



EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON OF BROOKLYN
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
109 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201-4212
Tel: (718) 237-9913 Fax: (718) 243-0444
chancerystmaron@verizon.net www.stmaron.org

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Feast of Saint Theresa the Little Flower

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Church in the United States observes October as Respect Life Month. This is the time to give thanks for God's gift of life and to rekindle once again in each of us the responsibility to care, protect, and defend the gift of life. The theme of this year is "Live the Gospel of Life" in commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of Saint Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*). As Pope John Paul articulated so well, the unborn, the elderly, those with special needs, and the marginalized are all worthy of the right to life.

We thus value the culture of life, for **God created us in his image and likeness**, and life is a sacred gift, precious in God's eyes.

Yet, to be honest, we must recognize that even though life is so valuable and beautiful, we live in a world that promotes a culture of death. Man believes he owns, and has every right to end life whenever it presents a "burden" to him. In this culture, the human person is evaluated only in terms of "function" and "usefulness" and there is a deep disconnect from God. Therefore, instead of life being precious and protected, it becomes a commodity, threatened by abortion or euthanasia.

Despite these challenges, however, there are ways to build a culture of life. Prayer is the foundation. We **pray** to honor and defend the gift of life, from conception to natural death. We also **advocate**, with a strong and reasonable advocacy, to promote in our society and in all aspects of government a sincere respect for life as a gift from God.

Lastly, let us redouble our efforts **in our own families** to cultivate the virtues, teach the dignity of, and promote the sanctity of life. May our families continue to help us in this sacred duty.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Gregory John Mansour
GJM/rs