

**Homily for the Curia Respect Life Mass**

**The Catholic Pastoral Center  
Springfield, Illinois**

**October 11, 2017**

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Reverend Fathers and members of the Curia of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, it is good that we are here to celebrate this Annual Curia Respect Life Mass, to be witnesses of the dignity of all human life and to implore the assistance of God in bringing about the conversion of hearts for all of those responsible in any way for promoting a culture of death.

Today the Church celebrates the feast of Pope St. John XXIII, who was canonized together with Pope St. John Paul II on April 27, 2014 and whose Mass of canonization I concelebrated with Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square. Today was chosen as the feast day of Pope St. John XXIII because he is the Pope who convoked the Second Vatican Council and today, marks the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first session of the Second Vatican Council.

As we observe Respect Life Month during this month of October and celebrate this Respect Life Mass here today, it is good to recall that the

Second Vatican Council unequivocally condemned abortion in these words from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: “[F]rom the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes.”<sup>1</sup>

The month of October is also a special time for honoring our Blessed Mother as Queen of the Rosary. Can you imagine how different things would be if our Blessed Mother had not cooperated in God’s plan of salvation? What would have happened if Mary had rejected our Lord’s call for her to be the mother of Jesus? While neither of these scenarios is true, they should cause us to pause and reflect upon our Blessed Mother’s acceptance of her role to be the mother of Christ. In the time in which Mary lived it would have been almost unheard of for a young unmarried woman to be pregnant and if such a woman would be pregnant, it would carry serious social ramifications. However, as we know, our Blessed Mother, the first and model disciple of Christ, despite what society might think, heard the call of our Lord and opened herself to the working of the Lord in her life to become the mother of Our Savior.

In our Gospel today, we hear John’s recounting of a story that should be familiar to all of us, which gives us the opportunity to dig deeper and

look at what our Lord was saying. *When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"*<sup>2</sup> Have you ever wondered what the "these" is that Jesus is referring to? Perhaps he was asking Peter if he loved Him more than the other disciples loved Him, or perhaps it was less theoretical, perhaps Jesus swept his hand round the boat and its nets and equipment and the catch from the day, and said to Peter: Simon, do you love me more than these things? Perhaps Jesus was asking Peter if he was prepared to give them all up; to abandon the worldly allure of a successful career, a steady job, or even reasonable comforts, in order to give himself forever to Christ's people and to the work of building up the kingdom of God on Earth.

This should be a familiar question to all of us as Christ's disciples, we must ask ourselves if we are willing to give up what the world offers to follow the will of God in our lives. Our Blessed Mother, the first and model disciple of her Son, certainly had to ask herself this question. Was she willing to be rejected, to give up how she had envisioned her life and have her heart broken as she watched her beloved Son embrace his passion and death on the Cross. Obviously, Mary had the faith to recognize the will of

God for her life and by embracing that will participated in the work of salvation that God called her to.

As a matter of fact, at the conclusion of *Evangelium Vitae*, our late Holy Father, Pope Saint John Paul the Great directs our attention in our fighting for life to our Blessed Mother, for she is the true model disciple whom we can look to for direction on how we might live as Christ's disciples in our daily lives and how we should go about building up a culture of life in the midst of the world.

So, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, may we always strive to model our lives after that of our Blessed Mother. And in doing so may we not only receive the word of God, but nurture it by our faith so that we can proclaim the Gospel through our living as Christ's disciples. So we pray:

O Mary,  
bright dawn of the new world,  
Mother of the living,  
to you do we entrust the cause of life  
Look down, O Mother,  
upon the vast numbers  
of babies not allowed to be born,  
of the poor whose lives are made difficult,  
of men and women  
who are victims of brutal violence,  
of the elderly and the sick killed  
by indifference or out of misguided mercy.

Grant that all who believe in your Son  
may proclaim the Gospel of life  
with honesty and love  
to the people of our time.

Obtain for them the grace  
to accept that Gospel  
as a gift ever new,  
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude  
throughout their lives  
and the courage to bear witness to it  
resolutely, in order to build,  
together with all people of good will,  
the civilization of truth and love,

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 51

<sup>2</sup> John 21: 15