

## JESUS: THE LIFE

December 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In this, my third pastoral letter written during our year of preparation for our Golden Jubilee, I present to you Jesus, the Life

I am sure you remember the classic horror movie, *Frankenstein*, based on the novel by Mary Shelley. In it, the mad Doctor Frankenstein pieces together a man from various corpses, and then with lightning captured by his laboratory equipment, animates the monster...with ultimately disastrous consequences. In the movie version, as the monster stirs, the mad doctor yells, "He's alive!"

I would suggest to you that this novel represents the world's vision of "life." To the world, life is a formula, a combination of chemicals, a random happenstance. The world would not recognize that human life is created to have a superior dignity because of the intangible element of the soul. Thus, you have a world-wide outcry when a lion is poached in Africa, but world-wide silence on the millions killed in the womb over the decades. People will speak about the "pain" suffered by vegetables and trees, but ignore the plight of the refugee, the marginalized, the homeless and the helpless.

The Bible teaches us that God is the Author of all life. The first chapter of Genesis, written mainly by an unknown author we call "the priest," presents a beautiful liturgical procession. The "worship area" is prepared first as light, sea, sky and dry land are arranged. Then the procession begins, with a progressive succession of plants, fishes, birds, beasts, and finally, in the final place in the procession (the place of the priest), Adam (which means "dust/dirt"). Besides being priest in this procession, he is prophet---he names the animals, actually "cataloguing" them (which means speaking a word over them). He is also king/steward. God commands Adam to care for creation, and have mastery over it. He is given the help of Eve, "Mother of the living."

Human life is the pinnacle of creation. Mankind---Adam and Eve--- is made in the image and likeness of God. It is through their mutual self-giving that more human life enters creation. And yet, the life they live is not just like the rest of the creatures. They have an immortal soul, equipped with intellect and free will---and that misuse of free will would lead to the fall from grace of the human race. We always want to be like God! That was what the serpent promised Adam and Eve if they ate of the forbidden fruit. It is what modern man still desires with all his heart: to be God.

And so, couple a secular mentality which sees life as a purely biological entity, and the human desire to control everything (be God) and all sorts of aberrations arise. Man interferes in the sacred act of reproduction. While often this technology can be good and noble, or at least morally neutral, too often it has also often resulted in human life

being treated as a commodity. In addition, the sanctity of the womb has been breached. Godless countries such as China force abortions on women who have conceived more often than the state allows (just raised from once to twice). Godless doctors in our own country, fueled by a healthy monetary profit and court decisions which spit in the collective eye of human rights, massacre the unborn every day, ironically choosing to be God while often not admitting His existence.

The source of all this moral evil is the fact that society views life simply as biological. In adopting this viewpoint, person, ironically, finds their inner selves lifeless, drained of all meaning and ultimately frustrated. From the time of Adam and Eve, choosing what is not of God, and choosing to be God, has drained every bit of true life from our souls, and made us “deader than dead.”

We also cling to our human life as an end in itself, as though there were nothing else beyond this world. Those who amass great wealth only for themselves, those who seek positions of power and prestige, who want to make a name for themselves without regard to what they can do to alleviate human misery, these folks have “deified” human life. “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!” How pitiable!

In His great mercy, “when we were dead to sin” as Saint Paul says (Ephesians 2:5), God sent His only Son as our Savior. Jesus, by His Incarnation, by taking on human flesh, entered into every aspect of what makes life truly human---as the author of the letter to the Hebrews (4:15) says, “like us in all things but sin” (which is less than human). On the night before He died, when His disciples were fearful and lost and afraid of what was to come, Thomas says they don’t know where this “way” to which Jesus summons them will lead. The Lord says, so beautifully and clearly, “I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life.” (John 14:6)

Jesus embraced and enjoyed every day of His human life. It was because He loved life that surrendering it for us became the ultimate Sacrifice, and freed us to enter into a new and eternal life. He gave us the Church and Sacraments, the vehicles through which His Life comes to us (Baptism) and deepens (Confirmation, Eucharist), is shared with others (Marriage and Orders), and if needed, is renewed (Anointing and Reconciliation).

When we empty ourselves of the desire to be God, and realize our true freedom consists in embracing not our will but God’s we are truly alive! When we share our resources with the needy, when we stand up for the rights of the marginalized, when we unite ourselves to the Lord’s Sacrifice by frequent participation in the Eucharist, we are truly alive! When at last we hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:23) and leave this world to enter one which lasts eternally, we are most truly alive!

And so, allow me to suggest some practical ways to live the true Life which is Jesus Himself. Stay in touch with Jesus by setting aside time for prayer; not just time to say prayers, but time to rest in His Presence and absorb in our very being His life-giving

Presence. Receive the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, as often as you can, even more often than weekly on Sunday. Make sure the life of the Trinity beams within your soul by frequently going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Share your life of Faith with your children and family: let religion and faith be frequent conversations topics when the family is together. Share the Light and Life of Christ with those who wander in darkness: gently invite back those whose practice of faith is weak or non-existent. Be life-giving to the hopeless, the abandoned and the marginal, either by your physical presence or monetary support or prayerful support. Be unwavering supporters of the most defenseless lives of all: the unborn targeted by a society which thinks in biological terms only. Enjoy every moment of this earthly life---it is the gift of God, the Author of all life--- but always realize that, as great as life on earth is, we eventually must let go of it to move on a New and Eternal Life, bought with the Savior's Broken Body and Poured-out Blood.

May we, as God's People, spend another 50 years, believing, welcoming and serving, and as always, like Saint Martha, may be always be friends of Jesus.

God's Blessings on you!

*Father Al*

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Pastor

