



Carpe Diem

Anglicans For Life's Official Newsletter



MARCH 2025

AnglicansForLife.org

What Do You See?

The Rt. Rev. Darryl Fitzwater, Bishop Coadjutor of the Missionary Diocese of All Saints

Editor's Note: This article is a reflection of the sermon preached at the Anglican Prayer & Worship Service at The Falls Church Anglican on January 24, 2025 prior to the March for Life in Washington, D.C..

Today, I would like to talk about beholding the Glory of the Lord. In our reading from the prophet Jeremiah, when God speaks to the young prophet, He does so with a series of questions, which He does with Jeremiah throughout his ministry. He asks, "What do you see?" He is not talking about seeing with his eyes. Rather, He is asking what does he perceive?

They asked Einstein once about the theory of relativity, and how he came up with it. He said he used his scientific imagination. He imagined what it would be like if he could ride a beam of light. And so, taking that fictitious idea, something that is completely impossible, he began to theorize, to create a hypothesis of what it would be like. And that positing of his mind, that looking at that idea—because ideas are things, even though they are intangible—he looked at the idea, and he thought, well, if this is the case, what would be the result?

Christian theology both past and present is full of that kind of stuff. Maybe you have read some theologians and you think, "How did they get that idea? That is so terrible." Or

you may have read other writings and find them brilliant and magnificent. Commentator GK Chesterton criticized scholastic medieval thought like this: If a unicorn has one horn, he said, then a cow has as many horns as two unicorns. You are not debating whether or not unicorns exist. You are saying that, if they do exist, here's what it has to look like.

All of this is to say that I think, sometimes, we can let something like the sanctity and dignity of life become so far beyond what we do in our daily experience that the only way to reengage with it in a healthy way is by having our ears attuned to the Holy Spirit, like the prophet Jeremiah. What do you see? It's not just what we see plainly with our eyes, as in Jeremiah's case, such as a pot that's tipped over or an almond tree that's in bud. Sometimes we only see the literal thing and completely miss what it all means.

And I think that's part of what's happening in our reading from the New Testament today, from the gospel of Matthew. Herod could see that there was a youth that needed to be killed to preserve his throne. Wise men could also see a star in the heavens, but they were beholding. They knew what it meant. They knew where to go. When we are summoned by the Lord into His presence, into His holy, heavenly counsel, and He asks us what we see, we need to be able to respond

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Canon Georgette

AFL President

As you will see throughout this edition of Anglicans For Life's *Carpe Diem* newsletter, we are sharing highlights from this year's March for Life in Washington, D.C..

One of the most common questions I get this time of year is "How was the March this year?" The second question now is "How did this year compare with previous years?" Especially since the 2022 *Dobbs* decision overturned the *Roe v. Wade* case that had legalized abortion and was the impetus for participating in the March for Life.

My answer to the second question is always easier, the number of marchers has decreased since 2022, but the enthusiasm for bearing witness to the value of life never dwindles.

This year my answer to the first question was very different than most years because God had four unique encounters ready for me and the AFL team.

First, a dear woman came up to me after the Prayer and Worship Service to thank me for inspiring her to attend an abortion healing program. She gave me a big hug and said that I was right about it being life changing and she wished she would have had the courage to do it sooner.

The second woman was be-friended by one of the Silent No More Regional Coordinators who struck up a conversation with her at our hotel while she waited for us to arrive. The woman was alone and wanted to attend the March because a friend had told her it was a unique opportunity! She joined us not only for the March but also stayed at the Supreme Court to hear all the testimonies and afterwards had dinner with us. I asked her for her observations of the day, and without hesitating she said we had opened her eyes to so much about abortion that no one ever talks about. She thought our testimonies were key to why the March was so important for people to experience.

The third encounter occurred as women were sharing their Silent No More testimonies in front of the Supreme Court building. I walked through the crowd handing out information about the Campaign. As I handed a woman the card, she had big tears in her eyes and said to me, "I am the woman they are referring to. I worked in an abortion clinic, and I would tell the women that their baby was only a blob of tissue. When they say they were lied to, I am the one who lied to them." I gave her a big hug and asked if she knew of the ministry "And Then There Were None" – which works with ex-abortion clinic workers. She said she was with them, so I invited her to share her testimony alongside the Silent No More women – which was healing for all.

The last encounter was with Thomas, who you will meet on page 9. His story is heart breaking, but he also was able to share it in front of the Supreme Court.

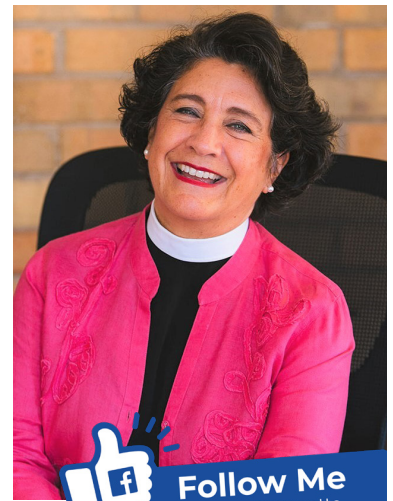
These encounters remind me why it's important to keep marching! I hope you will consider joining us next year.

For His glory,



Canon Georgette

P.S. Please take a few minutes and either fill out the enclosed survey or use this QR code to access it online. We need your input to help AFL establish a 5-year Strategic Plan that adequately serves you, the Church, and our mission to protect life.



Follow Me
@CanonGeorgette

AFL joins..

- The Rev. Justin Baldwin in honoring Mary Alice Baldwin.
- The Rev. Nicholas Lubefeld in honoring The Rt. Rev. John and Rev. Meg Guernsey.
- The Rev. Mitchell Keppler in honoring the memory of Fr. Mike (Sr.) and Daisy Keppler.
- Kenneth and Peggy Fisher in honoring the memory of Elizabeth Fisher.
- Cynthia Murdock in honoring the memory of Carol Cromartie
- The Very Rev. Cn. John Park and Susan Delgado-Park in honoring the memory of the Rev. Robert and Jeanné Delgado.

“GOD’S WORD UPHOLDS THE SANCTITY OF LIFE” ANGLICANS AFFIRM

Jeff Walton, Communications Director & Anglican Director for the Institute on Religion & Democracy

Jesus’ humanness confirms and restores the dignity of all persons, according to an Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) bishop preaching at a prayer service preceding the annual National March for Life.

Missionary Diocese of All Saints Bishop Darryl Fitzwater spoke at the event sponsored by Anglicans for Life and the ACNA Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic held at The Falls Church Anglican outside of Washington, D.C.

Participants at the January 24 prayer service heard testimony from Deacon Georgette Forney as part of the Silent No More Awareness Campaign.

“Abortion aftercare programs helped me to grieve for the child that I had aborted,” Forney shared, highlighting the importance of local church ministry among post-abortive women and their families.

“All I did was make myself available and give my sin back to God,” Forney recounted, describing God as taking human brokenness, healing it, and using it to build his Kingdom.

Pro-Life ministry, Forney explained, has expanded to address euthanasia and assisted suicide.

“Everything in God’s Word upholds the sanctity of life,” Forney insisted. “Once life is regarded as a burden or inconvenience, that life begins being treated differently.”

“
If we are going to be change agents for our culture and communities, it will require us to say ‘yes’ to God.”

-Georgette Forney, President, Anglicans For Life

Forney shared her own story of admitting her elderly father to a hospital, with a doctor strongly and repeatedly pressuring him to sign a “Do Not Resuscitate” order in the early hours of the morning. Her father declined to sign the order, but Forney saw it as a sign of how the medical community is changing and that churches need to prepare their congregants for such external pressures.

“If we are going to be change agents for our culture and communities, it will require us to say ‘yes’ to God,” the Anglicans for Life Director charged.

In his sermon, Fitzwater sought to emphasize the unchanging nature of God and his Word.

“If it was ever a sin, it still is. If it was ever his character, it still is,” Fitzwater preached. The West Virginia bishop shared about the spiritual nature of Christ and about his humanity.

“Spiritual does not mean to be ghostly: to be a spiritual people does not mean we are fixed on disembodied things,” Fitzwater noted. “Jesus is so spiritual, he goes around healing physical bodies. Spiritual means the Word became flesh and dwelled among us.”

The Anglican bishop insisted that “Christ is sanctifying the entire family structure.”

“In the cases of life, there are times when the circumstances and scenarios by which a woman becomes pregnant are not ideal, but that life is always sacred. It is always blessed. It is always given dignity,” Fitzwater stated. “The response of the Church must always be: how do we step in to not snuff out a smoldering wick? To not break a bruised reed, but to rightly and truly set bones so that they heal and grow into the fullness of the grace that God has already amply poured out through Jesus Christ.”

Following the service, participants loaded onto buses that took them to the National March for Life beginning at the National Mall in Washington and concluding on Capitol Hill.

“When we go out into this march today, we aren’t just walking with the people next to us, we are enveloped, immersed by a cloud of witnesses whose lives and legacies are pleading to God,” Fitzwater exhorted. “Let us not forget that the chief responsibility, the chief end in those moments, is to join with the prayers of all of God’s people.”





Welcome,

NEW LIFE-AFFIRMING CHURCHES, LIFE LEADERS, AND CHAPTER LEADERS!

AFL is excited to announce the following churches have signed-up to become Life-Affirming Churches since our last newsletter, and we have welcomed a new Life Leader and Chapter Leader!

- Bread of Life Anglican; Albany, NY
- St Lydia's Anglican Church; Lafayette, LA
- St. Patrick's Anglican Church; Murfreesboro, TN
- Church of the Apostles; Fairfax, VA
- Christ the Redeemer; Owensboro, KY
- All Saints Anglican Church REC; Shreveport, LA
- St. Agnes Episcopal Church; Cowan, TN
- Life Leader, Carol Leonard, St. Paul's Parish; Brockton, MA
- Chapter Leader, Evie Kline, Owensboro, KY

CHAPTER NEWS

St. Barnabas Anglican Church | Bellville, TX

As a Life-Affirming Church, St. Barnabas Anglican Church bears witness to the sacredness of life even during a recent unexpected dusting of snow in Bellville, TX! Faithful parishioner, William Fuller shared proof in this picture that it still snows in Texas!



The Falls Church Anglican | Falls Church, VA

Jeanne Lee, AFL Chapter Co-Leader, recently shared this update about their annual service for Infant Loss. Few sorrows are greater than the loss of a child. As part of pro-life ministry at The Falls Church Anglican (TFCA), a special Healing Service for Infant Loss is offered every year.

The church invitation says "If you, a family member, or a friend have experienced miscarriage, abortion, stillbirth or the early death of a child, we invite you to join us. Everyone will have the opportunity to receive confidential personal prayer at the end of the service."

The healing service in November included worship, scripture readings, a pastoral message, and individual prayer. The pastor shared scriptural truths about how Jesus welcomes little children into His presence, and that their lives on earth, though brief, are important. Christ also extends



forgiveness and healing to those involved in abortion. Roses were available to take home as symbols of comfort and hope. This December, TFCA added an inscription in the Columbarium/Memorial Garden adjacent to the church. The Scripture chosen honors little ones who have been lost early in life. We pray it brings comfort to those who have experienced such deep loss.

Anglican Church of the Holy Trinity

| North Augusta, SC

Terri Henley, Chapter Leader reports that Hurricane Helene came through their area quite unexpectedly. Many in their parish had some structural damage, lots of trees down, and power off for weeks. The Anglican Relief and Development Fund sent their church two trucks of goods. Terri shared, "God was merciful as we had no injuries in our parish. Items that parishioners didn't need were donated to local Christian charities, but the diapers in the photo were given to the pregnancy care center, Life Choices, where I volunteer."



Leadership Updates



Emmaus Anglican Church | Castle Rock, CO
Scott Gough, Co-Chair of the AFL Chapter of Emmaus Anglican Church, Castle Rock, CO reports that their January business meeting was conducted by Chapter Co-Chair Deacon Deborah Robbins. They were able to map out their plans for 2025. Some of the activities planned include; participation in the Colorado March for Life, the World's Largest Baby Shower, a presentation by a Father's Counselor around Father's Day and Alternative Pregnancy Center's Fundraising Gala.



experience as a "spiritual pilgrimage," not just to our nation's capital, but into God's heart for justice and the dignity of all people. In addition to the March, they attended the National Pro-Life Summit and toured the Smithsonian Museum of African-American History & Culture, National Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Museum of the Bible (with an awesome tour by Fr. Robbie Pruitt from Shepherd's Heart Anglican Church in Fairfax, VA).



Christ the Redeemer | Owensboro, KY
AFL's newest Chapter has been formed by 16-year-old Evie Kline. She reports on the new Chapter, "I am thrilled to help form a chapter of Anglicans for Life at my parish. As I read through the handbook and materials, I realized how much our parish is already involved in pro-life work. To say that our parish leadership and congregants are involved in pro-life work is an understatement."

Our leadership is continually encouraging the parish to be involved in protecting life. Leadership and/or congregants are actively involved in Visiting Morning Pointe nursing home weekly, holding monthly volunteer opportunities at a food pantry, volunteering at and donating to our local pregnancy resource center, attending KY March for Life, participating in Owensboro Walk for Life, supporting foster families in our church and community, working at Mentor Kids Kentucky, being a CareNet Owensboro Pregnancy Center board member, counseling at The Heartford House-Hospice of Western Kentucky, and helping with and support Owensboro Students for Life activities We plan to continue with the activities mentioned, as well as start educational classes about life issues (apologetics classes) and participate in a 40 days for Life campaign in a nearby city.



Church of the Resurrection | Wheaton, IL
The Anglican Diocese of the Upper Midwest sent 18 students and leaders to the March for Life, led by Fr. Will Chester of Church of the Resurrection in Wheaton, IL. Fr. Will encourages his students to think of this weekend

Student Quotes from January Events

"I participated in the March because I wanted to be a voice for the voiceless, expressing the need for advocacy for the unborn. I also wanted to reinforce the fact that I wasn't alone in the fight for the right to life, and this was a tangible reminder of that. Jesus loves the little children, even those not yet born, and I believe he would be at the March if he was still on the earth."



"For the pro-life movement to succeed, we must learn how to get along within the movement itself (showing respect), and also we must show that we care to those outside of the movement."

"In order for the Pro-life movement to succeed, we must support others through love. Some people commit abortions because they feel alone and have a lack of a support system. By being the body of Christ and being supportive, we can change hearts and minds about life as well as lead them closer to Christ."

Holy Trinity Anglican Church | Plainville, CT
Church representative, Valerie Rich, reports she and members of the church made Christmas goody bags for over 100 residents at a local nursing home. Each resident received a Christmas card, hand-made ornament, and candies.

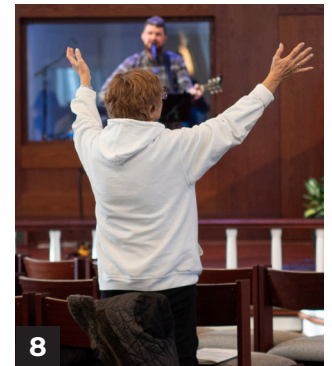
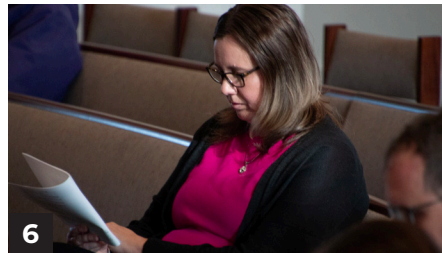


Ministry Updates

January Events Photos

Photos 1-10: Anglican Prayer and Worship Service Photos 11-21: March for Life

REMINDER: Visit AFL's Facebook page to view more photos from the events!



Ministry Updates



ANGLICAN ADOPTION FUND

"We would love to adopt a child, but it's just so expensive."

If I had a dollar for every time I've heard that statement, or some variation thereof, in my 20 plus years of adoption and foster care ministry, I could afford, well, another adoption.

The reality is that adoptions do cost money, and depending on the type of adoption being pursued, the cost can be a deterrent, and even prohibitive, for many people. Having said that, I would add that if God calls you (and your husband or wife) to adopt, then you can trust Him to provide the financing it takes to bring that child, or children, home.

I would also add to keep in mind that adoption from foster care is relatively low- or no-cost, though you may incur some expenses in order to get your home study approved. Still, the cost is negligible when compared to private and international adoptions.

As I mentioned, if God calls you to adopt, you can trust Him to provide. One of the ways He might want to help provide for your adoption is through the Anglicans for Life Adoption Fund, which provides grants to Anglican families to help offset the cost of adopting a child (or children).

Originally founded in 2015 as the Anglican Chaplains Adoption Fund, and developed and implemented by the Jurisdiction of the Armed Forces and Chaplaincy (ACNA), the jurisdictional authority of the fund was given to Anglicans for Life in 2021. That same year, AFL created a fund review committee which reviews grant applications and approves grants for prospective Anglican adoptive families.

The grants are intended specifically for Anglican families adopting domestically (including through foster care) or internationally. The Fund has helped many Anglican families welcome children into their homes over the past decade, and we would love to help yours as well.

The process is simple. Read about, and apply to, the Adoption Fund at AnglicansForLife.org/topics/orphans-and-vulnerable-children/adoption/anglican-adoption-fund/. Once we receive your completed application (including references), the fund review committee will look it over and make a decision, after which we will notify you of any funds the board approves. We will then work with your agency/ attorney to disburse the funds at an agreed-upon time.

If you're considering adoption, we invite you to check out, and apply to, the Anglican Adoption Fund. We also invite you to let other Anglican families know about the Fund as well. We truly want to help you (and others) in your adoption journeys!

We also want to support you in your journey in other ways, by being a resource (including giving you leads on other potential financial sources), and prayer partner for you. Applying to the Adoption Fund is a great way for us to get to know you so we can better walk alongside you as you answer God's call to welcome children into your family through adoption.

If you'd like to learn more about the Anglican Adoption Fund, or about adoption or foster care in general, please get in touch with me at Adoption@AnglicansForLife.org.

ABORTION RECOVERY AWARENESS MONTH

April is National Abortion Recovery Awareness Month. During one of the four Sundays of April, we are encouraging churches to acknowledge this unique issue as many women and men sitting in the pews on Sunday live with the pain of a past abortion. In fact, statistics indicate that 1 out of every 3 people sitting in church have experienced abortion in some way, but have kept it secret due to guilt and shame.

Furthermore, a recent study discovered only 1 out of 9 women knew that abortion recovery programs exist throughout the United States.

AFL encourages churches to work with their local pregnancy center, posting information about abortion recovery programs that are hosted at many centers, or you can share one of the resources in the side bar.

You can also feature a special prayer, such as *For all of the mothers and fathers whose arms are empty and hearts are broken because of their choice to abort*

their children, may they come to healing and wholeness in Christ as they repent of their sin and receive grace and forgiveness. Please touch their hearts in a fresh way today, Lord, and give us grace to minister to them. Lead them to the right abortion after-care program that will help them heal, forgive, and grieve for their aborted baby. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Remember, Section 4 of Title II, Canon 8 of Standards of Sexual Morality and Ethics states; The Church is called upon to show Christ-like compassion to those who have fallen into sin, encouraging them to repent and receive forgiveness, and offering the ministry of healing to all who suffer physically, or emotionally as a result of such sin.

This Canon is specifically written for those who realized too late that abortion is wrong. All sinners need to be told that God forgives when we repent.

Recovery Programs

Save One
SaveOne.org
(615) 636-2654

Support After Abortion

SupportAfterAbortion.com
(844) 289-4673 (HOPE)

Rachel's Vineyard

RachelsVineyard.org
(877) 467-3463

Men & Abortion Network

MenAndAbortion.net

24/7 Helpline

H3Helpline
H3HelpLine.org
(866) 721-7881

THE STORY of THOMAS & CLEMENTINE

The pain of losing a child is unimaginable, but for Thomas Kearns, the heartbreak is elevated by the tragic circumstances surrounding his daughter Clementine's death. At just five-months old in utero, Clementine was taken from him—by abortion. Now, Thomas is on a mission for truth, justice, and the chance to give his daughter the dignity she was denied.

AFL President, Georgette Forney, met Thomas during the Silent No More testimony time in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, when he shared his journey of uncovering what really happened to Clementine. Every step forward has revealed deeper layers of a harsh reality—one that exposes not only the horrors of abortion but also the way the abortion industry disregards the humanity of preborn children.

A Father's Unanswered Questions

It all started a year ago when Thomas' pregnant girlfriend feared she couldn't handle motherhood but also couldn't afford an abortion. When she called the local abortion clinic, they quickly assured her they had a program that would cover the costs for a 20-week abortion procedure that would take at least two days to complete.

Immediately after the abortion, Thomas' girlfriend regretted it and shared the details of the two-day nightmare with him. The information she provided made him question what exactly had happened at the clinic. They decided to request her medical records. The lack of description of how the baby died prior to removal from the womb created further concern — leading them to seek legal counsel. The lawyer showed the records to an obstetrician who said that based on the documentation, it was probable that the baby was born alive and sold through a fetal procurement agent.

This possibility led Thomas to further investigate the abortion clinic, and he learned that, indeed, the clinic does provide fetal research specimens to researchers nationwide. Instead of experiencing closure, he has found only more evidence of the abortion industry's barbaric practices—where babies, like Clementine, are not only killed, but often subject to medical testing and research after death.

Under New Jersey law, abortion is permitted throughout pregnancy, with virtually no restrictions. The state does not require reporting on fetal remains,



leaving parents like Thomas with no answers, no accountability, and no way to know where their children's bodies have gone. As Thomas has uncovered more about Clementine's fate, he has also come face-to-face with a larger, disturbing reality. Aborted babies are often subjected to scientific experimentation without consent, and treated as biological material rather than human beings. Their bodies are used for research, their organs harvested—all in the name of "medical advancement."

Clementine's story is not just about one baby—it is about the thousands of lives lost and discarded each year, with no voice to speak for them. Thomas's investigation shines a spotlight on an industry that promotes abortion as a solution while hiding the devastating consequences it leaves behind.

A Call to Stand for Life

Clementine's life mattered. She was not a choice. She was a child. Her father's love and determination reminds us that every life—no matter how small—deserves dignity, protection, and recognition.

Stories like Clementine's happen every day. Countless fathers, mothers, and families are left grieving for children they never got to hold, lost to an industry that profits from their pain. This is why we must stand for life. We must advocate for the unborn, fight for ethical accountability, and ensure that no more babies like Clementine are subjected to such brutality.

Thomas's journey is far from over, but his unwavering love for his daughter serves as a powerful testimony. Clementine's name will not be forgotten. He has three goals in sharing her story. First, he wants to find her remains to give her a proper burial. Second, he wants a law passed to stop all fetal research. Third, he wants to pursue a legal case against the abortion clinic

for fetal trafficking. Sadly, law experts question the strength of pursuing legal recourse given that there is a two-year statute of limitations for such cases and March 12, marks the one year anniversary of Clementine's birth/death. Please pray for Thomas and his girlfriend, that they may secure legal help to prevent other people from similar experiences while affirming the truth: that every life is precious, and every child deserves a chance to live.



WHAT DO YOU SEE?

(CONTINUED FROM P. 1)

Above: Bp. Fitzwater, his daughter, and Cn. Georgette marching in Washington, D.C..

not just with what our eyes are seeing, but to perceive what He is revealing by the kingdom of God.

Remember what our Lord told Nicodemus? No one can see the kingdom of God unless he's born of water and the spirit. It's not just that you can't enter the kingdom without being born of the water in the spirit. You can't even perceive it correctly. And how do we do that? Well, the sacrament of baptism and the Word of the Lord explains and opens up for us what it is that we're seeing. For every hot button life issue today, we need the word of God so thoroughly wrapped around our minds and our hearts so that, when the Holy Spirit quickens it, we can look at every issue and understand what God's mind is, with the great confidence that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And if it ever was a sin as far as the character of God goes, it still is. If it was ever righteous, if it was ever a blessing, it still is. Otherwise, we will quickly stumble in the mire of the cultural issues of the day.

Here are a few points to share. First, as the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, spiritual does not mean ghostly. As a culture we have started equating the two words, made synonyms of spiritual and ghostly, because of a shared etymology. But this is very dangerous, because the meanings of the words are not based upon how they were derived. To be spiritual people does not mean we are only transfixed on disembodied things like spirits or the soul. Too often, when people talk about being spiritual, they are referencing events like this. Read chapter 2 of Matthew with me. "Now, when they had departed"—that's the Magi—"Behold"—see, perceive—"an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream."

Then, later on, in verse 19, after Herod had died: "Behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt." And so, when people want to be spiritual, they think about the appearance of angels, and dreams and visions, and they regulate and define their spiritual vitality upon those particular kinds of phenomena. Well, praise God if He gives them to you,

but that's really not the driving emphasis in these passages, nor is it the driving emphasis of what it means to be spiritual today. Those particular events that happened to St. Joseph compelled him to act physically, concretely, and tangibly for the protection of our Lord and of the blessed virgin Mary.

Jesus Himself defines for us what it means to be spiritual. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God wants us to be looking at the cities and the towns that we live in and to look at the world that's right in front of us and ask: what does it look like when God's reign in heaven visits this place on earth? What kind of physical transformation takes place? Jesus is so spiritual that He goes around healing physical bodies. He doesn't say, "Hey guys, endure a little bit longer. You're eventually going to get to heaven where you don't need it anymore."

Consider the prayer that He taught us: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Specifically, that is being realized in Jesus's own person. Then, by sacramental extension, the entirety of His body, wherever His body is going or doing, is to be so intimately tied together with Him that you can't differentiate between the head and the member, because there's only one Christ. Spiritual doesn't mean ghostly.

Secondly, Jesus's humanness confirms and restores the dignity of all persons. When He became human, He confirmed that we were created in the image of God already—all of humanity, already created in the image of God. But then He does one better. He restores the perfection that will be ours at the resurrection. He restores the dignity and the sanctity of that.

If you look at the New Testament, there are roughly three different ways that our Lord signifies something by His presence. Sometimes His physical presence is because He's there to bless and to sanctify, giving a level of value and holiness to something. For example, His presence at the wedding in Cana of Galilee demonstrates Jesus's personal

endorsement of marriage. Other times His personal presence is meant to be reconciliatory. He's eating with the sinners and the tax collectors, not to endorse that behavior, but to go out and rescue the lost sheep of Israel, to gather in those who are fallen away and disassociated from the life that God wants to give them. The third way that our Lord makes His presence known is not to sanctify, not to reconcile, but to judge, as when He's carrying the cross. The women are weeping, and He says, "Don't weep for me, weep for your own sons." So, the presence of His battered body is not there to authenticate and endorse the behavior of the crowd, or even for the people who are grieving for Him, but as a sign of judgment against them.

What do you see, people of God? What do you perceive when the Lord's presence rests in upon a congregation, when His presence rests in upon your own heart? Is He calling you to repentance? Is He calling you to be reconciled? Is He authenticating and endorsing what you're doing?

In this case specifically this morning, our Lord confirms and restores fatherhood with Joseph, motherhood with Mary, and childhood with His own infancy, and He sets that in contrast to Herod. The passage in the Gospel contrasts a fallen and corrupt family against a holy family, a family that's following spiritual principles, because Joseph is a righteous man, and Mary is a righteous woman. Christ is sanctifying the entire family structure. He's sanctifying fatherhood and motherhood, male and female, in very particular ways, and that is a blessing for all of us.

There are times when the circumstances and scenarios by which a woman becomes pregnant are not ideal, but that life is always sacred, always blessed, always given dignity. And the Church must respond—stepping in but not snuffing out a smoldering wick, not breaking a bruised reed, but rightly and truly setting bones, so that they heal and grow into the fullness of the grace that God has already amply poured out through Jesus Christ, in situations and issues both in the present and in the future.

I think the entire written Word of God is a vibrant sacramental kingdom interaction.

”

-The Rt. Rev. Darryl Fitzwater,
The Bishop Coadjutor for the Missionary Diocese of All Saints

Speaking of the future, consider the growth of artificial intelligence. At what point does artificial intelligence begin to take the place of people? Once innovators and engineers take AI and unite it to robotic bodies—folks, we're dealing with a whole new level of issues. And we are going to have to be able to say that it is not a human being. It doesn't have the dignity and the integrity of what it is to be made in the image of God. And for some people that sounds so far left field, but that future is already upon us, and we need to be prepared to contend for the dignity of all life.

Lastly, this passage speaks to the power of our Lord's redemption. Matthew 2:17: "A voice was heard in Rama, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children. She refused to be comforted because they are no more." On our church calendar, right after Christmas, we have the Feast of the Holy Innocents. The fathers of the Church said that those holy innocents were the first martyrs of Christ. One of them wrote, "Thus it is that those blessed babes have deservedly lasted beyond others. They were the first who were worthy to die on Christ's behalf."

When we go out to the March later, we know that we will be surrounded by lots and lots of people in the flesh, and hopefully none of us trip over each other's shoelaces. But we'll be walking, locked arm in arm, next to each other. And I want to leave this last thought with you. The book of Revelation teaches us, with the breaking of the fifth seal in chapter six, that there are martyrs under the altar who are crying out to the Lord for justice, for their blood that has been shed upon the earth. And, in response to their prayers, God gives them a white robe, and He says, "Wait a little bit longer until the full number of those of your brothers who are going to be martyred are added." These martyrs would be amongst that number, these holy innocents. Later in the book, we see that an angel takes fire from the altar of heaven and offers the incense of that fire, the incense that rises to God, and in it is mingled the prayers of all the saints—the cloud of witnesses referenced in the book of Hebrews.

So, when I see this passage in Matthew, I do not think he is quoting Jeremiah to say, oh by the way, this fulfilled a prophecy. I think the entire written Word of God is a vibrant sacramental kingdom interaction. To whatever extent God was permitting Rachel in her eternal rest to perceive what was taking place, she was engaged in a weeping, a kind of intercession for these children. And when we go out into this March today, we aren't just walking with the people next to us. We are enveloped. We are immersed by a cloud of witnesses, whose lives and legacies are pleading to God. And, as we walk, as we smile, as maybe we cry, let us not forget that the chief responsibility, the chief aim that we have, is to join with the prayers of all of God's people. Let us pray.

Nothing is hard for You, O Lord. Teach us the value that You have given us through the wounds of Your beloved Son. Empower us to see and grace us with courage to do so. May Your Spirit give us all the wisdom and insight and understanding that we need to know the mystery of our Lord's incarnation and what it is that He's doing on this very day. Protect each heart and mind, O Lord, as we go to do what You've given us to do. We thank You, Father, in Christ's name. Amen.

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