



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE SEMINAR SPONSORED BY THE
INTERNATIONAL RIGHT TO LIFE FEDERATION**

Saturday, 1 March 1986

Dear Friends,

1. I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican as participants in the Seminar sponsored by the International Right to Life Federation. You have come to Rome out of a common concern for human life, seeking to deepen your understanding of critical issues pertaining to the protection of human life from the moment of conception to natural death. In this you are urged on by a strong conviction of the great dignity and value of every human person, no matter how weak or unprotected by law. I am happy to have this occasion to offer you encouragement and prayerful support in your important efforts.

2. The work in which you are engaged requires a clear understanding of all the issues involved, as well as personal fortitude and patient perseverance. You come from a variety of backgrounds and social situations, but in your efforts to protect the right to life you have all experienced criticism and organised opposition. In numerous places around the world, the pro-life movement runs directly contrary to certain current trends in society. In such a context, the advice of Saint Paul in his Letter to the Romans seems particularly relevant for you. He writes: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect".

What is needed is the courage to speak the truth clearly, candidly and boldly, but never with hatred or disrespect for persons. We must be firmly convinced that the truth sets people free. It is not our own persuasive argumentation or personal eloquence, however helpful these may be, but the truth itself, which is the primary source of freedom and justice. To be pro-life then, to defend the right to life, means to stand up for the truth, especially the truth about the God-given dignity and worth of every human being. It is very encouraging to see how many people of good will throughout the world embrace the truth wholeheartedly when they are presented with facts and

with convincing scientific and moral reasons.

3. I commend you in your desire to promote collaboration among all individuals and groups who are involved in the right to life movement. For it is only through co-operative efforts and effective solidarity that the desired objectives will be achieved.

Your organisation is rightly concerned with a broad range of issues related to human life. At the same time, you know the necessity of focusing on specific problems which demand urgent attention and action, such as the evils of abortion, infanticide, euthanasia and contraception all of which are intimately connected with the Church's teaching. Whatever endeavours you undertake should be a consistent expression of an integral philosophy of life based on the belief that God is the Lord and Giver of all life.

4. You know that the Church shares your concerns. She considers it an important part of her mission to work for the protection and dignity of human life and oppose the anti-life mentality which threatens the cause of all human rights. As I stated in my Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World: "The Church firmly believes that human life, even if weak and suffering, is always a splendid gift of God's goodness. Against the pessimism and selfishness which cast a shadow over the world, the Church stands for life: in each human life she see the splendour of that 'Yes', that 'Amen', who is Christ himself. To the 'No' which assails and afflicts the world, she replies with this living 'Yes', thus defending the human person and the world from all who plot against and harm life".

Be assured, then, of my great interest in your worthy endeavours and plans. I am convinced that the magnitude of the influence of the pro-life movement on the world and the full value of its contribution to humanity will be adequately spelled out only when the history of this generation is written. May your own vital contribution be truly blessed by God, "in whom we live and move and have our being". May he strengthen you with his grace and love. May he bless you and your families with his peace.

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