



Diocese of Dunkeld

Bishop's House, 29 Roseangle, Dundee DD1 4LS

31st May 2017

### **Feast of the Visitation of our Lady, Day for Life.**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Each year, around the Feast of the Visitation of our Lady, on the 31st May or the nearest Sunday, we celebrate the Day for Life, a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage, and in every condition.

Human life is a sacred and precious gift from God and must be treated with the upmost respect. This is true at every moment of life, from its first beginnings to its natural death. In the womb we grow and develop as full human beings, not as potential human beings. We read in the Old Testament: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I sanctified you" (Jeremiah 1:5).

The Day for Life 2017 has a particular poignancy and significance. This year marks the Fiftieth Anniversary of the passing of the Abortion Act in the United Kingdom. Since the Act was passed in the UK more than nine million unborn children have been killed and countless mothers and fathers have been hurt by abortion. Indeed, the World Health Organisation, an agency of the UN, has stated that abortion is the leading cause of death worldwide, ending the lives of more than 40 million children each year.

The right to life is the most fundamental of all rights. Without that right all other rights are lost. At present, human life in the womb is not well protected, leaving unborn babies at risk of losing their lives to abortion, and mothers to the damage of abortion. Vulnerable people such as the disabled, elderly and frail are increasingly in danger from pressures to introduce assisted suicide or euthanasia. Campaigners have been relentless in pursuing their aim of introducing such laws. Worryingly there is a broad coalition and considerable political support for extending the threats to life including extending abortion to birth for any reason. Even more worryingly as the culture of death has grown the right to conscience is also becoming increasingly eroded.

Thus, this year's Day for Life is not just an occasion to reflect on the sacredness of human life but an opportunity for all of us to renew our commitment to living out our baptismal promises, by putting our faith in the sacredness of life into action.