

**Reflection before March for Life
January 20, 2019**

My dear brothers and sisters, on January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court of our United States made a decision that dehumanized millions of our fellow human beings, allowing for the willful killing of children in the wombs of their mothers. This is the reason we here, and why so many throughout the nation are gathered in the same way. We gather to pray for the respect for all life. Most especially, we pray for an end to the horror of abortion, the lives it takes, and the lives of women and men everywhere that it harms and destroys. As Pope Francis has said strongly, adding to the voices of all of his predecessors: “Every unborn child, though unjustly condemned to be aborted, has the face of the Lord, who even before his birth, and then as soon as he was born, experienced the rejection of the world.” Our purpose here is to counteract such rejection. Life is a gift, and we are here to nurture and sustain this precious gift of life.

My friends, as we begin our procession, I ask you to keep some very important things in mind. Firstly, our Church’s teaching is consistent and urgent. We are here to bear witness to that teaching because we trust in the Lord who built this Church, uniting us in the one Body. The Holy Spirit guides her teaching, and we trust in the Holy Spirit who has sent us forth to proclaim the Gospel of Life. Thanks be to God for the Church Universal and the Church gathered here. May we always keep our eyes and hearts open to the teaching of our Church, even, and especially, when it is challenging. Secondly, we are here following Christ who loved those who rejected

him. Any lack of love for those who support abortion is a rejection of the mission of Christ. We soundly disagree, and we fight to nurture all life, but we must speak the truth in love. We must be honest about how many Christian voices are raised without love or hope. And this brings us to the third point – so important as we begin this pilgrimage. Hope! Hope is the virtue that keeps us walking toward that which is not yet fulfilled. We are walking toward a future full of hope. We are not people who live in a defeated manner. We are Christians, heirs to the life of eternity. We put our hope in the God of the living. My sisters and brothers, life is the victor! Life has won! Life will continue to win. Never grow sour or angry.

I urge you with the words of the Letter to the St. Paul to the Romans: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (15:13). We entrust to the Lord the souls of the little ones we have lost, and we renew our hope and love for all our brothers and sisters in this world. Each of their lives must be nurtured, and we must love those who in their confusion, fear, or error seek to destroy life. May we not add to that destruction with anger or hopelessness. We are people of hope; we are people of life.

May the God of life be with us today as we make our pilgrim way and walk united in prayer, nurturing and sustaining life everywhere. May we carry in our hearts those who have lost their lives to abortion. May we carry in our hearts the lives of mothers and fathers who have been damaged and destroyed by this horrible act. And may we walk in hope and faith as we bear witness to the victory of life.