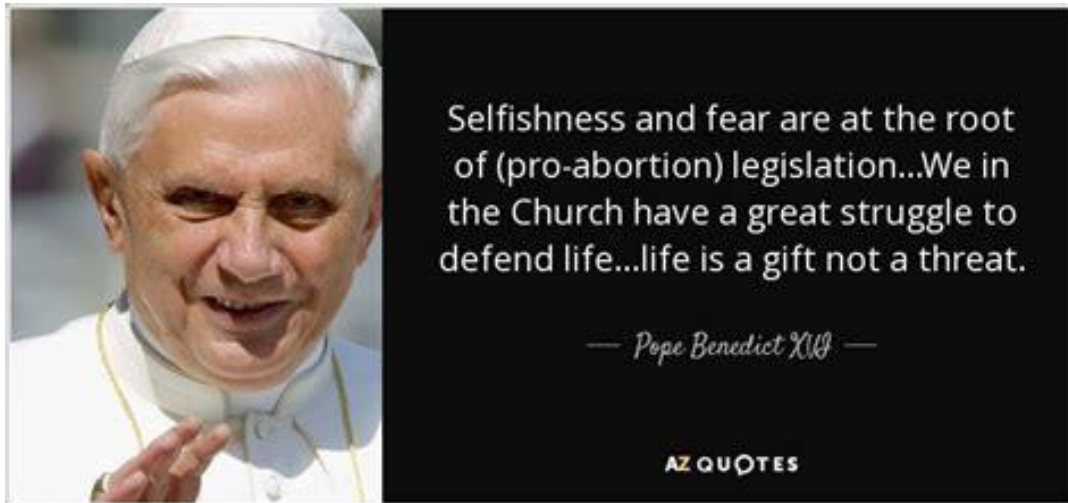


**FROM FATHER JOHN:** *"I love you, O LORD, my strength, O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer. My God, my rock of refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold! Praised be the LORD, I exclaim, and I am safe from my enemies. The LORD lives! And blessed be my rock! Extolled be God my savior. You who gave great victories to your king and showed kindness to your anointed."* ~ Psalm 18



On Tuesday and Wednesday, the Illinois Senate and the Illinois House of Representatives, respectively, voted to repeal parental notification when a minor seeks an abortion and sent the legislation to Gov. Pritzker who has said that he will sign it into law. Gov. Pritzker and our state legislature have led an assault on the dignity of human life these past few years. This is just the latest in a long line of tragic legislative actions that have cheapened the value of human life.

St. John Paul II wrote, as he called on all of us to build a Culture of Life, that, *"You are called to stand up for life! To respect and defend the mystery of life always and everywhere, including the lives of unborn babies, giving real help and encouragement to mothers in difficult situations. You are called to work and pray against abortion."*

In the beginning of the fifth century, nearly a century after Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity and nearly a century after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, blood sports were still going on in the Roman Coliseum. In Christian Rome, blood sports were still in vogue, upwards of 80,000 people would go to the Coliseum to be amused by watching gladiators

pummel each other to death with swords and other weapons. This was going on in a city where virtually everyone had converted to Catholicism following the conversion of Emperor Constantine.

How could a Christian people, a Christian nation allow such an abomination to continue in its capital? As important as that question is, there is a question that is even more important for each of us to consider today. How did the blood sports come to an end? Who brought the blood games to an end? I imagine many people in our country (myself included) would be upset if someone tried to eliminate all NFL games.

There was a Christian hermit, a monk, by the name of Telemachus, who one Sunday afternoon, while 80,000 people were cheering the gladiators on, threw himself over the wall, jumped onto the floor of the Coliseum and stood between the fighting gladiators. He urged them in the name of Christ to stop their fighting, the crowd jeered him. He urged them to lay down their weapons, the crowd jeered him. He urged them to allow the love of God to bring peace into their lives, the crowd jeered him.

Unfortunately, the gladiators didn't listen to Telemachus, they listened to the jeering crowd. One of the gladiators struck him with his sword and the great hermit, the great Christian, Telemachus, fell to the ground dead. Historical reports tell us that the crowd of 80,000 screaming and cheering and jeering spectators all fell silent. Since that day, blood sports have never again been held in Rome.

All human life is sacred because human life comes from God, is created by God, is made sacred by God, and is saved by the Father sending His only Son into the world to die on a cross so that we might have life. That is why our Lord Jesus came into the world – to give us, each and every one of us, life.

It doesn't matter whether that life is unborn in a mother's womb or whether that life is an impoverished child living in the inner city or our own sons and daughters here at St. Ann Parish, whether that life is a good Catholic Christian or whether that life is living on death row after committing the most heinous of crimes, whether that life is sick and suffering, has been in a vegetative state for years or is as healthy as can be. It doesn't matter whether it's convenient for us to respect life or whether we have to bear incredible burdens to respect life.

How did the blood sports in ancient Rome end? The living witness of Telemachus testifying to the sacred nature of all human life, with his very own life, with his very own blood, ended the evil that was the blood sports.

As Respect Life month comes to a close, each of us must remember that all human life is sacred in the eyes of God. This means that we must nurture human life, we must care for human life, we must respect human life, and most importantly, we must defend all human life. After all, Telemachus died defending the sacredness of all human life.

More importantly, much more importantly, Jesus Christ died on the cross defending the sacredness of all human life, giving each of us the gift of life.

May God bless you and all those who love the Lord.

