

Advent: Preparing to Celebrate Life

Dear People of Prince Edward Island,

In this holy season of Advent, we are anticipating the coming of the Christ child, as once Mary, His Mother did long ago. Just as the conception of Jesus (celebrated on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25) and his birth (celebrated at Christmas, December 25) is a profound mystery, so too the creation of every child is a wondrous mystery. Like the babe at Bethlehem, who was born into a very stressful social, economic and political situation, so today we pray that every new born can spread new life and hope into the hearts of mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather or adoptive parents.

I offer the following remarks from a Catholic perspective that focuses on providing support, comfort, and protection to the pregnant mother and the child that she carries within. Please note, I have no wish to enter into the political debate regarding the accessibility of abortion services, whether off-Island or on-Island, for I am unequivocally opposed to abortion. The teaching of the Catholic Church regarding abortion has been consistent over time, extending back to the early beginning of Christianity.

Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person – among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2270.)

My hope and prayer is to foster deeper understanding and respect for human life, in accordance with the Prince of Peace, who came among us to give us “life, life in abundance”. (Jn. 10:10)

In my view, the love of Christ advocates care, concern, compassion for mother and child. Accordingly, I applaud those community agencies whose principal mandates are directed at providing support services to ensure the well-being of the expectant mother and her offspring. Their efforts are worthy of praise, for often they deal with intense emotional struggle and the serious impact on the lives of individuals: mother, father, child and respective families.

With the utmost pastoral objective, I exhort faithful people to prayer and assistance for mothers-to-be, especially those of particularly young age who find themselves with an unexpected and perhaps unwanted pregnancy. My heartfelt prayers go out to those expectant mothers as they face difficult decisions about their future and the future of their child.

There should be no doubt that our Catholic convictions celebrate life and compel me to advocate vigorously in the defense of the unborn child and for the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the mother.

I take this opportunity to extend to all Islanders wishes for a peaceful and joyful Christmas season celebration.

**Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Richard Grecco
Bishop, Diocese of Charlottetown.**

