

“The Lord called me from birth, from my mother’s womb he gave me my name....The Lord has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb.”

Homily by Most Reverend John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo

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“The Lord called me from birth, from my mother’s womb he gave me my name...The Lord has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb.” My brothers and sisters, the prophet Isaiah leaves no doubt: life is a gift from God. It is a privilege to celebrate this Mass with you and to join with you today in this March for Life. And it’s amazing to see so many from our state of North Dakota here together for this great cause. In many ways, it is sad that we even have to be here. It seems absurd that we would even have to argue about the sacredness of life, but this is our world, this is the culture we live in, and this is the mission we have been given.

Jesus tells us of the man with a hundred sheep who goes looking for even one who has gone astray. And of course, this is an image of our loving God. God goes out to retrieve and protect those in danger; he comes looking for us when we have sinned, when we have gotten lost or in trouble because, as Jesus says, “It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.”

My friends, this is why we march today. It is not the will of our Father that even one little one should be lost. We march to show our nation and the world that each life matters, no matter how small, no matter how young or old, no matter what nation we come from. We march to show the people of this nation that every life matters, not only to us, but to God. It would be easy to become indifferent, to just not bother anymore. And frankly, I think that’s exactly what some people want. There are many people who hope we’ll just get tired of doing this year after year, who hope we’ll just get over it and give up. Many elected officials and judges have said that the so-called right to take the life of the unborn is the “settled law” of our land. And they think, therefore, that the case is closed and we should just pack up and go home.

But the case is not closed. As Isaiah says, “The Lord has formed me as his servant from the womb.” The case isn’t closed for us, it’s not closed for our unborn brothers and sisters, and it certainly isn’t closed for God. Jesus tells us, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for...their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.” Each one of these little ones is precious in God’s eyes, and we must never give up on their chance for life. God asks us to be strong, to be prayerful, and to be patient. If we are faithful, he will be faithful, and he will bring forth a miracle of life from what has become a culture of death.

To those of you who are veterans of the pro-life movement, we thank you for your steadfastness, for your example, and for your love for life. You inspire us to keep going, to put our trust in God’s grace and mercy, and to never give up the fight for life. You are heroes to all

of us for your willingness to stand up for life, and for your love for the little ones. We would never have gotten here without you.

To those of you who are young, I want to thank you for hearing God's voice in your heart, and for stepping forward to defend your little brothers and sisters. I have to be honest with you. For those of us who are a little older, who have seen this culture of death take hold in our nation, it's easy to get discouraged, to think that it's no use, that nothing will ever change. But, you young people give us hope. You, my young friends, give us inspiration and encouragement. You show us the beauty of the culture of life. Your energy and your joy in the gift of life are infectious. You show not only the people that march with you, but you tell the whole world that life is beautiful, it is a gift from God, it is something precious. And most importantly, you tell the world that we aren't going away. A whole new generation is rising up that is willing to take to the streets for the sake of even one little sheep that might be in danger. You are demonstrating by your presence here and at the March today that every life matters, every life is precious to God. Jesus tells us, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me."

Keep in mind, though, that we can't turn this around on our own. Just marching won't make it happen. Human effort alone won't win this fight for life. We will only see a change by the grace of God; only God can defeat the culture of death and restore a culture of life. It is his work, but he asks us to be a part of it. He tells us again that "it is not the will of your heavenly Father that even one of these little ones be lost." Jesus walks with us today and invites us into his company of friends, to be his voice, his hands, his feet, to carry on his mission in the world. So before we march, before we lobby, before we try to change any hearts, first we must pray, first we must come to the One who is Life itself, first we must allow God to change our hearts. How good it is that we are here praying together at this Mass, at the sacrifice of our Lord, because this is the most powerful thing we will do today. Let us take this spirit of prayer and the grace of Christ in the Eucharist with us today, as we witness to the gift of life.