Certainly on Respect Life Sunday we are to reflect upon the sacred nature of every human life—we recall the reasons that we are to promote God's gift of life by taking a stand against the evils that belong to the culture of death. We remember that we stand against atrocities such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and unjust war. Indeed to hold a consistent ethic of life we must stand against whatever there is that threatens life, whatever challenges the sacred nature of that which God has made. I believe this is what our Holy Father, Pope Francis, said in his recent interview that has received a lot of attention in the news. If our reflection is complete and our logic is sound, if our ethic of life is truly consistent, then there will be many other challenges to the sacred nature of life that we must add to the list.

We may not always consider it, but to be for life—that is to hold that all human life is sacred—means much more than simply being against something. It means that in action and in attitude we must be for those whom the culture of death threatens the most.

Too often in our world it is the children who suffer at the hand of our decisions and attitudes. Is it really being pro-life of us to say that we are against abortion but then take a stand, based perhaps on economic fears or political ideology, to deny children their right to basic things like healthcare, food, clothing, or even education? Are we truly being pro-life when we ignore the innocent victims of guns and bombs? Are we being truly pro-life when we put a claim to personal security in front of well-being of any child on this planet?

To be truly pro-life we must begin to ensure and establish the existence of a pro-human world where poverty, disease, hunger, war, and killing are no longer acceptable in any way whatsoever. We must make the world a welcoming place for the newborn as well as for every person.

Frankly it comes down to something extraordinarily simple. We are asked to love—no less than this really—but true love demands a giving on our part that is such that we empty ourselves heart and soul for others. Love demands that we give not only to our own but that we love the stranger among us and the stranger far away.

Giving of ourselves and loving completely far from being easy tasks—perhaps for many it might be impossible to even fathom the thought. Our truly accepting all human life as sacred demands sacrifice. It may also mean that in some way we learn to embrace suffering, that is,
that we learn to be healers by sharing our lives with those who experience pain and agony in life.

Several years ago I was acquainted with a gentleman in his early 80s who would volunteer in special education classrooms for children with mental and physical disabilities. One day he asked me why I thought God would allow children to suffer in this way. I wasn't able to answer really, but I did tell him that I thought it was his opportunity, and mine, to love more perfectly.

Paul reminds us in his letter to Timothy “bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God” which in turn reminds us in the suffering of our Lord Jesus perfection came about. In considering the gift that Jesus made of himself to us through his suffering, in considering his perfect giving, we must also consider that he gave himself for all human beings.

Jesus offered himself that we might learn to forgive and to be forgiven. He suffered and died so that suffering and death would no longer mean condemnation, rather that salvation might come about instead. Our call today is to come to Jesus and embrace him as our savior—and to bring the children of the world along with us.

When we approach Jesus we bring with us the unborn and those born in poverty. We bring with us those who are racially and ethnically different from ourselves. We bring the children of our enemies and those of our neighbors. We bring those condemned to die. We bring man and woman, sinner and saint; we never stand alone because we are part of something bigger. We stand at the Cross with the children of the world and we ask to be judged for we have called sacred the life that he created, that he gave to us in creation. We asked to be judged for what we do, in both attitude and action, with his sacred gift.

(Some or most of this homily may have been taken from other sources and may not be solely the work of Fr. Steve.)