



Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194

202-541-3070 • FAX 202-541-3054 • EMAIL PROLIFE@USCCB.ORG • WEB WWW.USCCB.ORG/PROLIFE

“Be Not Afraid” Respect Life Month, October 2017

My dear friends in Christ:

Once again, we mark the month of October as Respect Life Month. Looking back over the last year, there’s been a lot of uncertainty, suffering, and heartache. Between tragedies that occur in the public eye and trials that take place in our personal lives, there’s no shortage of reasons we cry out to God.

At such times, we may feel alone and unequipped to handle the circumstances. But we have an anchor of hope to cling to. With words that echo through thousands of years into the corners of our hearts, God says to us, “Do not fear: I am with you” (Isaiah 41:10).

The 2017-2018 Respect Life theme, “Be Not Afraid,” reminds us of this promise.

God isn’t a detached, distant observer to our pain; the Eternal Son became man and Himself experienced immense suffering—for you and for me. His wounds indicate the very essence of our identity and worth: we are loved by God.

There are times we may doubt the value of our own lives or falter at the thought of welcoming and embracing the life of another. But reflecting on the healed wounds of the Risen Christ, we can see that even our most difficult trials can be the place where God manifests his victory. He makes all things beautiful. He makes all things new. He is the God of redemption.

That’s powerful. That’s something to hold onto.

And, He is *always* with us. Jesus promised this when he gave the disciples the same mission he gives to each of us: Go.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we know that our identity and our mission are two sides of the same coin; like the apostles, we are called to be missionary disciples. We are not only invited to follow and take refuge in God, our stronghold, but we are also commissioned to reach out to one another, especially to the weak and vulnerable.

Building a culture of life isn’t something we just do one month of the year, or with one event or initiative—it’s essential to who we are. It happens through our daily actions, how we treat one another, and how we live our lives.

How do we respond when our aging parents are in failing health? Do they know how much we love them and cherish each day given? Do we ensure they know they are *never* a burden to us? In our own challenging times, do we ask for support? When others offer a helping hand, do we receive it? When our friend becomes pregnant in difficult circumstances, do we show compassion that tangibly supports her and helps her welcome the life of her new little one?

Sometimes, we may not be sure exactly what to do, but let's not allow the fear of doing the wrong thing or saying the wrong thing keep us from living out our missionary call. We don't need to have everything figured out all at once. Let's remember the guidance of Our Blessed Mother, the first disciple: "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5).

Also, I encourage you to visit www.usccb.org/respectlife to see the U.S. bishops' new Respect Life materials centered on the theme "Be Not Afraid." There are articles, bulletin inserts, prayers, action ideas, and more!

This Respect Life Month and always, let's walk with each other; let's help each other embrace God's gift of human life. Whatever storms or trials we face, we are not alone. He is with us: "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Sincerely yours in Christ,

- + Tim. Card. Dolan

Timothy Cardinal Dolan
Chairman
USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities
October 2017