

Homily Respect Life Mass – San Fernando Cathedral, 1/20/07
Most Rev. Jose H. Gomez
Archbishop of San Antonio

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

We gather today to pray for life on the Anniversary of the legalization of abortion in the United States. We are celebrating the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary to ask her intercession to renew our commitment to the Culture of life in our Country.

As we know, modern society is threatened by the culture of death, mainly with the crime of Abortion but also by euthanasia, violence, war, the death penalty, etc.

We come to ask for God's mercy to stop the abuse of life and that people at the beginning of the 21st Century value the gift of life as it is a gift of God.

As always the readings of the Mass are helpful to reflect of God's love for us and his redemptive plan for the human race. In the 1st reading from the letter to the Hebrews we hear the words concerning Christ as the High Priest: "He enter once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own Blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption"

The sacrifice of Christ brings redemption to the human race. It means that with His coming to earth and giving his life as a redemption for our sins, Jesus restored our friendship with God the Father and gave us the opportunity to go to Heaven.

Pope Pius XII said that "All men were thus rescued from the path of ruin and perdition and set once more on the way to God, to whom they were now to give due glory by co-operating personally

in their sanctification, making their own the holiness that springs from the blood of the unspotted Lamb” Mediator Dei, 1.

Christ sacrifice is a perfect sacrifice but, God in his infinite wisdom, wants us to freely accept it in our own lives. That’s not an easy task.

The passage of the Gospel gives us a hint of how difficult it is. St. Mark talks about how difficult it was for Jesus’ relatives to believe in Him. Jesus was with his disciples and his relatives heard that he was in town and ‘they set out to seize him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind’.

They were probably thinking that he was too radical. He was embarrassing them. He was ‘out of his mind’. Well, how many times, the people of our time think that we are out of our mind, because we are followers of Jesus Christ!

I was saying this week, at the Red Mass in Phoenix, now is the time when we face fundamental questions as Catholics of America—about who we are, about our identity as believers and citizens, about the relationship of our faith to our culture.

It seems to me that some times we are told that our faith is something we should keep to ourselves, that it shouldn’t influence how we vote and behave, and I feel that our secular society is not only promoting tolerance or government neutrality towards religion. It feels like they’re promoting hostility towards religion.

Practical atheism is dangerously close to becoming our de facto state religion. What I mean is that, more and more, in order to live in our society, to participate in its economic and political life, people are required to essentially conduct themselves as if God does not exist.

But, history shows us that when God is forgotten, the human person and the common good are forgotten, too.

Pope John Paul II told us in his Encyclical letter *The Gospel of Life...* that “the Church has received the Gospel ... as a gift from Jesus...to preach it to the whole world ... We are at the service of the Gospel... "With humility and gratitude we know that we are the people of life and for life, and this is how we present ourselves to everyone" (n. 78)

Some time ago our beloved Pope John Paul II said to the members of the Italian Pro-Life Movement: “On receiving the Nobel Prize for Peace, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whom you consider the spiritual president of the pro-life movements in the world, had the courage to say to the leaders of political communities: **"If we let a mother kill the fruit of her womb, what is left to us? It is the principle of abortion that endangers peace in the world"**. Pope John Paul II To The Members Of The Italian Pro-Life Movement, *22 May 2003*, 3.

“It is true! Pope John Paul II said, **there can be no true peace without respect for life**, especially if it is innocent and defenceless as is that of the unborn child. Elementary coherence requires those who seek peace to safeguard life. No pro-peace activity can be effective unless attacks on life at all its stages, from conception until natural death, are as energetically opposed. Thus, your movement is not only a Pro-Life Movement but also an authentic peace Movement, precisely because of your constant effort to protect life” Pope John Paul II To The Members Of The Italian Pro-Life Movement, *22 May 2003*, 3.

Let’s continue to pray for peace in the world. Let’s renew our enthusiasm in the development of the Culture of life in the world and especially in our Country. It is an exciting time to be a Catholic. As exciting as it was for the disciples, even if people were thinking that they were ‘out of their minds’.

They were not and we are not. We preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ: a message of love, forgiveness, life and peace.

The future of our country and of the world depends on each one of us. To imitate the life and mission of Christ at the beginning of this new millennium is a real challenge for us all, but with the help of God's grace we can do it!

In the words of Pope John Paul II: "Never be discouraged and never tire, dear brothers and sisters, of **proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel of life...**" Pope John Paul II To The Members Of The Italian Pro-Life Movement, *22 May 2003, 5.*

We go to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception, to ask her to 'grant that all who believe in your Son may **proclaim** the Gospel of life with honesty and love to the people of our time...Amen' Pope John Paul II, *Gospel of Life, 105.*