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## **The people of life and for life**

### ***Catholics are called to oppose the culture of death***

By Bishop Peter. J. Jugis

Bishop of Charlotte

During the month of October, we have been praying and working to promote a culture of life throughout our country. Respect Life Sunday and the entire Respect Life Month remind us to thank God for the gift of life we receive from a loving Creator.

In his 1995 encyclical, "Evangelium Vitae" ("The Gospel of Life"), Pope John Paul II encouraged us to use all means at our disposal to promote the culture of life, including personal witness, various forms of volunteer work, social activity and political commitment.

Our activity on behalf of life is a particularly pressing need at the present time, the late pope wrote, because "the 'culture of death' so forcefully opposes the 'culture of life' and often seems to have the upper hand" (n. 87).

### **Personal witness, volunteer work and social activity**

The personal witnesses, volunteer works and social activities to promote the culture of life, of which Pope John Paul wrote, are carried out in many different ways on behalf of the unborn by the faithful of our diocese.

During the course of the year, Catholics in our diocese give personal witness in support of the unborn through participation in Life Chains on the first Sunday of October (Respect Life Sunday), in the annual "40 Days for Life" campaign and in other peaceful prayer vigils at abortion clinics.

Parishes hold baby showers for pregnancy centers, where some parishioners volunteer to work. Rachel's Vineyard retreats for post-abortion healing are held in our diocese.

Newborn children are provided loving homes through the adoption services of Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Charlotte.

Many Catholics participate in the great Right to Life marches that take place in January in Charlotte, Raleigh and Washington, D.C.

### **Political commitment**

The Holy Father also wrote about the need for us to promote a culture of life through our political commitment. We are expected to act in the political arena to support the right to life of the unborn.

The Catholic bishops of the United States have written about our political responsibility in this area in the document, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship." Quotes

from that document show that ending the grave injustice committed against the innocent unborn by abortion is the preeminent issue of our time.

Not all the issues we may consider in an election year have equal weight. “Some involve matters of intrinsic evil that can never be supported” (n. 90).

“A prime example is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia. In our nation, ‘abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others’” (n. 22).

“The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many. It must always be opposed” (n. 28).

“As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate’s position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter’s support. Yet a candidate’s position on a single issue that involves an intrinsic evil, such as support for legal abortion or the promotion of racism, may legitimately lead a voter to disqualify a candidate from receiving support” (n. 42).

Catholics can legitimately expect candidates to “address the preeminent requirement to protect the weakest in our midst — innocent unborn children — by restricting and bringing to an end the destruction of unborn children through abortion” (n. 90).

### **People of life and for life**

Through prayer and personal witness, volunteer work, social activity and political commitment, we continue to promote a culture of life. Pope John Paul reminded us in his encyclical that “we are the people of life and for life” (n. 78).

Let us always stand on the side of the unborn, the weakest and most defenseless members of our human family, and through all the means available to us defend their right to life.