

Homily for the Diocesan Respect Life Mass and Rosary Walk

October 7, 2023

**Holy Family Parish
Granite City, Illinois**

**†Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers and deacons, consecrated religious, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good that we are here at Holy Family Parish to celebrate this Annual Diocesan Respect Life Mass, after which we will peacefully and prayerfully walk while praying the Rosary to the local abortion clinic here in Granite City. Those who are not able to participate in the Rosary Walk will be invited to stay after Mass for Eucharistic adoration here in church, where we will all have Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament when we return from the Rosary walk. Our objective today is to give witness to the dignity of all human life and to implore the assistance of God in bringing about the conversion of hearts of all those who in any way are complicit in promoting a culture of death.

We have this Annual Diocesan Respect Life Mass and Rosary Walk every year around this time because the month of October is designated Respect Life Month by the Catholic Bishops of the United States. This year's

focus is on radical solidarity with women who are pregnant or raising children in difficult circumstances.

As Christians, we are called to what Pope St. John Paul II called “radical solidarity”¹ with women who are pregnant or parenting in difficult circumstances – and with their children, born or preborn. Solidarity is the way in which we put our love for others into action. As disciples of Jesus Christ and stewards of God’s creation, we are called to make a sacrificial gift of ourselves for the sake of our neighbor. Radical solidarity compels us to be at the side of vulnerable mothers in profound friendship, compassion, and support for both them and their preborn children. It requires us to address the fundamental challenges that lead an expectant mother to believe she is unable to welcome the child God has entrusted to her.

In reaction to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the *Dobbs* decision last year, some areas of the country now protect the child in the womb, while others – like our own state right here in Illinois – are doing all they can to increase access to abortion. At this critical moment, we have been entrusted with new opportunities and new responsibilities to build a civilization of authentic love. We must do all we can to help mothers and their children flourish.

This cannot be accomplished by laws or policy alone, but requires the continual transformation of our own hearts, so that we may recognize in every person the face of Christ and place the needs of others before our own. We pray that we may be of one mind and one heart as we respond to the needs of mothers and their children.

God has given each of us particular gifts, and with those gifts he entrusts us with a role and duty within the Body of Christ. Embracing an attitude of radical solidarity calls us to honestly reflect on some challenging questions and to consider specific actions we can take to foster an authentic culture of life.

Today's first reading is from the Prophet Baruch. In a section prior to the one heard today, he refers to wisdom and the law as a lady. "She is the book of the precepts of God, the law that endures forever. . . . Turn, O Jacob, and receive her. Walk by her light of splendor. Blessed are we, O Israel!" (4:1-4). In *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Second Vatican Council referred to the Blessed Virgin Mary in similar ways: "In her sincere obedience to the law and her wholehearted acceptance of God's will, she is exalted among the humble and poor of the earth" – apropos to recall on today's Marian feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Baruch means “the blessed one” or “the one who has been blessed.” Indeed, “blessed among women” is she on this feast celebrating her rosary. Centuries before the Word became flesh, Baruch anticipated the Incarnation of Our Savior brought about through Blessed Mary’s cooperation. Baruch wrote, “He appeared on the earth and lived among us” (3:37).

The rosary celebrates our Blessed Lady, the Queen of Prophets, in her vital role in salvation history. Let us keep this in mind as we pray the Rosary during our Rosary Walk to the abortion facility here in Granite City, to honor her who is blessed among women and the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus.

The Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary was inaugurated in 1571 by Pope Pius V to commemorate the naval victory at Lepanto after he asked the faithful of Europe to pray for success. Their prayers were answered, as the Ottoman fleet was defeated, stopping their planned invasion of Europe.

In this Respect Life Mass, then, let us pray for that the culture of death may be stopped from spreading through our country so that we may all live the Gospel of life.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 207.