



**Archdiocese of San Antonio**  
**Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller**



**Homily – Respect Life Mass**  
**October 3, 2015**

**My friends, I have just returned this week from the week-long visit to the U.S. by our beloved Pope Francis. He said many inspiring things, and he said many challenging things. Toward the beginning of his visit he gathered all of us Bishops from throughout the nation into St. Matthew Cathedral in Washington, D.C., and spoke to us earnestly of the mission of the Church. We have received this salvific mission from Christ. The Holy Father laid a challenge upon us bishops at that gathering to give a bold witness to Christ. I would like to share that challenge with you this morning. He told us:**

**“This kind of witness is a beacon whose light can reassure men and women sailing through the dark clouds of life that a sure haven awaits them, that they will not crash on the reefs or be overwhelmed by the waves. I encourage you, then, my brothers, to confront the challenging issues of our time. Ever present within each of them is life,**

**as gift and responsibility. The future freedom and dignity of our societies depends on how we face these challenges.**

**The innocent victim of abortion, children who die of hunger or from bombings, immigrants who drown in the search for a better tomorrow, the elderly or the sick who are considered a burden, the victims of terrorism, wars, violence and drug trafficking, the environment devastated by man's predatory relationship with nature – at stake in all of this is the gift of God, of which we are noble stewards but not masters. It is wrong, then, to look the other way or to remain silent.”**

**So my sisters and brothers, what a blessing it is to be here with all of you, the flock entrusted to my care by the Holy Spirit, to speak of these challenging issues once more. We come to celebrate the gift of life, which must never and in no way be disrespected, de-valued, or destroyed. We are the stewards of creation and of the dignity of human life.**

**“Bless the God of all, who has done wonders on earth; who fosters growth from the womb, fashioning it according to his will!” The Lord shows his power in the innocent and the helpless. When he was just a child in the womb, he proclaimed the glory of heaven by causing his cousin, John, to leap for joy in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth.**

Even before he emerged into this world at his birth, he moved in the womb of his mother inspiring her great song. Mary proclaims her Magnificat that becomes our own song. It is a challenging song, one that speaks of the proud and mighty being put low – not because God is spiteful, but because they have ignored and trampled the life of the lowly. God will protect the innocent, and we who are his people must do the same.

Pope Francis would go on in his visit with us to speak in the United Nations where he said: “The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic.” Life is our foundation, may we respect it always.

As we recently celebrated the Memorial of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, I want to speak specifically about the need to protect the littlest among us – the most vulnerable – the unborn. If we are to be a nation of “liberty and justice for all,” we cannot be a nation that ignores the death of millions and millions of innocents, so many of whom are poor or disabled. The moment life begins it must be

**respected and cherished, and all Catholics and all people of good will must never forget this foundational truth.**

**I call again on all people here to remember the Church's call to care for the poor. Life continues after birth, and so does our call to protect all life. May we remember the words of the Psalm: "the Lord hears the poor, and does not spurn those in bondage." We must remember our call to tirelessly care for the poor, the orphan, the mother who is pregnant and afraid, the immigrant, the people dying in war, the refugee. The Gospel of Life is big enough for all lives. Are our hearts big enough to take on its challenge?**

**The Holy Father challenged us bishop with his visit among us, but truly he challenged us all. So many people worked to spin what he said to suit their own world-view, their own comfort zones, and I would dare say many of us Catholics did the same. But the Church answers to Christ, not to human ideologies, and he calls us to protect life, to respect it, to foster it, and to cherish it. May we answer her call to build a communion of life.**

**Never succumb to the temptation to see those who disagree with the Gospel as our enemies. They are our brothers and sisters, and their life is to be respected as well. Never succumb to the temptation to exempt yourself from any part of the challenge of the Gospel. We are the missionaries of Christ, the missionaries of the Good News, and we**

**are people of hope. I urge you all, as the Holy Father did to us, to be “a beacon whose light can reassure men and women sailing through the dark clouds of life that a sure haven awaits them, that they will not crash on the reefs or be overwhelmed by the waves.”**

**This morning may we call upon our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe to intercede for her little ones. May she help us protect all life from conception to natural death, and in each and every moment in between. May she guide us to be truly disciples of her Son, who is the way, the truth, and the life.**