



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

September 22, 2025

Dear Diocesan Family,

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops over the years has dedicated the month of October as Respect Life Month and its first Sunday, as Respect Life Sunday. It does so to reiterate one of the most basic teachings of our Catholic faith – the dignity and sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. In fact, this year's theme focuses on, "LIFE: Our Sign of Hope."

I don't think any of us would deny that more than ever our world is looking for hope, especially in our violence plagued society. The biblical prophet Habakkuk who we will hear from in our first reading on Respect Life Sunday echoes the anguish many feel in these days: *"I cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not intervene. Why do you let me see ruin; why must I look at misery? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and clamorous discord" (1:2-3).*

When we watch the news or scroll through social media, we are inundated by stories of violence against human life. The tone of public debate and discourse disrespects the very dignity of the human person. We can often feel that misery surrounds us as abortion, assisted suicide, and other affronts to the dignity of the person find wide public support. All products of hopelessness and despair.

Because the world in which we live is so often hostile to the Truth, proclaiming the Gospel of Life can be difficult. In many arenas, defense of infants' lives, the lives of those who are disabled or dying, or the lives of any vulnerable human population is met with resistance. Proclaiming the Church's teaching on topics like abortion, assisted suicide, immigration, and the death penalty can provoke challenging and emotional responses from those who disagree.

Nonetheless, we cannot forget in the words of an Eastern mystic who stated, "The birth of child is a sign that God hasn't given up on us yet!" Indeed, the words of Psalm 42 reminds you and me: "Hope in God, I will praise him still my Savior and my God." These words then point us to our own mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Life – not so much on street corners, but by our own way of life and the visible care you and I show to another, especially to the stranger among us.

Faith • Hope • Charity

In a world that seems to have lost sight of the value of human life, we must pray that those whose hearts have been hardened would hear the voice of God and come to see the invaluable dignity of every person they meet. We must pray that our own hearts will also be pierced by the suffering of the most vulnerable among us.

The Church's magisterium teaches us about life issues not to impose rules but so we can freely choose what is true, good and beautiful. The Church invites us to consider God's ways because God made man and woman and God knows what is best for us and what will bring us true happiness, peace and blessing.

Then through our embracing of this God-given commission to *"Go out to all the world and tell the Good News"* (see Mk 16:15), you and I become signs of hope to all people, especially those whose goodness, value, and dignity are undermined. Pope Leo XIV encourages us, *"How important it is that each and every baptized person feel himself or herself called by God to be a sign of hope in the world today."*

May this coming observance of Respect Life Month help us to recommit ourselves to our core belief of the inviolability of human life remembering that the gift of life that God has granted us is indeed a sign of hope!

In the Name of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. A small cross is visible at the beginning of the signature, before the first letter 'D'.

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse