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Day for Life 2006

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DAY FOR LIFE PRAYER

We thank you Lord
for the Gift of Life.
Every human life is
your gift to the world.
Each person is unique,
with a task you have entrusted
to them alone.
Help us always to promote
the basic rights of all,
and to recognise that we are
all parts of One Body,
dependent upon one another,
and called to share a common life.

Amen

www.dayforlife.org

The Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Ireland, Scotland and England & Wales join together annually to celebrate Day for Life – a day instigated by the late Pope John Paul II, dedicated to celebrating the sanctity of human life from its very beginning to its natural end.

This year's Day for Life will celebrate the life and presence of people with disabilities in the Church and in society today and will call for those lives to be respected and defended in full.

The Day for Life 2006 is being celebrated on **Sunday 1 October 2006** in parishes throughout Ireland.

The new Day for Life website

– www.dayforlife.org –

features the first ever podcasts from the Bishop of Killala, Most Reverend John Fleming, Archbishop of Glasgow, Most Reverend Mario Conti, and the Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, the Right Reverend Bernard Longley, as well as video clips featuring the integral part played by people with disabilities within the local life of our communities. In addition to the website, this leaflet is being sent out to parishes throughout Ireland to raise awareness of the gift of human life –

that all human lives are to be valued, celebrated, cherished and respected.

Please log on to
www.catholiccommunications.ie
for information on the Irish Bishops' Conference, its agencies and commissions.

DAY FOR LIFE



2006

‘What is the use of access ramps to buildings if I don’t have access to life?’

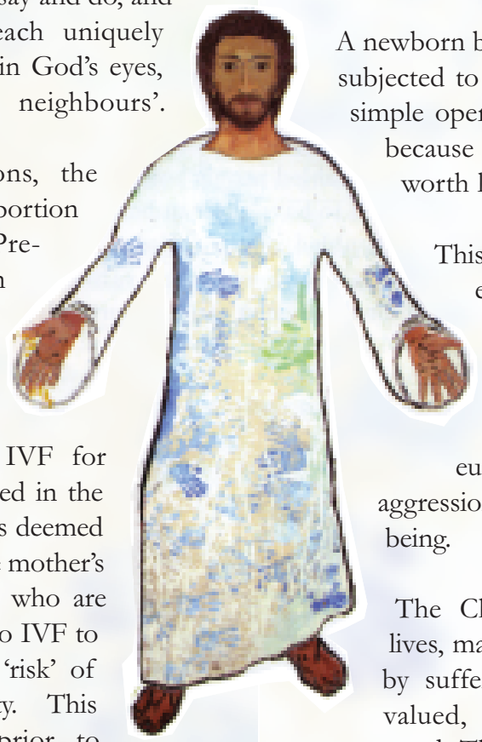
These are the words of a disability activist, pointing out a paradox in how people with disabilities are viewed in our society. Welcome efforts are made to provide ramps, hearing loops or other aids which help them participate in everyday activities. At the same time, many go to great lengths to stop people with disabilities being born.

Pregnant women are urged to have their unborn babies tested and, if found to have a disability, aborted. Refusal of such eugenic tests often meets with disapproval, rather than support. In Britain, a baby with a disability can be aborted legally right up to birth.

The Church takes a radically different stance:

- insisting that every person, irrespective of age, ability, health, sex or race, has a right to life
- calling for those lives to be respected in full
- supporting interventions to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Every member of the human family – whether a foetus, an infant or an adult – is made in the image of God and is literally irreplaceable. People of all abilities have a crucial contribution to make to the life of the Church and the world. In what they say and do, and in their sheer presence, each uniquely testifies to what is precious in God’s eyes, and should be in their neighbours’.



For this and other reasons, the Church rejects not only abortion but also the use of Pre-implantation Diagnosis in order to eliminate – at an even earlier stage of life – those who have a disability.

It is standard practice in IVF for multiple embryos to be created in the petri dish; only those embryos deemed ‘normal’ are transferred to the mother’s womb. Sadly, some couples who are not infertile are also turning to IVF to reduce what is seen as the ‘risk’ of having a child with a disability. This involves seeing embryos prior to implantation as commodities: subject to quality control and destined for destruction if considered ‘substandard’.

Of course, very many parents happily offer unconditional love and welcome to their children after they are born. But the unconditional welcome of children of all abilities as gifts from God is increasingly undermined particularly, but not only, before birth.

A newborn baby with a disability may also be subjected to lethal discrimination: denied a simple operation, or even food and fluids, because that baby’s life is judged not worth living.

This may also occur later in life – for example, in the case of an older person who has had a stroke. If the aim in withholding a medical procedure is precisely to make the person die, this is euthanasia: an indefensible act of aggression against an innocent human being.

The Church teaches that all human lives, marked as they are in diverse ways by suffering as well as joy, are to be valued, celebrated, cherished and respected. This is no less true if the person has a disability which causes them some unavoidable and, perhaps, significant suffering. As people in this situation and their carers often emphasise, suffering can and does coexist with a life that is profoundly valuable – both in itself and in what that person can achieve.

There is something tyrannical about a society which seeks to remove suffering by denying life to the people who are perceived to suffer.

Our society desperately needs a new vision in which the gift of human life is always cherished and respected, those who suffer are treated and cared for, and each person is enabled to play their unique part in our common life together.

As Catholics, we are committed to advocating the right to life of everyone.

Day for Life is an opportunity to renew our commitment to do everything we can in our own parishes to create more inclusive and welcoming communities as an effective sign of what our society can be.

What is Day for Life 2006 for?

- To celebrate the life and presence of people with disabilities in the Church and in society today.
- To defend the lives of those with a disability often threatened before birth by genetic screening and procured abortion, or by being denied necessary medical treatment when ill or old.
- To promote a more just and humane society in which all can reach their full potential.