

St. Bernadette Respect Life Committee

Newsletter

October 2006

The Culture of Life

"The family is the heart of the culture of life," said Pope John Paul II

In 1991, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's great encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, Pope John Paul II issued one of his own great encyclicals on social justice, *Centesimus Annus*. In this encyclical, Pope John Paul II declared his purpose was to show the permanent value of the social doctrine of the Church and to encourage "a great movement for the defense of the human person and the safeguarding of human dignity."

Pope John Paul II reminded us that the family founded on marriage is first and fundamental to the ordering of a just and humane society. "It is necessary," he wrote, "to go back to seeing the family as the sanctuary of life. The family is indeed sacred: it is the place in which life—the gift of God—can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth. In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life."

Pope Benedict XVI, also, offers a serious theological basis for a proper understanding of love in our lives. In a recent article published in the April 2006 issue of the *Columbia* magazine, Rev. Gabriel B. O'Donnell, OP, wrote, "The foundation for Christian marriage and the family that flows from it are discussed in Pope Benedict XVI's recent encyclical, *God Is Love (Deus Caritas Est)*." Rev. O'Donnell writes that the Church restricts sexual activity and sexual pleasure to the married state because "they allow a couple to become partners with God in His plan for human happiness and the continuation of the human race."

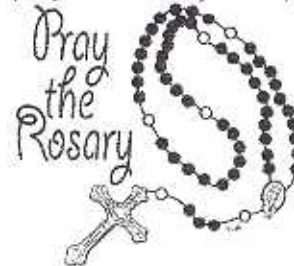
Rev. O'Donnell goes on to write that we are faced with two attributes of married love, "It is marked by fidelity and it cannot be dissolved by man." He concludes with a phrase from the old Rite of Marriage that sums it up, "Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome. Only love can make it easy; only perfect love can make it a joy."

Dominican Father Gabriel B. O'Donnell is director of the Order's Catholic Information Service and postulator for the cause of sainthood for the Servant of God Father Michael J. McGivney.

Respect Life Activities

The Vatican has declared a worldwide celebration for Respect Life Sunday on October 1, 2006. Here, at St. Bernadette Parish, as well as in the Diocese of Raleigh, special liturgies and activities are scheduled throughout the month of October.

Traditionally, October has been the month dedicated to the Holy Rosary. As Catholics, we are encouraged to pray the Rosary often, even daily. During October, we



ask that you pray the Rosary often for a conversion of heart for those who are challenged to accept the dignity and sanctity of all human life. We, also, ask for your prayers for the protection of all innocent human life: the unborn, from abortion and research programs that take life; the elderly, from attitudes of intolerance that reduce their dignity; the ill and handicapped, from rejection that brings neglect; the poor, from a poverty of love that crushes the spirit.

SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

Sunday, October 1—Respect Life Pancake Breakfast sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and the Respect Life Committee at St. Bernadette Parish after the 9 and 11 AM Masses

Sunday, October 1—Life Chain at Falls of Neuse Road, Raleigh from 2:30 to 4 PM

Friday, October 6—Eucharistic Adoration, Prayers and Meditation on the Gospel of Life, St. Bernadette Chapel, 9:30 AM through to Benediction at 8 PM

Saturday, October 7—St. Bernadette Parish's Weekend at the Pro-Life Prayer Vigil (Novena to St. Rita, Patroness of Parenthood), meet at Birthchoice, 3820 Merton Drive, Raleigh, at 1:45 PM

Tuesday, October 10—Mass and Rosary for Respect Life Intentions at St. Bernadette Church at 6:30 PM

Tuesdays, October 3, 17, 24 and 31—Rosary for Respect Life Intentions following 6:30 PM Mass at St. Bernadette Church

Please see the posters in the Gathering Area for full details of all activities, including the K of C Baby Bottle Campaign.

Who Are We, and Where Are We Going?

In his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est (God Is Love)*, Pope Benedict XVI speaks of love as the foundation of all human community. Our dignity as human persons is rooted in our origin in the One from whom we come, God the creator. His love is the source of our existence.

We are not simply made from dust. God created us to share in eternal life with Him. The Catholic Church teaches that man is the crowning glory of God's creation. Singled out from all creation, man alone has the capacity to know God and to share in His divine life forever.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides a deeper meaning to human life in the person of Jesus Christ, "In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear" (359). Christ is the perfection of all that is human. Jesus Christ took on a nature like ours in every way but sin. In doing this, He shows that man has value and dignity. It is good to be a human person because God has created us for life on earth as well as eternal life with Him in heaven.

There is a dignity and sanctity to every human life, and Christians are bound to acknowledge and defend every human life. "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Saint John's Gospel describes that event in these words: 'God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should...have eternal life.' (3:16)." (*Deus Caritas Est*) Pope John Paul II wrote, "Truly great must be the value of human life if the Son of God has taken it up and made it the instrument of the salvation of all humanity!" (*Evangelium vitae*)

The mystery that we are to ourselves and to each other is part of the rich meaning of the gift of life. "In the depths of his conscience, man is always reminded of the inviolability of life—his own life and that of others—as something which does not belong to him, because it is the property and gift of God the Creator and Father." (*Evangelium vitae*) God is the author of who we are and where we are to go in life according to His plan.

Guardian of Life

Very little is known about St. Joseph other than what is written about him in the Gospels. We know that he was a descendant in the line of King David, and that he was engaged to a woman from Nazareth named Mary. St. Matthew's Gospel tells us that "being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace" Joseph made plans to break the engagement privately when Mary found that she was going to have a baby. But God had other plans.

God sent an angel to Joseph in a dream and told him, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take

Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived." And Joseph listened.

Later, after Mary's son, Jesus, was born, and the visitors from the East had departed, God's angel again appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him, "Herod will be looking for the child in order to kill Him. So get up, take the child and His mother and escape to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you to leave." And Joseph listened.

Joseph cared for his foster son, Jesus, and taught him the values required to become a good carpenter: patience, judgment, honesty, and persistence. St. Joseph has long been revered as the protector of the Holy Family. God the Father entrusted him with the care of Mary and Jesus. He is a model for husbands, fathers, and all men.

Pope John Paul II wrote a beautiful reflection on St. Joseph in 1989, *Redemptoris Custos (On the Person and Mission of St. Joseph in the Life of Christ and of the Church)*. He opens with this statement "Inspired by the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church from the earliest centuries stressed that just as St. Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ's upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ's Mystical Body, that is, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model." He points out, "He is also the first to be placed by God on the path of Mary's 'pilgrimage of faith.'" St. Joseph accepted his role in God's plan.

Pope John Paul II goes on to write, "St. Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood. It is precisely in this way that, as the Church's Liturgy teaches, he 'cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation' and is truly a 'minister of salvation.'" He concludes with, "May St. Joseph become for all of us an exceptional teacher in the service of Christ's saving mission, a mission which is the responsibility of each and every member of the Church: husbands and wives, parents, those who live by the work of their hands or by any other kind of work, those called to the contemplative life and those called to the apostolate."

St. Joseph is a model of fidelity for all to imitate. Husbands and wives should pray to St. Joseph asking his help to embrace their vows of love and to be open to the gift of new life, fostering the spiritual growth of their children. All men should pray to St. Joseph asking his help to become models of virtue and courage in our society. Teenagers should pray to St. Joseph asking his help to live chaste lives. Our prayers to St. Joseph will bring many blessings.

Bring your prayers to St. Joseph—he will listen!

St. Bernadette Respect Life Committee
Rich Carberry, President Claire M. Schweitzer, Editor