



THY KINGDOM COME (Mt. 6:10)
DIOCESE OF CHANDA (CHANDRAPUR)

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Pastoral Letter on Year of Life - 2025

Dear Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and my dear people,

Thy Kingdom Come!
Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

This pastoral letter is in preparation for the observance of the Year of life 2025 in our diocese. We all know as per our Pastoral Plan the next year is going to be the 'Year of Life'. Coincidentally the Year 2025 is announced by Pope Francis as the Jubilee Year. I already have written a pastoral letter on the history and the importance of the Jubilee Year (Ref. *Chanda Samachar* XLVII, 5 &6, Sept-Dec, 2024, Pp. 2-4). We shall celebrate these two observances meaningfully with various activities. Here I share with you some reflections on the value and the source of life for our favorable considerations.

The basic concept about life is that God is the source of life and we are only stewards (Jer. 2:7, Dt. 11:12 & Rom. 11:36). God is the owner and source of life, and we have to respect it, sustain it and serve it. For this reason, any act such as abortion, murder, suicide, euthanasia etc. are against life and are considered sin. The Fifth Commandment – you shall not kill, is as an act against life and God, for God is the source of life.

Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches on sanctity of life as follows: "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being" (CCC, 2258). So, every human life in whatever condition deserve respect. Everyone is bound to protect

human life and each has the right to defend one's own life. With regard to abortion the Church teaches us that it is the question of helplessness of a human person, who is ever denied his right to defend one's own life. "The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority. These human rights depend neither on single individual nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the State; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death" (CCC, 2273).

The Fifth Commandment – "You shall not kill" (Ex 23:7, Mt 5:21) categorically prohibits any termination of human life in whatever way. It is one of the basic propositions of Holy Bible. Unequally in the created order, it is human life which is specially protected in the Bible. The fundamental prohibition on killing, and the basis for it, is set out in Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human, shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind" (Gen. 1:27). Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good. Every human life from the moment of conception until death is saved because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and Holy God (CCC, 2319).

The Church's teaching on sanctity of life is that human life is saved from the moment of conception until natural death. The Church believes that everyone has the right to life that shall be protected and valued at every stage. Human beings are created by God in God's image (Gen. 1:27). Pope St. John Paul II has the following to say to state the incomparable worth of human person: "Man is called to fullness of life which far exceeds the dominions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 2). Recalling the 25 years of *Evangelium Vitae* Pope Francis said in his message at General Audience (25 March 2020): "Respect, defend, love and serve life, every life, every human life! It is only on this path that you will find justice, development, freedom, peace and happiness". Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* (25 July 1968) teaches that "God is the source of life", for he said: "transmission of human life is a most serious role in which married people collaborate freely and

responsibly with God the creator" (# 9). In the encyclical he affirmed the teachings of the Church regarding married love, responsible parenthood, and the rejection of artificial contraception.

Life is God's gift and it is given gratuitously. God commanded not to take away life but also not to hinder or obstruct the way flow of life. God wishes that we respect all forms of life – human, animal and vegetation. Injury, obstruction of life, and taking away of any form of life, goes against God's commandment – you shall not kill. In the Year of life that we observe in 2025 we shall develop an orientation for 'prolife' and resolve to respect and protect life. God bless everyone.



Yours devotedly in Christ

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Ephrem Nariculam". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

† Ephrem Nariculam
Bishop, Diocese of Chanda

NB: Kindly read the translation of this pastoral letter in local languages in any of the Sundays in January 2025.