



## DIOCESE OF RALEIGH

Office of the Bishop

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September 28, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, the Catholic Church throughout the country will observe Respect Life Sunday. The theme for this year is "Hope and Trust in the Lord." The words remind us of the incarnate love of our God who is the reason for our hope. It is our trust in the Lord Jesus and His saving power that sustains us in our efforts to preserve and protect the sacredness and dignity of all human life.

As followers of Jesus Christ, the Source of Life and Hope, we must continue to work to eradicate all that destroys life, especially abortion and the use of embryonic cells for stem cell research. In word and deed, and in the decisions we make and the votes we cast, we must defend the unborn, the most vulnerable and defenseless, making our voices heard in peaceful and public opportunities. In addition to our work on behalf of the unborn, our respect for life must include concern and compassion for the terminally ill, the disabled and the immigrant. To choose life means to reject physical and emotional violence, to reject all forms of prejudice and racism and to dismiss any bitterness in our hearts.

During the month of October, I am asking you to celebrate with renewed gratitude the precious gift of life. To initiate Respect Life Month, I will celebrate Mass at St. Mary Catholic Church in Goldsboro at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 5. I am grateful for those who are currently participating in the 40 Days for Life campaign of prayer, fasting and peaceful vigils to end abortion. In the months ahead there will be additional opportunities to support human life. I hope many of you will plan to attend both the Mass and March for Life in Raleigh on January 17 and the Mass and March for Life in Washington, D.C. on January 22, where we, as members of the Diocese of Raleigh, can be a strong and unified voice in the defense of life.

St. Paul said "We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)." Our respect for life is a reflection of our work for good, our love for God and our call to work according to His purpose. May our Lord Jesus bless you with vigor and dedication to the cause of life and may Mary Our Mother watch over you always.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge  
Bishop of Raleigh