

Message for Pro-Life Vigil
St Andrew's Cathedral 27 October 2011

My dear pro-lifers, dear friends

I am delighted to be able to greet you this evening at the end of the precious witness you give by the torchlight procession which is held every year in this city to mark the anniversary of the passing of the Abortion Act.

For many of you this event is a regular recurrence in your diary. And while it can serve to inspire us, as we gather with others who value life as a precious gift, there is also the danger that we can become discouraged, as, with every year that passes, we seem no nearer to our goal of a city, a country, a world without abortion.

But it is important to resist that temptation to pessimism.

Every day positive developments occur, often hidden from the view of the cameras. Young people are growing passionate about the pro-life message in our schools, women considering abortion are changing their minds when they realise that the death of the unborn child is never the answer to their problems. In this very city, the work of the Cardinal Winning Pro Life Initiative continues to change lives and to save lives with every passing day.

Just last month, the Holy Father visited Germany, a country very much like our own in its secularism, and similarly besmirched by the crime of abortion. There he called for united Christian witness on the issue of abortion – something for which we long in our own country - and he related it to another issue we are facing at the moment here in Scotland, namely the attempts to redefine marriage.

Let me read you his words of inspiration.

The Holy Father said: “In the present climate, in which many would like, as it were, to “liberate” public life from God, the Christian Churches are walking side by side along the path of peaceful witness for understanding and solidarity among peoples, on the basis of their faith in the one God and Father of all.

“At the same time they continue to place the miracle of God’s incarnation at the centre of their proclamation. Realizing that on this mystery all human dignity depends, they speak up jointly for the protection of human life from conception to natural death. Faith in God, the Creator of life, and unconditional adherence to the dignity of every human being strengthen faithful Christians to oppose vigorously every manipulative and selective intervention in the area of human life.

“Knowing too the value of marriage and the family, we as Christians attach great importance to defending the integrity and the uniqueness of marriage between one man and one woman from any kind of misinterpretation. Here the common engagement of Christians, including many Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Christians, makes a valuable contribution to building up a society equipped for the future, in which the human person is given the respect which is his due.”

And so, dear friends, tonight I want you to take home with you the comforting knowledge that the Church is with you every step of the way... The Church understands the problems of bearing witness to the dignity of life in the modern world, but she is resolute in defence of the vulnerable.

Take courage! Be of good heart!

Our efforts to build a culture of life may not be always visible in this world, but our apostolate has its impact in many hearts and minds, and in our public witness we remind a confused, distracted and sometimes hostile world of the God of life whom we worship and in whose image we are made.