

No Time for Complacency

The Catholic Review

“A great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world.” These words of the late Pope John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical, *Gospel of Life*, are a call to action and a rallying cry for change—the kind of change that comes through the most powerful of all actions, prayer.

These words are still relevant today. We live in a world that continues to be threatened by a culture of death that has left it desperate for hope and desperate for the love that breeds respect for all human beings, most especially the unborn. One can't help but ask where the daily outrage is and whether our society has become de-sensitized to the heinousness of the state-sanctioned killing that has become the rule of law in this country for an entire generation's lifetime.

Here in Maryland, might it be the fact that since our state has the fourth highest abortion rate per capita in the United States (behind the District of Columbia, New York and New Jersey) that we could all become complacent about the taking of life on such a massive scale? A troubling side-note: Maryland stands to move closer to the top of the list as all three jurisdictions ahead of The Free State in abortions per-capita have seen decreases in their abortion rates since 2000; Maryland's abortion rate increased by 8 percent over that same time period.

Why is it that with so many Catholics as members of the dominant political party in our state—a political party that has traditionally upheld the rights of the poor, the immigrant and the marginalized, but a party consistently and solidly pro-abortion—that politics lacks conscience when life in the womb is commonly treated as refuse?

How can we not become complacent?

Should we not continue to pray for those elected officials who, regardless of the political cost, summon the courage to promote pro-life policies, and to pray that many more will join their number, especially when polls continue to show a majority

of Americans consider themselves pro-life.

What prevents us from committing ourselves to being a part of the urgently needed “great prayer for life” the late Holy Father championed, especially during the upcoming 40 Days for Life campaign, September 23rd to November 1st. Throughout this 40-day nationwide campaign, thousands of people will unite in prayer and fasting to promote a culture of life. Will you join us? Pray the Rosary or the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Attend Mass more regularly. Pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Just as the loaves and fishes were multiplied, our efforts to change hearts and save the unborn are multiplied exponentially by prayer.

Just as Christ came into the world to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37), “the duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as witnesses of the Gospel . . . Witness is an act of justice” (Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 2472). The truth of abortion is that it takes the life of the most defenseless and vulnerable human beings and gravely harms their parents. We are called to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. To do so is an act of love, an act of solidarity, and an act of service. In the words of St. Francis of Assisi, “preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”

Pregnant women in crisis need our prayerful support, as we seek to witness publicly to the sanctity of human life and the redemptive love of Jesus Christ, to soften the hearts of abortion clinic staff, to bring Christ’s love to a place of great suffering and evil. We pray in reparation for the injustice of abortion and for men and women who carry the pain of a past abortion.

There is much we can do to support life by helping women facing crisis pregnancies. They need our material and emotional support to help assure them that choosing to bring their baby into the world is not a choice they have to face alone. Many of our parishes work closely with the Gabriel Network and pregnancy resource centers to support women both during their pregnancies, and after their babies are born. Watch the video *Compassion Revealed*, available on the website of the Maryland Catholic Conference at www.mdcathcon.org, to learn more about how you can support the good work of these life-giving centers.

To pledge an hour of prayer during the 40 Days campaign, please contact your

parish Respect Life Coordinator or life@archbalt.org. To learn more about the 40 Days for Life campaign, please visit www.archbalt.org/respect-life/abortion-clinic-prayer-vigils.cfm. The Respect Life Office is offering a Day of Reflection, "Food for the Journey," Thursday September 24th at the Shrine of St. Anthony in Ellicott City to begin this prayer campaign. For more information or to RSVP, please contact life@archbalt.org.