



Diocese of Palm Beach

9995 North Military Trail • P.O. Box 109650
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida 33410-9650

Office of
THE BISHOP

(561) 775-9595 Fax (561) 775-7035

Respect Life Sunday 2018

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord:

Every year, the month of October is used to inaugurate the Respect Life Program of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and is designated as Respect Life Month. Since we are already in the fall season, October reminds us of the seasons of nature which reflect the seasons of life. We are graced with life from the moment of conception in our mother's womb and our lives experience changes and growth until our passing from this world. Life is a gift from God and it is sacred at every moment and stage of its existence.

The theme for this year's Respect Life Program is *Every Life – Cherish, Chosen, Sent*. The theme speaks to us of the inherent dignity and value of every person no matter his or her background, race, sex, abilities, disabilities, merits or failures. Pope Francis has reminded us this year of the fundamental right to life of every person at every stage by his reiterating the teaching of St. John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI that the death penalty is no longer an admissible alternative to the protection of life in modern society. Every life is a reflection of a participation in the very life of the Creator.

We encounter so many signs of a lack of respect for life in our world today from the taking of innocent life through abortion to attempts at terminating the lives of the elderly, sick and infirm under the guise of the enhancement of life. As men and women of faith in God, we recognize the right to life of every human being made in His image and likeness and recommit ourselves to cherishing and protecting that life at every stage.

In a particular way, we also recommit ourselves to do all that we can to prohibit legalized abortion within society and to provide loving alternatives to it which respect both the life of the child and its mother. The legalization of abortion in our nation has put us on a slippery slope which cedes respect for life at every stage. As Pope Francis so poignantly stated this year in his Apostolic Exhortation on holiness, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, "Our defense of the innocent unborn ... needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development."

Let us, during this Respect Life Month of October and in the coming months, continue our efforts to respect life as we realize that every life is cherished, chosen and sent. I am deeply edified by and grateful for all that you do and for all of your prayers in the most important matter of encouraging respect for life.

With every prayerful wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
Bishop of Palm Beach