

## SERMON 12A 2026.

My friends today is the annual day of prayer for life – dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage.

Our duty to promote a culture of welcome and acceptance of life, and to work for better legal protection for pregnant women and unborn children. We grieve the loss of life due to abortion. We seek a change of minds and hearts about the innate dignity of the child in the womb and the care of pregnant women.

The battle to protect life continues, legislation has just been passed allowing women to induce an abortion up until birth, and no doubt further attempts will be made to extend the right to medically induced abortions up until birth as well. Info is available at the back of Church.

There is also the continuing battle over assisted dieing, with legislation being re-introduced into parliament to allow this. Life in the womb and life nearing its end continues to be under threat.

On this day the Church normally asks for donations towards its prolife activities, to help uphold the dignity of the human person- retiring collection as you leave Church.

My friends, we have recently returned to the ordinary time of the year, after all the great seasons of Lent, Easter, and the great feasts of Pentecost and Trinity, and in recent days the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, yet there is no easy re-introduction to this ordinary time for Jesus in his teaching to his disciples today, reminds them and us of the cost of being people of faith. Persecution awaits people of faith, those who proclaim the Gospel of life and love can expect to be treated as Jesus was. But there was nothing new about it even in the days of Jesus, for the prophets of old had all faced such persecution- we heard of the great prophet Jeremiah who faced tremendous suffering in his ministry, as he tried to make the people listen to Gods will at the time of the terrible Babylonian exile.

We are aware today of how many suffering Christian communities face physical threats and even death for their faith-in such places as Pakistan, around the middle and far east and in so many places. We are fortunate here, that the worst we might be expected to face is mockery and scorn at times, for upholding such values as the right to life. If those who truly suffer for their faith can remain faithful then surely so can we, persevering and remaining steadfast. But the Gospel passage where Jesus gives us this warning is also full of consolation, we are told not to be afraid, to trust in God, that God knows and sees all, that we are beloved by him, and that those who remain faithful to him, he will speak up on that last day of the final judgement. The phrase “Do not be afraid”, crops up again and again in scripture, 365 times I believe, God calling on his faithful, not to let fear or doubt or despair overwhelm them, in whatever circumstances of life we face, whether of these days of the lockdown, when many are also isolated and lonely, in the culture of death in which we seem to live, or in the face of any kind of persecution or attack –do not be afraid we are told, trust in Gods loving care for us.

And this is not just some airy fairy hope, hope without foundation, just words, it is a hope based on what God has done for us, a love demonstrated for us in a historical event, which we were reminded of in that 2<sup>nd</sup> reading from Pauls letter to the Romans, reminding us of the salvation offered to us in Christ, by his savings works. That although sin and death had come into the world through the sin of Adam and Eve; through Christ, the new Adam, life has come into the world, offered as a free gift to us, and all we have to do is believe. God, sending his own only begotten son, to become flesh for us, becoming a

**man so that he could die for us, washing away our sin and inviting us to share in his own divine nature in the Church which is his body. We truly do not have to be afraid God loves us that much, wishing to spend eternity with us, as his sons and daughters**