



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon
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Day of Prayer for Reverence for Life Sunday on January 27, 2019

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

Pro-Life Sunday will be celebrated in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon on Jan. 27, 2019, providing our faith communities with an opportunity for prayers, reflection and discussion about the value of every precious human life.


This year marks the 50th anniversary of the removal of abortion from the Criminal Code and the 31st anniversary of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Morgentaler case on Jan. 28, 1988, which removed all remaining restrictions on abortion in Canada. Sadly applauded by many in our society, these moments in our nation's history hold within them the tragic reality of millions of lost lives.

Victims of abortion include the unborn children who are killed, but also the mothers, fathers and families left wounded after an abortion. The community is also weakened and damaged as the weakest and most vulnerable among us are not valued and protected.

Our faith has always consistently taught that human life is sacred. The value of a human life is not derived from its "usefulness" or any other subjective evaluation of "quality of life," but is intrinsic to the human person: a sacred value, which has its origin in the Creator of all.

As Pope Francis said in his 2016 document *The Joy of Love*: "The gift of a new child, entrusted by the Lord to a father and a mother, begins with acceptance, continues with lifelong protection and has as its final goal the joy of eternal life. ... So great is the value of a human life, and so inalienable the right to life of an innocent child growing in the mother's womb, that no alleged right to one's own body can justify a decision to terminate that life, which is an end in itself and which can never be considered the 'property' of another human being. (*Amoris Laetitia*, 83)."

Admittedly, this is a challenging and sobering teaching when a mother and father are dealing with an unexpected or crisis pregnancy that brings with it daunting questions and uncertain pathways. However, not to face this reality dehumanizes our world.

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

Today, advances in science, genetics and embryology clearly show the distinct humanity of each unborn child, which comes into existence at conception. Each new, distinct human person shares the fundamental human right to life that we as Canadians celebrate and support on so many other fronts. Failing to recognize that right has left our country damaged – not only in the missing and lost lives of millions of unborn children, but is removing ‘the heart’ from our society. For instance, devaluing human life at any age or stage has inexorably led to the legalization and growing acceptance in our country of Medical Aid in Death: our lives seem to cease to have meaning and value as we face the fear of not being ‘useful’, or that we are a ‘problem’ to those on whom we rely for care. This loss of ‘heart’ is also the root cause of so many other evils in our midst: poverty, hunger, discrimination, injustice, racism, and violence.

Standing in stark contrast is the core of the Gospel, as Saint Pope John Paul II describes in his encyclical *Gospel of Life*: “It is the proclamation of a living God who is close to us, who calls us to profound communion with Himself and awakens in us the certain hope of eternal life. It is the affirmation of the inseparable connection between the person, his/her life and bodiliness. It is the presentation of human life as a life of relationship, a gift of God, the fruit and sign of His love. It is the proclamation that Jesus has a unique relationship with every person, which enables us to see in every human face the face of Christ. It is the call for a ‘sincere gift of self’ as the fullest way to realize our personal freedom” (*Evangelium vitae*, 81).

Holding firmly to the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I invite you to join me in prayer on Pro-Life Sunday on Jan. 27. And may our every action always lovingly affirm the deep and sacred value of every human person. *Brothers and Sisters, we pray that as a nation we may re-discover our heart!*

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Mark A. Hagemoen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen