

**“Let Your Light So Shine before Men, That They May See Your Good Works  
and Give Glory to the Father . . . ” (Mt 5:16)**

4th of the Series of Pastoral Letters of His Grace,  
the Most Reverend Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D., Archbishop of Caceres,  
*On the Rediscovery of the Relation of Faith to Moral Life*

**Introduction**

In my first pastoral letter, I stated the reason why the Church has the right and duty to speak about socio-political issues. In the second, I set forth the guiding moral principles that have helped us in our discernment of the issues contained in the RH Bill. In the third, I dealt with the special concerns on the bill and the Church response to these issues. Now, what do we do next?

In this final pastoral letter, I wish that we rediscover the newness of our faith and remind ourselves once more that our faith is not simply a matter of believing in doctrines but a “lived knowledge of Christ, a living remembrance of his commandments, and a truth to be lived out” in daily life.<sup>1</sup>

**Objective of the Pastoral Letter**

Allow me, therefore, to reflect with you on these points:

1. Faith gives rise to and calls for a consistent life commitment.
2. Faith entails and brings to perfection the acceptance and observance of God’s commandments.

**Faith: Consistent Witness to the Sanctity of Human Life**

Our faith demands a consistent, unconditional respect for, defense and promotion of the dignity, freedom and right to life of every person.<sup>2</sup> This is not only a personal but an ecclesial and social concern. Our faith must be a confession that we are God’s own people, called to proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of Life and Truth. By catechesis, preaching, personal dialogue, and educational activity, we proclaim and help people discover the newness and relevance of our faith in Jesus and his Gospel. We are people of life and for life! Thus, we must not fear hostility or unpopularity! Further, our being people for life must be celebrated not only in the liturgy but above all, in daily living.<sup>3</sup>

**Faith: Acceptance and Daily Observance of the Commandments**

Some proudly profess that they are Catholics yet openly support the RH Bill. What does faith require of a true Catholic? Saint John tells us: “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth . . . And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says I know him but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”<sup>3</sup>

Our profession of faith must lead us to daily observance of the commandments. It must be a commitment that promotes life actively and develops particular ways of thinking and acting which serve life.<sup>4</sup> How do we develop a character or a specific attitude, which serves life?

## **Challenge to Action**

### ***To Parents***

Summoned to proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of Life in the family, parents lead their children to authentic freedom through their choices and concrete actions that reveal that human life is a gift received, in order to be given as a gift.<sup>5</sup> As we close the month of the Lady of the Rosary, may every family celebrate the Gospel of life through common recitation of the rosary and daily exercise of love and self-giving.

### ***To Civil Leaders***

Entrusted with the task of serving the people and the common good, government officials have a duty to make courageous choices in support of life. In a democratic system, where laws and policies are made on the basis of consensus of the majority, the decisions of Catholic politicians cannot renounce their personal responsibility in conscience to God.

### ***To Priests and All Those Responsible for Catechesis and Formation of Consciences***

Faced with opposing points of view on the RH Bill, the members of the Church, who share in different ways in the prophetic mission of Christ, should not betray the truth and their own mission by proposing personal ideas contrary to the Gospel of life.<sup>6</sup> Positively, priests need to possess a thorough and accurate understanding of Church teaching with respect to life and death issues.<sup>7</sup>

### ***To Those Involved in the Mass Media***

Called to combine freedom of information with respect for every person and profound sense of humanity, media practitioners need to present noble models of life and make room for instances of people's positive and heroic love for others. With great respect, they should also present the positive values of sexuality and human love, and not insist on what defiles and cheapens human dignity.<sup>8</sup>

### ***To Health Care Personnel: Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Health Care Assistants, Etc.***

As guardians and servants of human life, health care professionals should commit themselves to absolute respect for human life and its sacredness. They are called to become living images of Christ and of his Church in loving the sick and the suffering,<sup>9</sup> to become witnesses of the Gospel of Life.<sup>10</sup>

### ***To All Christians, Non-Christians, Groups and Associations***

The issue of life and its defense is not a concern of Christians alone. "No single person or group has a monopoly on the defense and promotion of life. These are everyone's task and responsibility."<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

Let me conclude with the words of John Paul II: “It is impossible to further the common good of the society without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop. Only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential goods of society, such as democracy and peace. There can be no true democracy [like ours] without the recognition of every person’s dignity and without respect for his or her rights.”<sup>12</sup>

Let the light of Christ shine always upon us that we may live as people of life and for life! In this way, we can tell the whole world that the Philippines, indeed, is the beacon of hope in Asia!

*Given this 28th of October, 2010 in the Year of Our Lord, from the Office of the Archbishop, City of Naga.*

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Archbishop of Caceres

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<sup>1</sup> See, John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 88; Pope Benedict XVI’s Message for the 2011 World Youth Day, “Planted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith.”

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, nos. 39, 38.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Jn 1:5-6; 2:3-6.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 76.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 92.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 82.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. Leonardo Z. Legaspi, OP, DD, 4th Part of the Pastoral Letter *On the Pastoral Care for the Family to the Clergy, the Religious and All the Faithful in the Archdiocese of Caceres* (February 10, 2002)

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 98.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 53.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. John Paul II, Message to the Participants at the International Congress for Assistance to the Dying, in *L’osservatore Romano*, March 18, 1992, no. 6.

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 91.

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 101.