

**3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time
Mass for the Legal Protection of the Unborn
January 22, 2017**

“I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.” These powerful words of St. Paul to the Corinthian community are still as challenging to us today in our own communities of faith. We in this country, this state, and even this world, are fractured and divided. Even among us Christians we are divided and bickering. To be honest, I think St. Paul would have even stronger words for us these days.

This does not mean I am pessimistic, but it is my work as your archbishop to challenge you like St. Paul did. Christians are called to unity in the truth – the truth who is Jesus Christ. His Gospel is what guides us; we must reject all other guides. All other false guides can only lead us to further division. Only the Gospel of Christ brings us to wholeness and unity. As Isaiah prophesied: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.” The Gospel is the Gospel of Life! We celebrate that Gospel today in this Mass in which we pray and call out for the legal protection of the unborn.

It seems crazy that such a basic, fundamental right would cause so much division in our society – and, even more scandalously, in our Church. But this is where we find ourselves. When Chloe and her community called for unity in the Church of Corinth, the divisions were around who they all followed: “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos.” But today, you might hear these words: “I am Pro-Life,” or “I am Pro-Social Justice.” These divisions among Christians are just as ridiculous as the

divisions in Chloe's community nearly 2000 years ago. Is God only a God of life in the womb, or is God only a God of justice and charity to the born? No, God is not limited by our human-drawn lines, so why are we if we follow him? There is no division between these causes. We are Christian, and we love all people and stand in defense of all people. There are so many who want to sow dissension among Christians, why would we help them do this?

The challenge of unity calls us to be honest with ourselves. Are we truly ready to defend the most vulnerable in our society? We must stand in defense of our unborn sisters and brothers. There are millions of them losing their lives to abortion each year in our world. Millions of humans dying, because we cannot promote a better way together. Furthermore, standing for the unborn does not mean we stop standing for the poor, the immigrant, the single mother who feels scared and alone, the woman who has had an abortion or the men affected by this affront to life and sanctity. This is not our way either. Standing for one does not stop us from the standing for the other. Anyone who says otherwise is not being guided by the Gospel. The time has come, my dear brothers and sisters to stop letting human institutions dictate how we stand for our fellow humans. Those institutions are not our guides. Only the Gospel guides us to unity. As our pastor, Pope Francis, urged us in one of his general audiences: "Spreading the Gospel means that we are the first to proclaim and live the reconciliation, forgiveness, peace, unity and love which the Holy Spirit gives us" (22 May 2013).

Let the Holy Spirit guide your hearts, my friends. May the Gospel guide you to love your fellow Christians. May the Gospel guide you to challenge the human institutions and groups you may belong to so that they can see a better way; a way that is not one of useless conflict

between imperfect ideologies that only lead to selfishness or individualism. The solidarity of the Gospel of Life can bring light to the world. The Lord called simple fishermen out of their old life and built a Universal Church on the ways of God. The Holy Spirit called a woman Chloe and her community to work for unity in the truth, and left a legacy that will last to eternity, calling all of God's children to wholeness. May we follow their example, call upon the Holy Spirit, and be honest before our Lord, "that there be no divisions among [us], but that [we may] be united in the same mind and in the same purpose" (1 Cor). May we be disciples in all the communities of this world, and defend life from the first moment of conception, throughout life, to natural death. May we do this together, despite our diversity, as one Body of Christ. Come Holy Spirit, be our guide to unity in the truth.