

3rd February 2019
21/2019

UNITED FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

MASS ON THE OCCASION OF THE DAY OF LIFE

A few days ago, the attention of many people in Europe was on the heart-breaking story of a little boy, Julen Rosello, who fell in a borehole in Spain. Huge efforts were made by rescue workers to reach the boy in order to save his life. For entire days, hundreds of people dug a tunnel to get to the trapped boy. When after thirteen days they finally reached him, the boy was dead. It was a terribly sad story of unspeakable sorrow for the boy's parents and family, and for many people who were earnestly following the strenuous efforts to save this boy's life.

In this tragic event, one is struck by the hard work put in by so many people who came together to save one human life. What a timely lesson for us all! This story highlights the preciousness of human life and reminds us that we should work hard to protect and save it.

Today, on the Day for Life, we are together declaring that we are in favour of life and we always want to protect life and the dignity of the human being. The Word of God today speaks about the baby and the womb with reverence. We want to protect life from the very first moment of conception, that is from the very beginning, with a special emphasis on when life is most vulnerable and in need of protection.

NOT A MATTER OF A MANDATE

My appeal today is that we all commit ourselves to the protection of life as a principle we embrace rather than because convention dictates such, and that there are people with a backbone in Malta who are brave enough to give witness to this principle. The protection of life, as a principle, is not tied to a mandate given by the people. I shall put it in simpler terms: I am against cruelty to animals on principle. If the people give a mandate for animals to be mistreated, I stand wholeheartedly against it all the same

since this is a principle that does not depend on the people's mandate. The protection of life even at conception is also a question of principle.

AN HONOUR TO STAND ALONE

Sometimes it is said that our country is all alone in the protection of human life from conception. This does not shame us into silence, but it actually has the opposite effect on us. It makes us proud that for us, human life is so precious that we wish the very best for the child when it is still in the womb even when it is only a mass of cells. It is not the quantity of cells that determine whether it is a human life or not.

ZERO TOLERANCE TO ALL THREATS TO LIFE

Alongside the defence of life of the child in or out of the womb, we want to work for a culture in favour of life at every stage of a person's life. Whenever human life is in danger we should be united to protect it. It may be that someone's life is in danger at sea struggling to live, waiting for someone to help or risk going under. Another person could be in danger because of the conditions he or she is living in. The life of others could be at risk due to pollution and the destruction of the environment. Someone might be tempted to take drugs and is duped into thinking that these so-called recreational drugs are the gateway to good times without consequences. It could also be that a person who is old and infirm is anxious that he or she may be considered to be someone whose time is up. As persons of principle, we should have zero tolerance to all threats to life.

COMMITTED TO HELP WOMEN WHO ARE VICTIMS

While we declare that life is precious, today we must also strengthen our commitment to help those who are suffering. I am thinking particularly of women who face difficulties about their pregnancy and who at times end up being the victims. We must give our support in every way to those women who endure all the burden and are left alone. Every victim cries out for our help. We must work together so that these women do not find themselves alone, they may find in us the support they need during their hard times.

AN APPEAL

God told us to always protect life because it is his gift. That is why we treasure life with love. However, even those who have not yet acknowledged God in their lives or those who do not believe in him can understand that life is precious and that the protection of life should not be taboo. We must all show our gratitude and pray for all those who give witness to life so that, with courage, they will continue to convey this all-important message for our time.

Saint Paul tells that love does not rejoice in injustice but rejoices in truth. I particularly appeal to all influencers to always treasure human life, and that in all discussions held we are always on the side of truth, of the vulnerable, and of those who need protection and compassion.

✠ **Joseph Galea-Curmi**
Auxiliary Bishop of Malta