

## **Easter 3: Thursday**

### **Pro-Life Mass before the March for Life**

St. Patrick's Church, Victoria

9 May 2019

Dear brother priests and deacons, young people from our Catholic schools in British Columbia, and dear brothers and sisters in the Risen Christ:

#### ***Introduction***

What a blessing that the good Lord has gathered us here to pray that the annual March for Life will renew our own commitment to the cause for life and encourage others to embrace the dignity of every human life from conception to its natural end. But ours is also a prayer one of thanksgiving: that God cares for us from the first moment of our existence until he calls us to the fullness of life with him in Heaven.

We are also praying for ourselves: that we will have the courage to stand up for life. Dear young people: you are exceptionally important in renewing our hope that the struggles of the last 50 years have not been in vain. Thank you for your willingness to swim against the tide by defending justice for the unborn, the weak and the dying. Your courage is an inspiration to us. It is a great blessing for you – and certainly for me and everyone else who shares these convictions – to see your courage in action: that your Confirmation has made a difference in your life, that this gift of the Holy Spirit given to you in this Sacrament is bearing such fruit! You give us a reason for hope that the pro-life cause

continues to go forward with enthusiasm.

Today's readings from Mass shed light on how and why it is vital for the good of all people – not just the unborn and those facing death – that we be truth-tellers about human dignity.

***Acts of the Apostles: Learn the Truth about Life***

The Acts of the Apostles tell us of the early days of the Church after Pentecost. After the Apostles assembled in the upper room were “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (cf. Acts 2:4), they began preaching the Good News of Jesus's Death and Resurrection for the salvation of sinners.

The Apostles were fully aware that it was precisely the Holy Spirit who was at work in what they were able to accomplish. It was he who guided them and strengthened them to bear witness to Christ crucified and risen. It was he who indicated to them how to approach the people, and it was he who, by means of them, brought converts to the living God.

In today's reading, Philip, a new deacon, went to Gaza (now so much in the news) and, prompted by the Holy Spirit, he joined an official of the queen of Ethiopia who was passing along the road seated in his chariot. Philip asked the Ethiopian, “Do you understand what you are reading?” (Acts 8:30). The official answered him: “How can I, unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:31).

This is the question, even if not expressed out loud, that many people are asking about life. “When does it begin, and when does it end? Who has the right to determine life and death?” And many others besides.

Dear friends: the Lord places us, as those who have been baptized, in the same shoes as Philip. We have to be able to explain simply, clearly and accurately *why* we believe justice and truth demand that we treat every human life, from the moment of their conception as a human person, as sacred, as enjoying a right to life which no government and no individual can contradict.

What does this mean for you? I believe it means that you yourselves have to learn the reasons why we defend life and how to communicate them to others, who often don’t agree with you, in a clear way. The Holy Spirit has been given to you to speak convincingly and prudently, and never with stridency or defensiveness. In your discussions, first always try to find why the person believes what they hold, and build on that to bring them to a fuller knowledge of the truth. Always be confident, for who has a greater grasp of the truth of human life than Jesus Christ?

### ***The Gospel: Why Life is Sacred***

In today’s Gospel, Jesus pronounces himself “the living bread that came down from heaven and the bread that I will give for the life of the

world is my flesh.” (Jn 6:51).

The Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, tells us why the body is sacred. Many of our contemporaries do not think that the body, the human body of flesh and bones, is all that significant.

What is important, they say, is the “divine spark” in us. This divine spark, they affirm, is the “real me.” The body was merely an instrument, a tool of the spirit. This means, of course, that we can do what we want with our body. You can see why this way of thinking enables one to embrace abortion and euthanasia.

But we believe something very different. Through his Incarnation, the Son of God assumed a human body and becoming fully human without losing his divinity – true God and true man! Because of this, Christians are convinced that the body has an eternal significance. It has a dignity, even in its beginning stages or when in decline and frail.

This conviction – that the body is supremely important and not just some baggage that the spirit has to carry around – is why we revere human life as sacred at every stage, even in the womb.

### ***Conclusion***

The deepest reason for a person of faith to be pro-life – though there are, it is true, other reasons as well, which might appeal more to those who do not yet believe – is anchored in the Incarnation. Through his becoming flesh the Son of God expressed himself, poured himself

out in death for us. In the Eucharist, Jesus continues to hand himself over to us bodily: “this is my body, which is given for you” (Lk 22:19).

This gift of his will now become present for us, and we will receive his Body in Holy Communion. Let us pray that the Lord will strengthen our conviction that life – all life – is sacred and a wonder in God’s sight.

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