



Bishop Hicks' Column

May 2024

Valuing Life. No Matter Where You Live



Recently, on April 17, 2024, I traveled to the second annual "March for Life" in Springfield, Illinois. The morning began as over 1,500 people gathered for Mass at University of Illinois' Sangamon Auditorium in Springfield. We started the day fittingly through, with and in Christ, to be strengthened and nourished by the Word and Sacrament, the real and true Bread of Life. Among this large crowd, I concelebrated Mass on the stage with many bishops, priests, deacons, and seminarians from all six dioceses in the state of Illinois. I had the honor and privilege to deliver the homily.

As I preached, I could not help but notice the youthful spirit of the assembly. It was encouraging to see so many young Catholics present to celebrate, promote, and pray for the gift of life. Those who are my age and older were heartened and reassured to witness the baton of this important pro-life ministry being passed on to and embraced by the next generation.

In my homily, I began by asking everyone to raise their hands according to the diocese they lived in. It was uplifting to see representation from all six dioceses, including Belleville, Chicago, Joliet, Peoria, Rockford, and Springfield. After that quick survey, I inquisitively asked, "Do those of you who live in one diocese have more value than those who live in another?" They instantaneously responded, "No!" I affirmed their response and added, "You are right! Those of you who live in one diocese do not have more value than those who live in another diocese."

And here is my point: One's value should not depend on where one lives! Likewise, one's value should not depend on whether one lives inside the womb or outside of the womb.

Too many people support a culture that claims that human life only has value once he or she is living outside of the womb. However, in the Catholic Church, we support a counter-cultural point of view. Namely, we value life from conception to natural death. God is the creator and author of life, and life itself is a gift from God. Therefore, we respect, support, pray, promote, and value life both inside and outside of the womb.

There are people who would prefer we not gather at events like the March for Life with our prayers, our voices, and our advocacy. Yet Pope Francis has stated, "I urge civil authorities to be especially attentive to children who are denied their fundamental rights and dignity, particularly their right to life." And that is exactly what happened on April 17th in Springfield: together we urged civil authorities to be especially attentive to children who are denied their fundamental rights and dignity, particularly the right to life.

Let me extend a word of gratitude to those of you who support the gift of life through your prayers. Thank you, too, to those of you who put your faith into action through your donations, support, advocacy, and care to assist with those choosing life for the unborn child, especially in crisis situations. We are grateful to those involved with ministries of accompaniment, by supporting post-abortive women and men, through counseling, retreats, and compassionate support groups.

The month of May is often associated with the arrival of Spring and the renewal of life. During this time, we also turn to Mary in a special way, celebrating her "YES" in bringing forth new life through Jesus Christ. Through her Son's life, suffering, death, and resurrection, we have been given the gift of life eternal. We acknowledge one's value should not depend on where one lives, because life is a gift from God both inside the womb and outside of the womb. And with Easter joy, we continue to celebrate that eternal-life is a gift from God for those who believe and follow our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our Lady of Mercy, Life-Giving Spring, pray for us. And let us celebrate our mothers - those on this earth and those in heaven – with prayers of love and gratitude this Mother's Day.

(To view photos from this year's March for Life in Springfield, I encourage you to visit our website at www.diojoliet.org)