



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

January 29, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

On the evening of January 19, the night before the Presidential Inauguration, I watched as President-elect Biden and others gazed out at the memorial honoring the many lives lost to the coronavirus in the past year. It was a somber moment as the now familiar *Amazing Grace* was sung for all to hear, and remember. What struck me most was the fact that just a few days later, around January 22, we would ordinarily be marching to mourn the taking of millions of lives lost not to a sickness but by the grievously sinful act of abortion of the unborn.

These are certainly challenging times brought on by a serious illness, the impact of which is being felt in every aspect of life not only here in the United States of America, but throughout the whole world. Despite effective, worldwide, virtual and spontaneous means of communication there remains a somehow depersonalizing distance between us. Many remain separated from loved ones, coworkers, neighbors, parish communities and, yes, even from the whole congregation being present at the Mass itself!

As today we are recalling the March for Life, we can say something similar about the many technical advances that allow us to see the image of the developing fetus; it is there and it is real, despite there being no physical contact between the viewer and the living image on the screen. This creates, for some, a distancing or barrier, and it seems that individual circumstances can somehow determine the acceptance or rejection of what is presented there on the screen.

For others, the perceived distance creates a greater excitement, longing, and emotional bond. Indeed, the emotional bond between and among living beings is a reality created by God's design. Some may choose to accept that and some may not, but we hold this belief: the Blessed Trinity of three Divine Persons in One Eternal God creates the human person to live in generous, self-giving love in this world, created by God for our growth into completion, and that eternal life with God, the ultimate Good, is the ultimate reward.

The Bible records for all time the image of the Original Sin of our first parents (Genesis 3) and it is there that we find an explanation (not an excuse) for our inadequacies when confronted with the choice between good and bad; doing righteous deeds or evil ones. The Creator offers the reward for good and righteous deeds; the great Deceiver/Accuser (Satan) offers the sorrows that accompany bad or evil deeds. An attempted depersonalization of God creates a distance so pervasive that God becomes an "image" and so do the concepts of society and human dignity, making it easier to succumb to the frustrating inadequacy of human attempts to wholly address human problems.

As January ends, when we would normally have made our way to Washington D.C. for the national March for Life, we, though experiencing this virtual image, recall with fervor and resolution the words taken from the First Letter of Saint John: “you know Him who is from the beginning...you know Him who is the Father... you are strong, and the Word of God remains in you” (1Jn2:14). Through Baptism and fidelity to the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Gospel that is Life in God, our strength and our hope lies in what cannot be seen...the victory that conquers the world is our faith (1Cor5:4).

What we see before us is an image – each one, born and unborn – the image of the real, soul-endowed living body of a person created by God to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him forever in the next. That is why today, as we mark this testimony of our Faith, I impart my blessing on each and every one of you:

“May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He cause His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace.”

And may the peace and blessing of Almighty God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you forever and ever. Amen.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Libasci", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first name.

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.
Tenth Bishop of Manchester