sunday

God's commitment to human life is at the very foundation of our life of faith. It commits us, if we are to follow Jesus, to be ourselves bearers and protectors of human life, especially the most innocent and vulnerable. ... When we commit ourselves to being pro-life and living that commitment, we are doing what every human being, without exception, should be doing. This is not a ‘catholic’ position. It is enjoined on us by our very humanity. It is inhuman to destroy innocent human life. It is human to foster and protect it at every stage.

Bishop William Murphy, Diocese of Rockville Centre, homily for Respect Life Sunday

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[When] senators oppose a judicial appointment because of the nominee's opposition to Roe, they not only endorse but make a litmus test out of one of the most intellectually suspect constitutional decisions of the modern era. They practically require that the judicial nominee sign on to logic that is, at best, questionable, and at worst, disingenuous and results-oriented. In doing so, they select not for faithful, but for unfaithful, constitutional interpreters to people the federal judiciary.

Pro-choice legal commentator Edward Lazarus, “The Lingerin Problems with *Roe v. Wade*”..., Oct 3, 2002. [Find Law's Legal Commentary](#)

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Roe is utterly indefensible as a matter of constitutional text. ... In fact, I know of no serious scholar, judge, or lawyer who attempts to defend *Roe's* analysis on textual or historical grounds. A first-year law student who argued for such a position would likely get a “C-“ in any good Constitutional Law course, and that's only because of grade inflation.

Michael Stokes Paulsen, “The Worst Constitutional Decision of All Time,” *Notre Dame Law Review* 78 (2003): 995-1043, at 1007

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Msgr. Michael Shugrue, vicar general Diocese of Raleigh, homily for Respect Life Sunday

In all the dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life. The Mass “For Peace and Justice” (no. 22 of the “Masses for Various Needs”) should be celebrated with violet vestments as an appropriate liturgical observance for this day.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 373

Preaching for Life

January 23, 2006

Mass of the Day

2 Samuel 5:1-7, 10 *You shall shepherd my people Israel.*
Mark 3:22-30 *It is the end of Satan.*
Lectionary for Mass, no. 317

Jesus tells us today that if a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand. That is why the bishops of the United States of America, with a passionate love for the solid principles on which this country was founded, have declared today to be a day of penance and prayer for the right to life. In every Catholic church in the United States, today is observed as a day of “penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life.”¹

We wear violet vestments today because we mourn for a nation which allows the killing of its children, the disposal of its sick, the warehousing of its elderly. We do penance so that we might receive God’s grace to turn away from the many small acts of selfishness that keep us from embracing the Gospel of Life. We pray the Mass for Peace and Justice because we seek a just society in which every human being knows peace and dignity from the first moment of conception to the last breath of a natural death.

We just reminded ourselves in the Responsorial Psalm that God’s faithfulness and mercy are ever with us. From the first moment of conception to the last moment of death, God is always there.

Wherever people fail to value the gift of life, may God be with them to change their hearts. Whenever senators and congressmen are faced with decisions which protect the least powerful among us, may God be with them to make them strong. May God give the grace of the spirit of truth to our President, to the members of the Supreme Court, and to every American citizen, that our laws might once again protect the life, the liberty and the pursuit of happiness of every human being.

For God never forgets his people, even when they wander far from his ways. He simply waits, like the father of the prodigal son, for us to return.

¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal for the Dioceses of the United States of America, no. 373.*

Readings from the Mass for Peace and Justice

The readings for today may also be taken from the Mass for Peace and Justice. The following commentary on these readings is offered to assist those preparing homilies for this day.

Readings from the Old Testament

Lectionary for Mass, no. 887

Isaiah 9:1-6 *His dominion is vast and forever peaceful*

I was talking to an old pro-lifer the other day. I think she's been coming to the March for Life for the past twenty years! She's stood on the steps of her parish church handing out pamphlets for Project Rachel in the rain and the noonday sun. She's knocked on the rectory door innumerable times to get intercessions for life into the Sunday Mass and quotes for life into the parish bulletin. She's picketed abortion clinics, prayed the rosary in the rain, and held more rallies at the Statehouse than a professional lobbyist. She is an old time pro-lifer. And what strikes me about her is she's always filled with the joy of life! There's always a glimmer of hope in her eyes. She knows that no gloom is too thick and no darkness too dark for God's light. She **knows** that the yoke will be lifted from the child and the old man and that the weapons of death and destruction will be smashed and we will be warmed by "every cloak rolled in blood." She knows that a little child will lead us to God's everlasting kingdom. She will never lose hope, for she knows that God has promised he will return and that God always keeps his promises.

Isaiah 9:1-6 *Justice will bring about peace*

Isaiah writes to a people who have been forced from their land and for whom life seems empty and barren. That's not unlike what it's like for those whose life is threatened by the selfishness and myopia of the culture of death. But do not lose hope! For God promises us that the parched and the barren will be made fruitful beyond our wildest imaginings! Even the desert will bloom! And every person from conception to natural death will live in peace, security and his constant care.

Isaiah 57:15-19 *Peace, peace for all, both far and near*

I remember the first time I heard of Project Rachel. And I remember the first woman who came to me telling the story of the day she had an abortion. "Where was God," she asked me. "And where is he now?" Isaiah answers her question today. God is in heaven. He is on high. He is in holiness, wherever there is love. And God is with every person who is crushed and dejected. He is with your little baby in heaven. He is as close to you as the ache in your heart. And in each of those places he brings the blessed assurance that he will heal and lead and comfort those who mourn.

Readings from the New Testament

Lectionary for Mass, no. 889

Philippians 4:6-9 *The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds*

At every Mass we ask God to "deliver us, Lord, from every anxiety." But what of the anxiety we feel for the victims of the culture of death? How are we to be delivered from the anxiety we feel for them? By prayer and petition and thanksgiving we ought to constantly tell God about them, beg God to help them, and be confident that he will hear us! Let us work to promote love and holiness and life, remembering always that whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, and whatever is loving is a gift from God.

Colossians 3:12-15 *Let the peace of Christ control your hearts*

I remember seeing a woman at the March for Life last January. She was an old lady in a threadbare coat, not really heavy enough to protect her from the cold. But she did not seem to notice. She was too busy with the people around her: with the little child to whom she was feeding a cookie, with the baby she was coaxing to laugh, with a harried mother whom she was causing to laugh. For underneath that threadbare coat she had put on

heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and most of all, love. And she is the sort, it occurred to me, whose warmth will win the fight for life!

James 3:13-18 *The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace*

From beginning to end, we always see Mary in the same place: beside Jesus. First at the manger, she's holding up Jesus for all the world to see. Later, by the foot of the cross, she's clinging to the lifeless body of God's only son, by whose sufferings we have been set free. Mary is ever the selfless one, whose only purpose is to draw us to him through whom we were made and who is still our life, our way, our only hope. Saint James tells us where the mother of life gets the grace to be *blessed among women*. It's from wisdom born of a good life. It's the very opposite of jealousy and selfish ambition. We will never understand the infinite value of life, God's greatest gift, until, like Mary, we give our whole life to humility, goodness, and Christ, her son.

Gospel Readings *Lectionary for Mass, no. 890*

Matthew 5:1-12a *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God*

What happens when life is not respected? The laugh of a child is forever silenced. The wise glint in the eye of an old man is darkened. Those rich with life are made poor in the spirit, when the infinite value of each human being is systematically ignored. A people created for joy are smothered with mourning, and those made in the image and likeness of God are reduced to disposable objects. But do not despair! For Jesus, the Christ, has promised, and his promises are true! The poor in spirit will inherit the kingdom of God! Those who mourn will be comforted, and the meek will inherit the earth.

Matthew 5:38-48 *I say to you: offer no resistance to one who is evil*

Does anything make us grieve in the same way as the death of a child? Just to imagine an innocent little baby abused, forgotten, or neglected is enough to raise our ire. And what of those who kill a baby? It is no surprise that we can become righteously enraged. But what does Jesus want us to do with this anger? Would he have us contend violence with more violence? Should we return hate for hate? Would he have us take a life for every life taken? No. Emphatically no. To answer evil with evil is to hand evil a victory. By his words and by his life, Jesus tells us what to do. Do you have enemies? Pray for them. Do you know people who hate? Love them. It's as simple as that, as simple as the cross.

John 14:23-29 *My peace I give to you*

I remember the first teenager I ever met who was contemplating an abortion. All she saw was trouble on every side! She felt her parents no longer respected her. Her boyfriend had abandoned her. Her peers whispered behind her back. And all she wanted was to make it go away! When pain and sorrow are all around, when our hearts quake and we are so afraid that we're tempted to give in to darkness and fear, to forget who first knit us in our mother's womb, may God give us the grace to be still, and to hear his gentle voice: "peace I give you ...peace...I am here."

John 20:19-23 *Peace be with you*

God made us. God made our bodies and makes our lungs to breathe, our hearts to throb, and our eyes to see. How glorious is his creation! Whether a little baby, a gangly adolescent, a sleek young adult, a somewhat chubby middle-aged man, or a stooped senior citizen, the body God gave us and life which keeps it going is a marvel to behold! It is in his own body that Christ won our salvation, nailed hands and feet to the cross. It's those same hands, and a spear-pierced side, that are the upper room's best evidence of his resurrection. That night he breathed peace on his disciples, peace expelled from the lungs of a risen body, onto the body of his disciples and his Church.

Intercessions for Life

For all who are lonely or afraid,
for teenagers on the street,
old people in nursing homes,
prisoners with no one to visit them,
and all whom the world has forgotten:
that Christ might lead us to them;
We pray to the Lord:

For children who are unwanted by their parents,
that God's grace might send others to love and care for them;
We pray to the Lord:

For medical researchers,
that inspired by the beauty of human life
they might seek to be co-workers with God
in fulfillment of his divine plan;
We pray to the Lord:

For all who work to promote the Gospel of Life,
that God might reward them for their goodness;
We pray to the Lord:

For a growing love of each human person
from conception to natural death;
We pray to the Lord:

For everyone who is haunted by the memory of abortion,
that they might know repentance, mercy, and peace;
We pray to the Lord:

For bishops
who seek to guide Catholic politicians in the ways of truth,
that by their example and their words
they might witness the Gospel of Life;
We pray to the Lord:

For all who are very sick,
and especially those afflicted by HIV/AIDS,
that we might care for them
with the compassion and love of Christ;
We pray to the Lord:

For all who work for an end to the culture of death,
and especially for our brothers and sisters
from other churches, ecclesial communions, and religions,
that love for the Gospel of Life might draw us closer in Christ;
We pray to the Lord: