

**On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1973, the Supreme Court legalized abortion throughout the United States.**

**Since then, millions of children have lost their lives and millions of women and families have been wounded by the tragedy of abortion; in fact, our entire nation has been affected by it, not only because of the injustice, the suffering and the division it has caused, but because the way on which it has undermined our ability to recognize the inviolable sacredness of each human life.**

**In the words of Pope Francis, “how can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties? ‘If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away’” (*Laudato Si'*, n. 120).**

**We are here today to commemorate such an unfortunate anniversary, reflect on the sanctity of human life, and pray together for the respect and protection of the most vulnerable among us, starting with the unborn.**

**Just a few weeks ago we found ourselves fascinated with the miracle of the Incarnation of the Son of God. We approached the manager with our friends and family to contemplate the beauty of a God who had decided to become one of us.**

**With his words and actions, Jesus Christ not only redeemed humankind but showed us in an unmistakable way just how much the life of each person matters to Him.**

**With Jesus, Pope Saint John Paul II used to say, the positive requirements of the commandment "You shall not kill" were revealed to us "in all their breadth and depth: they range from caring for the life of one's brother (whether a blood brother, someone belonging to the same people, or a foreigner (...)) to showing concern for the stranger, even to the point of loving one's enemy." (Saint Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 41).**

**As a consequence of our encounter with Christ, we now discover ourselves entrusted with the sacred duty of protecting and promoting the lives of those he has saved at the price of the Cross.**

**This is why we are all called to constantly pray for, support and actively participate in the multiple ministries and initiatives that are required to provide assistance and hope to those among us whose life and dignity are under threat.**

**By answering this call, we provide others with concrete evidence that God has not abandoned them; that He is actively present in their lives; and that they are not alone. What better use of our time, talents, and resources can we possibly imagine?**

On his *Gospel of Life*, whose 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary we will be commemorating on March 25<sup>th</sup>, Saint Pope John Paul II explained that: “the God of the Covenant has entrusted the life of every individual to his or her fellow human beings, brothers and sisters, according to the law of reciprocity in giving and receiving (...) In the fullness of time, by taking flesh and giving his life for us, the Son of God showed what heights and depths this law of reciprocity can reach (...) This new law also gives spirit and shape to the commandment "You shall not kill". For the Christian it involves an absolute imperative to respect, love and promote the life of every brother and sister, in accordance with the requirements of God's bountiful love in Jesus Christ. "He laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (...) It is therefore a service of love which we are all committed to ensure to our neighbour, that his or her life may be always defended and promoted, especially when it is weak or threatened." (*Evangelium Vitae*, nn. 76-77).

As 2020 begins, we commit ourselves to undertake once again this a beautiful mission in a year loaded with significant social and political developments, starting with the the troublesome events that we are now witnessing in the Middle East; **news that have just been released in connection with the treatment of refugees in the State of Texas; a case over which the Supreme Court will be ruling this year which could derive in the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*; and the election that will be held in November after the prolonged political campaigns and impeachmen process that are now under way.**

**With so many things going on at the same time, with so many important tasks to be accomplished; with so many threats to human life developing simultaneously, we can easily forget that in order to face it all without losing our hope or joy, we must first approach the Lord in prayer to ask him for our continuous transformation into instruments of His love; to pray for those whose lives are in danger, as well as for those who fail to recognize the value of every human being.**

**That is precisely what we will be doing in a few minutes as we walk down the streets of our city, raising our voices to heaven as we ask through the intercession of the Mother of God for the grace of becoming good instruments of God's peace on earth.**

**As we close this brief reflection before moving out to the street to begin our procession, "we confidently ask God that the Day for Life we are about to celebrate brings a breath of fresh air, allows everyone to reflect and commit generously, starting with our families and those who work in the service of life. May each of us be given the joy of witness, in fraternal communion" (Pope Francis, *Remarks to Italy's Pro-Life Movement*, February 2, 2019).**

**Amen.**