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MOST REVEREND
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January 5, 2018

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

January 22, 2018, marks the forty-fifth anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. On January 19, 2018, the annual March for life will be held in Washington D.C. This year's theme is "Love saves lives." Tens of thousands, young and old, will march in the largest Pro Life event in the world. The enthusiasm of all present gives witness to the fact that all human life is sacred—the unborn, the forgotten, the unwanted—yes, every human life. Every life matters.

Abortion is a grave moral evil. The church has taught this from its earliest years. The Didache, a first century instruction says "Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant." The teaching of the Popes and the magisterium have been clear in their teaching on abortion. Saint John Paul II, in the Gospel of Life, says: "In the name of God: respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life! Only in this direction will you find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness." Continuing the teaching of the church on abortion Pope Francis wrote in Amoris Laetitia: The Joy of Love: "If the family is the sanctuary of life, the place where life is conceived and cared for, it is a horrendous contradiction when it becomes a place where life is rejected and destroyed. 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."

Since 1973, more than 58 million unborn children have lost their lives. Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche, a community working with the special needs population, wrote a book titled Tears of Silence. In it he pens the following words, words that echo the theme of this year's March for Life (Love saves Lives): "Love is the greatest of all risks...to give myself...to you...do I dare...do I dare leap in to the risky, swirling, living waters of loving fidelity." Do we dare to build a culture of life that embraces the humanity of the unborn? Do we dare to love enough to see in the migrant, the homeless person, the imprisoned, the face of Jesus? When Our Savior came into the world there was "No room for Him at the Inn." (LK 2:7) Do we have enough love to build a world that welcomes the down-syndrome child? Do we have enough love to respect the life of the elderly and resist attempts to legalize physician assisted suicide? "Who will hear the silent cry?" Jean Vanier asks. Do we hear the silent cry of the unborn?

Together let us work together to build a civilization of love. Love saves lives. We give thanks for those who volunteer in crisis pregnancy centers and those who open their hearts and their homes to adoption. Thank you for all you do to promote a culture of life here in the Diocese of Norwich.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop of Norwich