

From Pontiff to Pew (continued)

of human history is touched by the light of Easter. And if Christ was able to descend all the way down there, nothing can be excluded from his redemption. Not even our nights, not even our oldest faults, not even our broken bonds. There is no past so ruined, no history so compromised that it cannot be touched by mercy. To descend, for God, is not a defeat, but the fulfillment of his love. It is not a failure, but the way by which he shows that no place is too far away, no heart is too closed, no tomb too tightly sealed for his love. This consoles us, this sustains us. And if at times we seem to have hit rock bottom, let us remember: that is the place from which God is able to begin a new creation. A creation made of people lifted up, hearts forgiven, tears dried. Holy Saturday is the silent embrace with which Christ presents all creation to the Father to restore it to his plan of salvation.

From the Pastor's Desk

It feels as if it has been a long time since I have addressed you, my dear friends, in this regular section of the bulletin. This week I find myself filled with topics for reflection. Since October is coming fast upon us, and October is the month that that USCCB dedicates to respect life activities I would like to begin by paraphrasing the official letter of Most Reverend Daniel E. Thomas, Bishop of Toledo, Chairman, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities. With great joy we celebrate October as Respect Life Month amid the Church's Jubilee Year of Hope. This Jubilee Year "offers us the opportunity to appreciate anew, and with immense gratitude, the gift of the new life that we have received in Baptism, a life capable of transfiguring death's drama." (Pope Francis). The paschal mystery of Christ is the foundation of our hope. Through Christ, our sins are forgiven, and eternal life overcomes the harshness of death. We are reminded daily; however, of how desperately our world is thirsting for the hope that only God can provide. Every day we witness the overwhelming disregard for human life: through rising rates of abortion and assisted suicide; the killing of innocent school children, even at prayer; the mistreatment of immigrants as they endure an environment of aggression; and political and ideological violence inflicted against unsuspecting victims. These attacks threaten life precisely when it is most vulnerable and in need of protection. Despite these realities, the gift of human life exists as a sign of hope to our world today, defying the devil and the culture of death. It is of the utmost importance that we work to ensure that every life, in every stage and circumstance, is protected in law.

As we begin Respect Life Month, together we embrace the words of Pope Leo XIV, "How important it is that each and every baptized person feel himself or herself called by God to be a sign of hope in the world today. "Each of us is called to be a witness to the Gospel of

Life, proclaiming in word and deed the innate goodness and dignity of every human person. I affirm this statement of the USCCB on the importance of being part of a culture of life. Just being against abortion is not enough. Opposing Capital Punishment is not enough. Lobbying against the right to physician-assisted suicide is not enough. With the totality of our being we must embrace the culture of life that Christ called for by his words and by his actions, which was so very evident in his miracles of healings and raising the dead to life, but most importantly in his action of giving his life in love for us on the Cross! We must embrace life for it is the first and greatest gift that we are given by God at the moment of our creation. Please take some time this October to respect life – through prayer and action. It is part of the Universal Call to Holiness.

*Respecting life also calls to mind for me the need for us to work collectively to end political violence – a topic that has loomed over the American people for far too long. Any tension that exists between persons of differing political opinions that is not healthy is a direct affront to Christ. Christ prayed that we all might be one. In John 17, Jesus prays for unity among His followers, emphasizing that believers should be one just as He and the Father are one. Key verses include John 17:22-26, where Jesus expresses His desire for His followers to experience perfect unity, reflecting the love and glory shared between Him and the Father. This prayer serves as a profound reminder of the call to unity within the Christian community, and even farther than that...within the human community. Will we never come to understand that disunity that fosters violence is vicious circle? Violence begets more violence. It is as simple as that. I know that much attention was brought to the cruel and ugly murder of Charlie Kirk. It was a tragedy...not so much as for what Charlie Kirk personally believed politically, but because he was persecuted for engaging others in free and open political dialogue. **THAT WAS EVIL, PURE UNADULTERED EVIL.** The **only** good that came from it was the model of Christian life and belief that was incarnated in Erika Kirk. With her heart broken and her life virtually turned upside down, **she forgave her husband's killer. That is more than admirable. That is the stuff of saints.** Christ said: love your enemies and pray for your persecutors – **AND THAT IS WHAT SHE DID.** I pray that we might all have the grace to have a saintly disposition like hers. And while we may not all be perfect, no one should be proud of their hatred of enemies, regardless of the other good they may or may not achieve in life. Respect life – it is a challenge, but if we want to say that we are Catholic Christians – we need to live by the Gospel mandate to love others: born and unborn, friend and enemy, rich and poor, citizen and immigrant, male or female, liberal or conservative. All are made in the image and likeness of God – we need to start acting like it. If we do not, we risk so many things but ultimately, we risk our humanity!*