

**Respect Life Mass
January 21, 2018**

From the beginning of the Church, Jesus has been sending out his people. He makes us “fishers of men.” This is who we are, the missionary disciples of Jesus, sent out to bring people back to God – to bring them to the fulness of life. This is message we receive from the scriptures today as we celebrate the fundamental dignity of life.

Our mission is one of calling people to repentance, just as Jesus did at the start of his ministry. It is the same mission Jonah had in Nineveh. It is the light of God that leads us to life, and the Lord has sent us to help others see that light and turn away from darkness. On this day, we know well the darkness that exists in this world.

Hundreds of thousands of innocent children are destroyed by abortion in this country alone every year. These voices have been lost and continue to be lost to this horrible perversion of human freedom. It pits mothers and fathers against their own children and ends the lives of fellow human beings. We know how there are still children who have been born into this world, and adults as well, who are starving, freezing, and thirsty. This is a scandal, especially in a nation with so many resources and opportunities. We know that people who seek to migrate to support their struggling families are met with denial and hatred – even by those who should be following God’s command to welcome the stranger. We see the elderly and sick being forgotten and discarded, and in some cases even killed in acts of euthanasia.

The darkness is real, sisters and brothers, but we remember the truth and are not afraid. The light conquers the darkness, and the

Lord has won the victory. We are people of the Good News, we are people of the light. We will not stop on our mission to share that light with the world. Where the light is, the darkness cannot be. Today we stand for the dignity of all life, from conception to natural death. Those lives are the lives of wonderful people, fellow humans and children of God. We stand for those whose voices are not heard, and those whose voices have been lost. We have been sent for this purpose. As Pope Francis exhorts us: “Go forth and reach out to all people at the margins of society! Go there and be the Church, with the strength of the Holy Spirit” (23 Jun 2017).

But something else needs to be said today, my friends. There is so much division and anger among us Christians. We cannot forget that this call to conversion is our call as well. We do not preach repentance as something just for others. No, each of us is called to repentance and conversion every day. When we share the light, are we loving those in darkness? This is a fundamental question. We cannot share the light if we are not living it. The first commandment we have received is to love God and to love our neighbor – every neighbor. We preach repentance because we love our neighbor, not because we want to win an argument or pat ourselves on the back for our own holiness. If we cannot show compassion, care, and kindness to our neighbor, while at the same time clearly and faithfully calling them to conversion, we are not disciples of Christ. Are not acting as Christians when we break the first commandment. This cannot be the way for us missionary disciples of Christ.

We must be faithful to the light of life. This is clear. Watering down the message of the gospel because of discomfort, political

maneuvering, or out of selfishness is unfaithful to the lord. But part of that message is that we love unconditionally in the truth. We are not here to win arguments or score points for a team. We are here to reach out in love to those being called to conversion, just like we are. “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” May we defend and respect the dignity of each and every human life without compromise. And through the witness of our love and hope as children of the light, may we call all people to join us.

Mother Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, mother of all the living, pray for us and help us to follow your divine Son, the author of life.