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**Day of Prayer for Reverence for Life Sunday**  
**January 29, 2023**

**Dear Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon:**

The day of prayer for Reverence for Life will be celebrated in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon on Sunday, January 29, 2023, providing our faith communities with an opportunity for prayers, reflection and discussion about the value of the precious gift of human life.

2022 featured a year when we continued to struggle with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the terrible war in Ukraine. I continue to hear from many that the events of the last few years have highlighted both the fragility and strength of human life. It is in these times that we continue to struggle with care of the vulnerable, and especially with protection and care for the unborn and critically ill in our communities.

**SINS AGAINST HUMAN LIFE CONTRIBUTE  
to an UNCARING and UTILITARIAN CULTURE**

Canada continues to deal with the tragic repercussions of removing abortion from the Criminal Code. We now mark the 35th anniversary of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Morgentaler case on January 28, 1988, which removed all remaining restrictions on abortion in Canada. Incredibly applauded by many in our society, this moment in our nation's history holds within it 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.

As the Canadian government continues to seek to expand access to doctor-assisted suicide – also known as “Medical Aid in Dying” or “MAiD” – the words of the Holy Father only a few years ago continue to ring prophetic:

*“The victims of this [throwaway] culture are precisely the weakest and most fragile human beings – the unborn, the poorest, the sick and elderly, the seriously*

*handicapped, etc. – who are in danger of being ‘thrown away’, expelled from a system that must be efficient at all costs.”*

During the Papal visit to Canada on his Penitential Pilgrimage for healing and reconciliation in July, Pope Francis called on all Canadians and people of good will to dream and work for a future that is able to see the God-given dignity of all peoples, and gain inspiration from Indigenous people’s cherishing of the relationship between elders and youth. On the feast day of Saints Joachim and Ann, he implored these saints to help us treasure the presence of our elders in order to create a better future:

*“...a future in which the elderly are not cast aside because, from a ‘practical’ standpoint, they are ‘no longer useful’. A future that does not judge the value of people simply by what they can produce. A future that is not indifferent to the need of the aged to be cared for and listened to. A future in which the history of violence and marginalization suffered by our Indigenous brothers and sisters is never repeated. That future is possible if, with God’s help, we do not sever the bond that joins us with those who have gone before us, and if we foster dialogue with those who will come after us. Young and old, grandparents and grandchildren, all together. Let us move forward together, and together, let us dream.”*

(See +Francis’s presentation at Commonwealth Stadium, Edmonton, July 26, 2022.)

This statement reminds me of the Pope’s call several years ago to continue the steady work to turn our culture from one of convenience and short-sightedness, to a cultural movement that seeks - through good-will and honest reflection - the realization of a truly human culture.

(+Francis’s speech to *Dignitatis Humanae Institute* Dec. 7, 2013)

## **INCOMPATIBILITY of CARE FOR CREATION with ABORTION and EUTHENASIA**

Pope Francis highlights that respect for creation and human dignity are issues that are only realized together. As he states:

*“Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion... How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties?”* (see *Laudato Si*, #120)

The Gospel’s moral and social teaching calls on all people of good will to bring to bear intellectual, social, and political consciousness on the inconsistency that is affecting the well-being and flourishing of human cultures throughout our world. As Pope Francis states:

*“It is necessary to raise awareness and form the lay faithful, in whatever state, especially those engaged in the field of politics, so that they may think in accord with the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church and act consistently by dialoguing and collaborating with those who, in sincerity and intellectual honesty, share – if*

*not the faith – at least a similar vision of mankind and society and its ethical consequences.* (+Francis's speech to *Dignitatis Humanae Institute* Dec. 7, 2013)

Indeed, this effort is at the service of every person on the planet! If we do not engage in calling each other to a greater and fuller humanity, we should then not be surprised at the larger deterioration of a culture of human care and respect.

### **The LOSS of HEART**

Current 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. Devaluing human life at any age or stage has inexorably led to the legalization and growing acceptance in our country of euthanasia and assisted suicide: 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.

The loss of heart is also the root cause of so many other evils in our midst, including: discrimination, injustice and racism, violence, poverty and hunger, debilitating addiction. It also contributes to the problem of *indifference* towards those outside my own immediate circle of concern. The recovery of *heart* will be a very important feature in the coming times – as we work towards the goals of healing and reconciliation with Indigenous and all peoples. The recovery of *heart* must also contribute to finding true and lasting pathways for a true peace – not a *superficial peace* that removes us from caring for and being engaged with one another.

Sisters and brothers, let us respond to *loss of heart* by holding steady to the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: *the Sacred Heart for our world*. Let us join in our common prayer for Reverence for Life on January 29, and throughout this year. *Sisters and brothers, we again pray that as a people and nation we may re-discover our heart!*

Yours in Christ,



✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen