

Reflection

God has a plan for my life

God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments. Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about.

Blessed John Henry Newman



Resources

WEBSITES

www.catholicbishops.ie
Irish Bishops' Conference website

www.dayforlife.org
Day for Life website

RELEVANT PUBLICATION

From Crisis to Hope:
Working to Achieve the Common Good
The Council for Justice and Peace of the
Irish Episcopal Conference

Available from
the Catholic Communications Office
www.catholicbishops.ie



Day for Life is celebrated yearly by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition: www.dayforlife.org

Day for Life Prayer

We thank you Lord for the gift of life.

Help us to appreciate the unique dignity of every person and the individual contribution they make to the world, in fulfilment of the task you give them.

Enable us by your grace to promote their wellbeing, serving you in one another in a spirit of generosity, through Christ Jesus Our Lord. Amen.

'Only the great certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all its setbacks and failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can then give the courage to act and to persevere.'

Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n.35



www.catholicbishops.ie



www.facebook.com/pages/Irish-Catholic-Bishops-Conference/186044185648



www.twitter.com/catholicbishops



www.youtube.com/user/IrishCatholicBishops



VERITAS
www.veritas.ie

DAY FOR LIFE MESSAGE

SUNDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2011

A call to solidarity and hope in difficult times

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

(Romans 12:2)



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLÍCEACH ÉIREANN



Day for Life this year reflects on what it means to live a full and happy life. It takes as its starting point the words of Pope Benedict during his recent visit to England, when he said: 'Happiness is something we all want, but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.'

(Pope Benedict XVI, *The Big Assembly: Address to Young People*, Twickenham, England, 17 September 2010)

In a culture that often measures happiness in terms of pleasure, success and money, many are thinking again about what brings true meaning and joy to life. The recent upheaval in banking and the economy in particular has left many individuals and families facing an uncertain future.

As a Christian, the deepest joy in life does not come from what I have or what I can achieve. It comes from the knowledge that even before I was formed in my mother's womb I was known and loved by my Creator (Jer 1:5; Psalm 139): that from the first moment of conception to natural death I am loved personally by God and have an eternal future. It comes from knowing that every minute of life is enfolded by God's loving care and that life itself will not end in emptiness. As Blessed John Henry Newman once wrote, 'God has created me to do him some definite service ... He has not created me for naught.' God has a plan for me and 'that plan is for good, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope' (Jer 29:1-14).

God's love offers a life that is 'truly' life because it is a life not measured by achievements but in the very fact that I am – and that I am eternally loved. In the certain knowledge that 'nothing can separate us from the love of Christ' (Rm 8:39), my life can still be rich in meaning and constant in hope in the face of setbacks, suffering and even death itself. God's love gives us the possibility of persevering day by day with patient joy, spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect.

When setbacks do come, the friendship and care shown to us by others becomes a vital source of comfort, meaning and hope. Building a culture of life also commits us to building a civilisation of love: it involves showing practical solidarity and concern for those around us who are in need. A society that protects those who are vulnerable and weak contributes to our shared happiness: a society that shows love and concern for others who are in need enhances our quality of life.

One of the most striking examples of this is found in the story of the Visitation. In a most extraordinary act of generosity and selfless concern for others, St Luke tells us that Mary, having just received the news that she had conceived a child through the power of the Holy Spirit, set out across the hill country of Judea to give support to her cousin Elizabeth. In one of the most powerful affirmations of the sacredness of life in the womb, Luke tells us that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child in her womb 'leaped for joy' (Lk 1:44). We are also told that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months, enough time to help with preparations for the birth. At the news of the birth 'the relatives and neighbours shared their joy' (Lk 1:58).

What is particularly striking about this story is the joy that follows the news of new life and the practical help given by family, friends and good neighbours. A culture of respect for life is essential for a civilisation of love. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI:

Openness to life is at the centre of true development. When a society moves towards the denial or suppression of life, it ends up no longer finding the

necessary motivation and energy to strive for man's true good ... The acceptance of life strengthens moral fibre and makes people capable of mutual help.¹

As a society we have a strong tradition of good neighbourliness and of showing mutual help. Day for Life is an opportunity to ask ourselves if there is anything more we can do to be of help to our neighbours, to improve the quality of life of others and of society as a whole, especially in these financially challenging times.

By embracing a culture of life, and standing with those marginalised and deemed 'useless' or a 'burden' on society, we can turn the values of our consumer society upside down. We can contribute to the happiness and quality of life of all by ensuring respect for the life of every person, from conception to natural death. We can work toward creating a civilisation of love, rooted in a culture of life, by reaching out to those who are suffering as a result of the long recession.

Day for Life 2011 is a call for us to work for a society in which all are valued as created, loved by God, redeemed by Christ; not for their fame, or power or what they own but for their intrinsic worth. It is a call to rediscover the truth that our deepest happiness and joy comes from the knowledge that we are all loved by God from the very beginning, and that by trusting in God's love, through our setbacks and difficulties, our own 'joy will be complete' (Jn 10:10).

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 28.