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WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
& PRO-LIFE SUNDAY
January 21 to 28, 2018

Dear Clergy, Religious, & Lay Faithful
of the Diocese of Saskatoon:


The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 21-28, which concludes with Pro-Life Sunday on Jan. 28, is an opportunity for all of God's faithful people to reflect on the good news of the dignity of the human person, and the call by our One God and Creator of all to share in the mission of Jesus Christ, which features honoring and promoting the dignity of human life.

The call to unity among Christians takes on special significance as Christians live together in our world of both blessing and challenge. While we live in a culture that has achieved and advanced in so many ways, current circumstances can mitigate our ability to truly see the fullness of the human person and the blessing of the human community in our world. The ability to recognize the beauty and goodness of human life – from conception to its natural end – is often overwhelmed by less worthy and competing values, that taken to their own conclusion, diminish or even destroy God's great and precious gift of human life.

The affirmation of the gift and specialness of human life is above all revealed each year when we celebrate Christmas and begin the great journey through the Lenten season to Good Friday and then Easter Sunday. God becomes a human being – in Jesus Christ the Son of God – to not only give humanity distinctive recognition – but to reveal through His unique servant-way what it means to be *fully human, fully alive*. Through the greatest example of self-less service, Jesus Christ – facing the worst of human failure, fickleness, and destruction – goes all the way in honoring, embracing, and loving a humanity which for a moment in history calls for His own destruction.

What do we learn from the unique lesson of Jesus's paschal journey?

Firstly, in God's darkest hour, Jesus Christ chose to honor and love a humanity which at times has not honored Him. *What does Jesus's unique example tell us about what it means to respect and honour people always and in all circumstances?*

 In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,
in His desire to bring God's love to all peoples.

Secondly, God sees humanity as that which is worth saving and redeeming. *Can we have the same vision and commitment?*

Thirdly, the very life of Jesus Christ is a type of 'blue-print' of what it means to honour the human person, as well as a way out of the destructive paths that at times are so heartless and disconnected from our common human condition. *How does the life of Jesus Christ inspire us to deepening relationship with all of God's people, especially when the call to relationship is mitigated by a climate of distrust and competition?*

I commend all who are witnessing to the good news of the dignity of the human person and am profoundly grateful for:

- The many efforts to advocate for the unborn and provide supportive alternatives in circumstances of unwanted pregnancies;
- The dedicated efforts at providing good palliative care for persons facing the fear of pain and loneliness at the end of life;
- The work with the many needy and marginalized persons who are often left abandoned by a success-driven culture;
- The provision of care and support to persons facing incarceration and those who are striving to find a hopeful and restorative way back to full human communion;
- The efforts at providing hospitality and support to refugees driven from their homelands;
- The bridge-building work of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples;
- And, finally, for the work with youth and families, as our faith communities honor the family as the 'first human community' – with many efforts of care and support.

Of course, there is much more to do in these efforts, and I look forward to our ongoing life and work to realize the fullness of living out this pre-eminent vision of the mission of Christ and His Church in the world of being a Christian people united in being truly "pro-life".

God's blessings on you all!

In Christ,



✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen
Bishop of Saskatoon