

MESSAGE OF THE PERMANENT EPISCOPAL COUNCIL FOR THE 30th NATIONAL
PROLIFE DAY FEBRUARY 3,2008

To Serve Life

Children are a great resource for every country. By their number and by the love and attention they receive from their families and from society, one can see how much a nation believes in the future. Those who are not open to life are without hope. The elderly are our memory and our roots: by the care with which they are accompanied, one can measure a country's self respect.

Life at its origins, life towards its epilogue. The civilization of a people can be judged by its ability to serve life. The first to be called to this responsibility are parents. They are so at the moment of conception. The drama of abortion will never be contained or conquered if responsibility in maternity and paternity is not promoted. Responsibility means not considering children as objects, to be put in the world to gratify their parent's desires. And it is important that as they grow, children are encouraged to "take flight," to become independent, grateful to their parents for having been educated in the use of freedom and responsibility, able to take control of their lives.

This is what it means to serve life. Unfortunately, the tendency to take advantage of life is strong. This happens when parents claim the "right " to a child at any cost, even at the cost of ethically unacceptable manipulation. A child is not a right, but always and only a gift. How can one have the right to a person? A child is to be desired and welcomed, not the object of a right to generate and possess. We are convinced of this, even in the acknowledgement of how painful it can be for a couple to discover that they cannot satisfy the great aspiration of generating children. We are close to those who find themselves in this situation, and we invite them to consider, with time, other possible forms of maternity and paternity. The loving relationship between parents and a child can occur with adoption or foster care, for example, and there are other forms of self-giving that can be expressions of maternity and paternity.

To serve life means not putting life at risk on the job or on the road, and to love it even when it is inconvenient or painful, because life is always worthy in and of itself. This is true for the seriously ill, for the elderly, for those who slowly lose health of mind and body. No one can claim the right to decide when a life is no longer worth living. What needs to grow is the ability of the family itself to welcome and care for life. It is surprising that so much energy and debating has been dedicated to the possibility to suppress a life which is afflicted by pain, and little is said and less is done in the field of palliative care, a solution which truly respects the dignity of the person, who has the right to approach death without suffering and without being left alone, loved like he was at his origins, open to the prospect of everlasting life.

For this reason, we want to thank all those who freely serve life. Thanks to responsible and altruistic parents, capable of a non-possessive love; to priests and religious, to educators and teachers, to the many adults – including grandparents – who cooperate with parents in the rearing of their children. Thanks to the heads of institutions who recognize the fundamental mission of parents, and instead of abandoning them to themselves or actually mortifying them, help them and encourage them. Thanks to gynecologists, obstetricians, and nurses who do all they can to help babies be born, and to the volunteers who work to remove the causes that might induce women to take the terrible step of aborting, thus contributing to the birth of babies who might not have otherwise been born. Thanks to the families who manage to keep their elderly in the home with them, and to the people of all nationalities who assist them with generosity and dedication. Thank you -
you who serve life are the serious and responsible part of a nation that desires to respect its history and believe in its future.