



Diocese of Palm Beach

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October 3, 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord:

October is designated as *Respect Life Month*, with the first Sunday, October 3, as *Respect Life Sunday*. This year is dedicated to St. Joseph who is a model of respect for life as the foster father of Jesus and the husband of Mary. Joseph's strong defense of the gift of life is experienced as we first encounter him in the Scriptures, when the angel appears to him in a dream and directs him to take Mary as his wife after she had conceived Jesus in her womb through the power of the Holy Spirit. St. Joseph reminds us of the need to give witness to life today in a world and society which has lost true respect for life, especially through the legal acceptance of abortion. When abortion is permitted, as is the case in our country, respect for life at every stage is forsaken and diminished. This year, as Catholics, we are deeply saddened as the present administration of our nation is one of the most aggressive in regard to the promotion of abortion. We realize our obligation to stand firm in opposition to this through all legal means available to us.

In a very recent video on adoption by Pope Francis during this year of the fifth anniversary of his Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris laetitia*, he stated: "Every baby, in every case and in whatever situation, is to be welcomed because he or she is a child. Parents' love is the means by which God shows His love. He awaits the birth of every baby. He accepts and welcomes each child as they are. I want to say to every woman expecting a child: you are God's awesome instrument to welcome and offer a new life in the world." Pope Francis' moving words are a special reminder to us, on *Respect Life Sunday*, of our commitment to protect the gift of life on behalf of every person from the moment of conception until natural death.

During this *Year of St. Joseph*, let us renew our commitment to do all we can to promote respect for life at every stage. We and others live life to the fullest when we do so. I am grateful to all of the faithful within our Diocese who are such outstanding promoters of the defense of life.

With every prayerful wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
Bishop of Palm Beach