



DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

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Office of the Bishop

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

So much has taken place over the past year that has challenged us as a Church not to be indifferent to the sufferings of those around us. The pandemic continues to place tremendous burdens on the most vulnerable of our society, often driving them further into isolation at the most critical moments of their lives. Among the many who suffer silently are women facing unexpected pregnancies and those approaching end of life.

Saint John Paul II tells us that, “every threat to human dignity and life must necessarily be felt in the Church's very heart; it cannot but affect her at the core of her faith in the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God and engage her in her mission of proclaiming the Gospel of life in all the world and to every creature.” (*Evangelium Vitae*, par. 3). A consistent life ethic must be founded on the preeminent issue of respect for the unborn, and the protection of all people in the most vulnerable stages of life. All other social goods will flow from a culture that rightly has as its source the respect for the sanctity of human life.

Advent will soon be upon us and with that, on the second Sunday of Advent (December 5), our annual Diocesan Pro-Life collection in support of various organizations that assist women dealing with unplanned pregnancies. By educating and advocating on behalf of the most vulnerable members of our province these organizations play a vital role in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of life in our diocese.

You can contribute to this special collection on Sunday December 5 using envelopes marked, “PRO-LIFE OFFERING”. The monies collected will be sent to support the efforts of such organizations as Birthright and New Brunswick Right to Life in the three regions of our Diocese (Fredericton, Saint John, and Miramichi). These funds will help continue the important work of education on the value of life from conception to natural death, keeping the public informed regarding issues of life that are coming before Parliament, and serving women in unexpected pregnancies. Your generous financial and prayerful support will help promote respect and protection of human life at all stages, from conception to natural death – which is the most fundamental issue facing our world today. I urge you in charity to respond as generously as you are able.

We are called to be a Church that accompanies one another. Pope Francis reminds us that, “the cry of the poor...is the stifled cry of the unborn, of starving children...it is the cry of the elderly, cast off and abandoned to themselves. It is the cry of all those who face the storms of life without the presence of a friend” (Homily, World Day of the Poor, November 18, 2018). In these times of great suffering, let each one of us prayerfully discern how we can extend a hand to those in need, and pray for the good work of organizations bringing the love of Christ to the most vulnerable and forgotten among us.

Please join me, dear faithful, in keeping this cause in prayer. In a world clouded with uncertainty, let us pray that the fundamental right to life will be protected, valued, and upheld. Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the unborn – pray for us!

Yours in Jesus with Mary,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Riesbeck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

November 16, 2021