



UP TO THE SOURCE

MONTHLY WORDS

January: Choose Life!

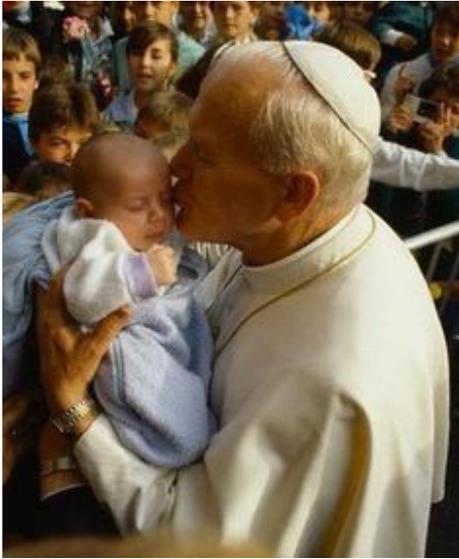


"Choose life." These are, according to Benedict XVI, the fundamental words of the legacy of our great Pope John Paul II: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore, choose life" (Dt 30: 19) (cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 2 March 2006). But what is the mystery of life?

Life is a gift. John Paul II was a man full of life. Just a few months after being elected Pope, he was nicknamed "Hurricane Wojtyla." He was a joyful, energetic, passionate and compassionate man, even though he had already lost his whole family by the time he was 21. John

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Paul II lived every moment of his life as a gift from the Creator. He was not resentful because of his short years with his family, but he received them as a gift.



We truly live when we give ourselves. Filled with life as he was, John Paul II was also ready to risk it for the right reasons. Under the Nazi occupation during World War II, he cultivated the underground theatre and poetry. Later he embraced the danger of entering the clandestine seminary in order to follow God's vocation and become a priest. After the war and his ordination, under Communism, he risked again his life in order to serve the families: he organized forbidden hikes and outings. During those outings, the youth could not address him as "Father" but they would call him "Uncle" (*Wujek*). John Paul II's journey teaches us that life is a precious gift that grows in us as we give it away. It is not enough for us to survive, to stay safe. Our life cannot be understood without love. Love reveals who man

is: our life comes from love, and is fulfilled through love (*Redemptor hominis*, 10).

The mystery of life. There is, therefore, a mystery in our life: it is much more than organic life. We can only receive life when we give it to others. Life on earth is not an ultimate, but a penultimate reality. It is, and remains, a sacred reality. But it can only reach perfection through love, through the sincere gift of self to God and to others. Therefore, death is not just an interruption of our life, but it will be the moment of the greatest gift, when we will give back to the Lord everything we received from him. This is what Christ taught us when he died on the cross for us: "Into your hands, Lord, I commend my Spirit."

Jesus Brings True Life: Eternal Life.

At the heart of John Paul II's teaching we find this word of Jesus: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Jesus gave us abundant eternal life by revealing to us the Father. "Father... this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). His love is our origin, and communion with Him is the goal of our life. Here we find the foundations of the sacredness of human life: we are called to share the very life of God, something which far exceeds the dimensions of our earthly existence. Such goal comes from our origin: we have been created as image of God, loved by God for ourselves. All the other creatures on earth (minerals, plants, animals, etc.) have been created for us, to help us become friends of God.

Sacredness of Human Life. From this origin and this vocation, we understand the greatness and the inestimable value of human life,

here and now, in its temporal phase. Jesus reveals to us the Father, and therefore, the sacred value of life. From womb to tomb, from natural conception to natural death, every human life is sacred. Every embryo, healthy or sick, viable or not, is sacred. No elderly, blind, deaf or with dementia, is useless. They are all sacred. A human life is never a commodity or something negotiable. "Numbers retreat before the person". From the beginning, God the Father loves each human life for itself, and Jesus Christ died on the cross for each one. A person should never be considered merely according to its "quality" of life (comfort, abilities, etc.), but should always be loved according to the "sacredness" of its life, as someone called to be friend of God.

Eternal Life Starts Here. John Paul II enjoyed greatly his temporal life, as saints do. Because he was ready to lose everything for Christ and for the sacredness of life, he was able to celebrate the beauty of creation and much more the beauty of a family, an elderly grandpa, a pregnant woman, or a toddler. He was able to discover the beauty of the Creator and the Redeemer in his daily life. His life shows that eternal Life, our relationship of love with God, starts here.



The Culture of Death. But if it is true that heaven begins here, it is also true that eternal death (hell) can start here. John Paul II reminded us always of the great battle between life and death "The "ruler of this world" and the "father of lies" *relentlessly tries to eradicate from human hearts the sense of gratitude and respect for the original, extraordinary and fundamental gift of God: human life itself.* The culture of death declares that a human life needs to be calculated according to its efficiency. It proposes a materialism, which breeds individualism, utilitarianism and hedonism. It is a conspiracy against life which connects abortion, contraception, IVF, infanticide, sterilization, euthanasia, etc. It generates an atmosphere, an environment of sinfulness.

In this battle, the family especially is under attack. The family is the sanctuary of life, the place where we learn that elderly and babies are sacred and precious. In a society that destroys the family, the weakest members of society are the most at risk: "the unborn, children, the sick, the handicapped, the old, the poor and unemployed, the immigrant and refugee."

Call to Battle. What shall we do? In Denver, during the World Youth Day of 1993, John Paul II gave one of the most courageous calls to fight against death. He encouraged us to choose life and fight for life. Every human life. All lives, no matter the size, the age, the color, the nation, are important. All lives matter. This was John Paul II's priestly vocation: to choose life ourselves, and to help others to choose life.

To Reflect:

1. The eclipse of God leads to the eclipse of man. When we reject our Creator, we consider human life in terms of efficiency and we start thinking that the life of an elderly, a disabled or a baby in the womb can be decided on an election.
2. There are different levels of offenses against life. Abortion and euthanasia are the worst offenses: the direct killing of the most innocent by those who should care for him or her. Other offenses against life are grave
3. We are called not just to respect life, but to promote it, to make it grow.

Practices:

1. Promote the life of the (not yet) born, i.e. welcome the gift of life. When you see a pregnant woman, pray for her. If you have a chance, smile and give a word of support and gratitude.
2. Promote children. Their presence is a blessing. Celebrate the attendance of babies, children and youth to Mass. Try not to complain about their presence or cries. Pray for parents who struggle with their children.

Congratulate them for their openness to life.

3. Pray for parents who suffer infertility and for those who had a miscarriage.
4. Promote the sick. Pray for the sick and the disabled, and for their caregivers. Help them to embrace their suffering
5. Promote the elderly. In this time of Covid-19 call frequently the elderly of your family. Reach out to the elderly of your neighborhood offering your help and prayers. Fight against euthanasia and assisted suicide.
6. Support the prolife activities of our parish and archdiocese.

To know more:

St. John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*

St. John Paul II, World Youth Day in Denver, 15 August 1993.

Christ's blood reveals to man that his greatness, and therefore his vocation, consists in the sincere gift of self (St. John Paul II).



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