

This weekend we welcome Sr. Michael and Sr. Mary Elizabeth from the Little Sisters of the Poor. I will shorten my reflection so as to give sister some time to talk about their ministry and how you can help support them in caring for the poor.

Also, just a note that this coming week workers will be grinding down the concrete floor in our entryway about a fourth inch and cutting back the wall by our kiosk four feet. We have boarded up the baptismal font for the time being to protect it. I saw someone earlier this week tap the top of the wood over the font and bless himself.

This weekend the Church is pro-life weekend where the Church celebrates the gift of life, and really all those who work to support life, protect it, and are at the service of life. Over 100,000 people participated in the March for Life in Washington D.C., and thousands more participated in marches at state capitals around the country.

We often associate the pro-life movement with the right to life of children in the womb. And this is good. Every child is a gift from God, with his or her own unique personality and gifts. Children must be cherished, celebrated, and protected.

Keep in mind that the pro-life movement also includes extending mercy and offering forgiveness to our brothers and sisters working to pick up the broken pieces from an abortion or a choice against life.

Additionally, being pro-life means helping improve the *quality of life* of those already born. Many of our brothers and sisters struggle with basic clothing, food, and shelter. Those who help increase the quality of life of the poor also contribute to a culture of life.

Last week I spoke about the heroic work of Mary Jo Copeland and her work at Sharing and Caring Hands. Every week she washes the feet of the poor. A big thank you to families that have brought in socks, t-shirts, blankets, and towels for Sharing and Caring Hands. We will continue to receive these items for the next couple of weeks and bring them to Sharing and Caring Hands.

Some of you have also brought in diapers for West Metro Options for Women and ICA. Thank you! And this weekend many of you have brought in food for ICA. Thank you!

And of course, we have ministries such as St. Stephen's Breakfast Ministry, Loaves and Fishes, and Feed my Starving Children mobile meal pack (March 13th – 100,000 meals). Thank you to all of our parishioners who participate in these ministries, or any ministry that helps increase the quality of life for our brothers and sisters in need.

The pro-life movement also means protecting and supporting life at the other end of the spectrum. For example, euthanasia is when a physician administers a lethal injection to a patient. It is illegal in the United States. Physician assisted suicide (PAS), however, is unfortunately becoming more commonly accepted. It is now legal in seven states and the District of Columbia. PAS is where a licensed physician makes available a lethal dose of drugs for a patient to take his or her own life.

In speaking to medical leaders in 2016, Pope Francis said, "Let's be clear – physician assisted suicide is part of a 'throwaway culture' that offers a 'false compassion' and treats a human person as a problem." For Pope Francis, true compassion means 'suffering with,' someone, not seeing their disappearance as a good thing.

In this light, I can't help but help but thank God for Christians and people of good will who "suffer with" the lonely, the sick, and those bearing terrible pain. I think of a granddaughter caring for her grandfather as he nears death; a nurse caring for someone dying of cancer; or a doctor who does all he can to help a patient, even saying, "You are in my prayers." I think of our staff at Deephaven Woods and our own Sr. Anjaly who provides such beautiful care to our residents.

And I think of the Little Sisters of the Poor, who serve the elderly poor by providing not just food, water, and a place to live, but also compassion and love. They embody those words from Isaiah our prophet in our first reading. *No more shall people call you "Forsaken, "or your land "Desolate, " but you shall be called "My Delight, " and your land "Espoused."* Through their care, our elderly and those suffering from disease realize they are not "forsaken," but rather "espoused" to God in love.

The Little Sisters of the Poor contribute to a culture of life by their witness and ministry, reminding us that each person is valued not because of what they do, but because of who they are. For those suffering, they are the face and hands of Jesus.

As many of you know, I am pretty old. I hope that in just a few years, they will be willing to take care of me. I am not sure if they also accept dogs because I will most like have one by then.

In all seriousness, thank you sisters for your tremendous witness and all you do for the poor and for the Church! May God bless you and reward you! At this time, I would like to invite Sr. Michael to share with you the work they do in their ministry and how you can support them. Please welcome Sr. Michael!