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MOST REVEREND
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My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Sunday, October 3rd, 2021, is Respect Life Sunday. The theme this year is Saint Joseph, Defender of Life. In this year of Saint Joseph, we recall how Saint Joseph protected the infant Jesus and his mother Mary. We recall, too, how his intercession still guides us in our efforts to protect the most vulnerable in our midst—the unborn, the poor, the migrant, and the elderly.

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the Foundation of a moral vision for society. The catechism states: "Of all visible creatures, only man is able to know and love his creator. He is the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake, and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the Fundamental reason for his dignity." (CCC, 356). The Catechism continues: "Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something but someone." (CCC, 357).

The dignity of the human person is the basis of catholic social teaching. This is why the church is firm in its defense of the unborn, the poor, the migrants, and the elderly. As Pope Francis notes in his encyclical On Care For our Common Home (Laudato Si): "When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities—to offer just a few examples—it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself." In *Evangelii Gaudium*, The Joy of the Gospel (no. 153), Pope Francis notes that we have created an economy of exclusion, one that does not respect life. "Just as the commandment 'Thou shall not kill' sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say 'Thou shalt not' to an economy of exclusion and inequality such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape. Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a throw away culture which is now spreading."

To combat what Pope Francis has labeled the "throw away culture", we need to reemphasize that the human person is a "someone" not a "something". Humans are not consumer goods to be discarded. The infant growing in the womb is not just a clump of cells, it is a human person created in the image and likeness of God. The same can be said of the poor, the homeless, the migrants, and the elderly. They have a dignity and worth as sons and daughters of God.

Let us strive to build a civilization of "inclusion" to counter our throw away culture. May Saint Joseph, Defender of Life, be our model and guide for the defense of every human life. Thank you for all of your efforts to build a culture of life here in the Diocese of Norwich.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop of Norwich