

Tenth Sunday Per Annum (C)
June 5, 2016.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; whom should I dread? When those who do evil draw near, they stumble and fall (Ps. 27:1-2) [Entrance Antiphon].

The readings that we have just heard affirm the truth that God is the source of life and that He can restore to life. He is truly *the giver of life*, as we profess in the Creed. It is not insignificant that we are reminded of this truth just a few days after Bill C-14, the euthanasia bill, passed its reading in Parliament by a vote of 186 to 137 and is now headed to the Senate for debate. In all likelihood it will soon be legal to kill patients in need of healthcare. As a doctor present at a rally protesting this bill observed, *there is now little doubt that euthanasia will be legal in the whole country, despite the warnings from other countries, despite the dangers, despite the fact that people will be driven to request it out of fear, loneliness, guilt, coercion (LifeSite News –June 1, 2016)*. To put it bluntly, the deliberate killing of a patient will be seen as a legitimate healthcare expense.

Both doctors and politicians advocating for the defense of human life have expressed shock at the fact that political debate is concerned with the legalization of killing. This however, is not completely an unexpected development. Throughout the twentieth century, Western civilization has witnessed an epic struggle between two radically opposed philosophies of human life; the traditional *sanctity of life* ethic and the new *quality of life* ethic. This new morality judges human lives by the standard of *quality*, and by this standard it declares some lives not worthy of living and the deliberate *termination* of these lives morally legitimate. *Life Unworthy of Life* was the way it was described by the title of the first book to win public acceptance for this new ethic, by German doctors before World War II. All of us are aware of the horrors that this ethic then spawned.

The support that this dangerous ethic now enjoys speaks to the validity of Pope St. John Paul's struggle against the culture of death and Pope Benedict's warnings about the dictatorship of relativism. The saintly African Cardinal Robert Sarah whose book *God or Nothing* continues to inspire many, rightly observes that *the destruction of human life is no longer a barbaric act but a sign of progress in civilization....This is no longer a sort of decadence but, rather, a dictatorship of horror, a programmed genocide of which the Western powers are guilty. This relentless campaign against life is a new, definitive stage in the relentless campaign against God's plan*. Against this relentless campaign waged now against every stage of life, we must be very clear in our ability to enunciate and explain our convictions. Human life is sacred in its *origin* – for from the beginning it involves the creative action of God; in its *nature* – because it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator; and its *end* – for God is our sole end. *God alone is the Lord of life from the beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstances claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2258)*. The State did not create us, design us or give us life. Neither did it give us the right to life. Therefore the State cannot take away that right.

As Catholics we have an obligation to be faithful to the law of God which is crystal clear about the sanctity of human life. This conviction is the basis for Western civilization and specifically, for Catholic culture, which endeavours to foster the full development of human abilities for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. Words like *soul* are very important and we must use such terms deliberately for they affirm the dignity of the human person and both our origin and destiny in God. Catholic culture has always been a culture of life. The holiness of life to which we are called by virtue of our Catholic faith renders Catholicity both intensely particular and transculturally universal. The beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty are universally recognizable. Their eloquence is self-evident. The concrete circumstances that define us in this particular time in our nation's history challenge us to be unambiguous in our defense of human life. In the absence of government support in defense of life, a greater burden is placed on us to foster the culture of life and to defend human life, especially the life of the most vulnerable. It will now increasingly be the task of every local community, the parish, to provide a bold witness to the truth and loving service in the care of the vulnerable. We must deliberately endeavour to establish and foster a virtuous culture. In this effort, the role of the sacred liturgy as both the feast and school of faith cannot be underestimated for as we worship, so we will live; and as we worship, so will we become (*lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*).

Let us entrust ourselves to the loving protection and guidance of St. Joseph whose privilege it was on earth to watch over the life of both Jesus and Mary. Cities and towns across our nation bear witness to the devotion of past generations to St. Joseph. Many hospitals bear his name and many institutions dedicated to the care of the vulnerable are under his patronage. Persons are not things, objects of manipulation and control and design. Each life, each individual, each human being is unique, and each is equally and infinitely precious. This is the conviction that guides Catholic morality on all issues of human life. May God, the author of all life, human and divine, give us the courage always to bear witness to the truth of God's word. It is all too easy to doubt the power of grace in our lives and to give in to the prevailing spirit of our age. If the early Christians had clung to the moral standards and outlook of their times they would never have converted pagan Rome. Like them we must stand outside the culture of death and bring to it the life-saving message of the Gospel. May the witness of the Saints and Martyrs, especially our own Canadian Saints, inspire us in our faith, in our charity and in our fidelity.