

MARCH FOR LIFE – CHARLOTTE 2022

(Friday, January 14, 2022)

A Reflection by Fr Ernest Nebangongnjoh (Guest Preacher)

We begin by giving thanks to God for His goodness and unfailing love. It is by His grace that we are gathered here today for this public witness to the Gospel of Life.

We just ended with the Christmas Season, and during it we reflected on the Mystery of the Incarnation, the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to come to this world to accomplish our salvation in it. While remaining God, He became truly man, like us in all things, but sin. (Cf. Hebrews 4:15). So, in creating man in His own image and likeness, and then becoming a human person Himself, God by these facts showed us that the human person has an intrinsic dignity and that human life is sacred.

How did God make His appearance in the world? We know that God is all powerful. With Him nothing is impossible. So it was very possible for His Son to tear heaven open and just jump down in the streets of Nazareth as a full grown man, and announce: ‘I am Jesus. I have come down from heaven to save the world.’ He did not do that. Instead, He was conceived in the womb of a woman. He stayed inside the womb and went through all the stages that a fetus goes through and after nine months, He emerged from the womb as a bouncing baby boy. From this, it becomes very clear that human life unfolds in continuous stages of development, and at every stage, it has an inherent dignity and sacredness.

In relation to the sacredness of human life, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstances claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.” (CCC 2258) It goes on to say that “ From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as

having the rights of a person –among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.”

“These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin.”

“The moment a positive law deprives a category of human beings of the protection which civil legislation ought to accord them, the state is denying the equality of all before the law. When the state does not place its power at the service of the rights of each citizen, and in particular of the more vulnerable, the very foundations of the state based on law are undermined.” (CCC 2270, 2273)

Our gathering here has been occasioned by the fact that despite God’s injunction that no one should spill innocent human blood, and that every human life should be accorded the highest respect, we, mere humans who cannot afford to create as much as even one tiny living cell, have arrogated upon ourselves the right to take away human life, and with no sense of shame, we have not kept it at the private level, that is, as something we do in hiding, we have gone to the extent of making it legal, and using money that we contribute as taxes to instead fund organizations and institutions that mastermind the destruction of innocent human lives. We even try to justify our actions using various arguments, most of which collapse under the weight of their own logical inconsistencies.

We have gathered here today to say that this not correct. It is wrong. So it should stop. It is said that all it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to sit quiet and do nothing. We have come out today to publicly denounce such practices, following the instructions of St. Paul who urges us to preach the message, to insist upon proclaiming it whether it is welcome or unwelcomed... “The time will come when people will not listen to sound doctrine, but will follow their own desires and will collect for themselves more and more teachers who will tell them what they are itching to hear. They will turn away from listening to the truth and give their attention to legends.” (2Tim 4:1-5)

So, we have gathered here to address a message first to our legislators and policy makers who have approved legislations stating that there is nothing wrong in taking away the lives of innocent human beings. We are asking them this question: God who is the author of life says we should not kill. They who cannot create life say there is nothing wrong in killing. Between them and God, who deserves to be listened to?

Secondly, we are addressing our message to our beautiful daughters, sisters and mothers to whom God entrusted the noble responsibility of being the custodians of human life at its very tender stage. We are telling you that in saying that direct abortion is evil and so should be made illegal, we do not in any way intend to take away your rights to make personal decisions. We love you and respect you. We are only telling you that, if in the course of carrying out your noble responsibility of carrying a child in your womb and you find yourselves in a difficult and challenging situation, do not listen to those who tell you that the only option you have to deal with the situation is to spill the blood of your beautiful and innocent babies. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Pro-life Movement is committed to work with you to look for a better solution, one that will preserve both your life and that of your baby.

Thirdly, we are addressing ourselves and all people of good will. Yes, human life is sacred and the intentional killing of an innocent child is a grave evil, an evil that no reason or circumstance can ever justify. But if we are sincere to ourselves, we must also admit that just knowing that something is a grave evil does not mean we will never find ourselves in a position where we are tempted to still want to do it.

It is a fact that some of the women who have considered having an abortion are Christians and believers in God, some of whom have even participated in marches like this. What does this mean? It means that circumstances can still push people to want to do what they know is evil. This being the case, our approach must go beyond just condemning the evil to actually taking time to listen to those who find themselves in such situations in order to understand what they are going through so as to better be of help to them. We must

approach them with compassion and love, offering them always the mercy and forgiveness of God.

At this juncture, we must appreciate the efforts that MiraVia, Catholic Charities and other charitable institutions and organizations, and even individuals, are making to cater for pregnant women and offer them the necessary assistance. We appreciate also the work many are doing to assist those who have found themselves in an abortion situation to find forgiveness and healing, and to lead them to conversion.

May we remind ourselves also that most unwanted pregnancies often start with a sexual intercourse that was not supposed to be wanted or desired. Pregnancy, wanted or unwanted, is always the effect of a sexual intercourse. So our efforts to handle the problem of abortion must also include a comprehensive Christian education on human sexuality. Because of fallen human nature and the permissiveness of our society, it is a bit challenging, but not impossible since the grace of God is always available too.

Considering the complex nature of the evil of abortion and other evils against the sacredness of human life in our society, there is need for the ProLife Movement to speak with a voice that is strong, authoritative and clear. This would demand two things, among others: the ability to listen and consistency. One way to make your voice heard is to speak louder than everyone else. But this may not be effective at times, especially when every other person is talking too with a loud voice. A more effective way may be that you first take time to listen attentively to what others are saying. In this way you would be able to speak in a way that addresses the concerns of the other voices, and even if you have to disagree, you would be doing so reasonably.

One major complaint we hear today is that our nation is polarized and the dividing gap seems to be getting wider and wider. Why? Because everybody is so busy trying to make his voice heard so much so that no one has time to listen to the other. What often happens in such a situation is that emotions tend to override reason. We of the ProLife Movement have to go beyond that.

There is also the need for consistency in our defense of the sanctity of human life. We would be inconsistent if we raise our voice to condemn the killing of innocent human beings in some cases, but lower it in other cases.

There will be inconsistency also if we turn blind eyes to other situations that may indirectly still bring about death. Most often when we talk of anti-life tendencies, our minds go first to abortion providers and those who seek abortions and promote it. Let us remind ourselves that one can be against life by commission, that is, by being actively involved in activities that directly facilitate the taking away of innocent human lives. But it is also possible to be anti-life by omission. That is, by omitting to do or neglecting to create conditions necessary for the survival of human life.

Whether one takes away human life directly, or neglects to create conditions necessary for human life to flourish, the end result is the same: death. Therefore, both of them are anti-life. The human life that is disrespected in an abortion is the same human life that is disrespected in reckless gun shootings. It is the same life that is disrespected when people are left to die in poverty or starvation, when people do not have access to quality medical care and basic shelter. After all, the same Person who said ‘thou shall not kill’ is the same person who said ‘feed the hungry, take care of the sick, shelter the stranger, take care of prisoners’. So loyalty to this Person will demand that one should not kill, but also that one should create favorable conditions in which human life can be lived with dignity; that one should ensure that people are able to have food to eat, lest they die of hunger, to have access to medical care lest they die of poor health, to have basic shelter lest they die of weather conditions. In all these, it is human life that is lost and the mission of the Pro-life Movement is to defend the sanctity of human life in all circumstances from conception to its natural end.

Life is a gift from God. Our mission to uphold life is thus a divine mission. It is a daunting task, one that needs courage and a collective effort. If we have to be faithful to it, we must strive to bring on board all of God’s children and all people of good will. All human beings

desire to live. So, all human beings must put their efforts together to fight against anything that poses a threat to human life and its inherent dignity.

It is not a fight in which one group is struggling to win over another group, or to consolidate power and control. It is not a fight between “us” and “them” whoever the “them” may be. It is a fight to destroy all tendencies in our society that stand against the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Yes, it is fight to uphold life which is God’s most precious and sublime gift to us humans.

When Jesus came on earth He said: “The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that you may have life and have it in abundance.” (John 10:10) It is Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is to Him that the prolife movement owes its loyalty. Let Him bless all the efforts of the prolife movement. Let Him bless and protect all of us, born and unborn. Let Him bless all the citizens of this great nation and all who live in it. Let Him pour on the citizens of this nation an abundance of the grace of conversion of hearts. And when our days on earth are ended may it please Him to grant us eternal life in His kingdom, where we shall live and reign with Him forever and ever. Amen.

Thank you for your kind attention.