

Work together to promote, defend life, pope says on Mother's Day

By Carol Glatz

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY - People must work together to protect life, Pope Francis said on Mother's Day, the day Italy celebrates its annual March For Life.

After praying the "Regina Coeli" at noon May 10 with people gathered in St. Peter's Square, the pope greeted all those who took part in the pro-life initiative that morning, saying "it is important to work together to defend and promote life."

He also expressed his gratitude and affection for all of the world's mothers and asked the thousands of people in the square to give a round of applause, a form of "embrace," for "all of our dear mothers: those who live with us physically, but also those who are with us spiritually."

Several thousand people participated in the March for Life in Rome, including U.S. Cardinal Raymond L. Burke, patron of the Knights of Malta.

He told Vatican Radio May 10 that "St John Paul II urged us, in his wonderful encyclical letter on the Gospel of Life, to make public manifestations to demonstrate the incomparable beauty, the inviolability of innocent, defenseless human life."

He said the march was an important sign of people's dedication to restoring "respect for all human life, from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death."

Australian Cardinal George Pell, prefect of the Vatican's Secretariat for the Economy, spoke the day before the march at a pro-life, pro-family conference organized by Voice of the Family - a network of Catholic lay organizations worldwide formed to offer input on the extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family last year and on the synod gathering scheduled for Oct. 4-25 at the Vatican.

In his keynote address, Cardinal Pell said the gathering of the world's bishops in the fall would not result in any change to church teaching about the family and marriage, and instead would "massively endorse the tradition" of the church.

"I don't anticipate any deviation from (church teaching) at all," he told the gathering.

Cardinal Pell told Vatican Radio May 10 that the church must respond to the challenges facing the family by practicing what it preaches.

"We (must) explain the importance of faith. Often we can be very, very understated about the importance of faith, prayer, conversion," Cardinal Pell said.

"The secrets for religious prosperity lie in the Gospels and in the Catholic tradition. We've just got to go to them. And adapting more and more to the society - they'll all

say that's good, but they won't join, and it will put us out of business if we do it long enough," he said.

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