

31st Sunday of Ordinary Time C

October 29- 30 2022 (5:15p, 8:00 a, 10:00a)

*To seek and to save what was lost*

Readings: Wisdom 11:22-12:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2; Luke 19:1-10

The Book of Wisdom poignantly reminds us that in His creative work, God does not make mistakes. Our very existence is from love. God holds each creature in existence by His will; he hates nothing He has made. Nor should we. October is Respect Life Month in the Church, an annual observance that seeks to educate Catholics about our crucial duty to faithfully articulate respect for the gift of human life in all its stages.

On the fundamental issue of protecting innocent life, the Church's conviction is clear. But consider that nearly 2/3 of all Americans were born **after** *Roe v. Wade* in 1973; they never have lived in a country without federally legalized abortion. While this presents unique challenges to be sure, it also opens opportunities to speak with teenagers and young adults. How we as Catholics present ourselves in this moment is critical. We must be as compassionate as we are clear.

While the *Dobbs* Supreme Court decision represents a victory for justice for the unborn and the rule of law, justice alone is not sufficient. The [bishops' statement](#) stresses: "To build a world in which all are welcome requires not only justice, but compassion, healing, and above all, unconditional love."<sup>1</sup> It requires "speaking the truth that abortion not only unjustly kills a preborn child, but also gravely wounds women, men, families, and the nation as a whole," highlighting how all is interrelated.

The focus of this year's message is to help us "better see *who we can be as a nation* by truly understanding *what we owe to one another as members of the same human family.*" And what is that exactly? Following the words of today's Gospel, it is "to seek and to save what was lost." When we turn away from the good, the true and the beautiful, our vision is clouded, our consciences dulled. We become lost; many have no idea where to turn. The moral confusion in our society has led many good people to make very bad moral decisions, often without fully comprehending their actions. Some may even be invincibly ignorant, their consciences so

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, "Building a Culture of Life in a Post-Roe World"

poorly formed. Our response of love must take this into account.

In his 1995 letter to the [Fourth World Conference](#) on Women of the United Nations, Pope John Paul II used an interesting phrase, stating: “A **radical solidarity** with women **requires that the underlying causes** which make a child unwanted **be addressed.**”<sup>2</sup> Thus, until we agree that societal problems have a moral foundation, we can never address the underlying causes. And that will require radical solidarity, not unlike the idea of accompaniment of which Pope Francis has so frequently spoken.

It means speaking to wider society, extending a hand of compassion to those in need, without judgment, condition or expectation of repayment. This is how we build a civilization of love. But what we cannot do is fall prey to the societal forces that weaken our voice in a misguided attempt to show solidarity with the world.

Worse than counterproductive, it undermines our ability to witness. Tragically, I believe that misguided approach has been adopted recently by the Pontifical Academy of Life, founded by none other than St. John Paul II himself. It is the topic of [today's bulletin column](#), one I could never have imagined needing to write. The Pontifical Academy has sadly lost its way, inexplicably appointing members who support legal abortion. The online version includes several links; I urge you to read it.

Saint Paul continuously prayed for his people, that God would make them “worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose.” May we indeed be worthy of our calling to effectively witness and show **radical solidarity** with our brothers and sisters in the work to defend the sanctity of all human life.

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<sup>2</sup> Saint Pope John Paul II, Letter to the Fourth World Conference on Women of the United Nations, 29 June 1995, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul.