



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

June 2005

The Day for life 2005 – Cherishing the Evening of Life

The Bishops of England and Wales, together with the Bishops of Scotland and Ireland, have come together this year to encourage all parishes in our countries to celebrate the Day for Life. The theme this year is *Cherishing the Evening of Life* to be celebrated in England and Wales on *Sunday 3rd July 2005*.

The annual Day for Life was called for by Pope John Paul II. He wanted to encourage a greater awareness within the Church of the crucial importance of the Church's teaching on the gift of life. Our theme this year celebrates that gift in the lives of older people, and the witness the Church gives by working to enable older people to age with grace. In the way he approached his own death earlier this year Pope John Paul II taught us all a wonderful lesson about the dignity of old age, and the way in which death can be faced with courage and dignity, even in the face of great suffering. So today is an opportunity for the parish to reflect on and to celebrate this particular aspect of the Gift of Life.

As well as a prayer card, a leaflet has also been produced which is being given out today to every family attending Mass which encourages us all to reflect on the great gift life holds for all of us in our later years. It also draws attention to the profound moral issue of euthanasia, which would inexorably lead to the opposite of cherishing the evening of life. It is important we all understand and are equipped to oppose euthanasia which poses a threat not only to older people but to a variety of other suffering, disabled or vulnerable people.

Additional resources available in parish packs and on the website www.dayforlife.org, include information about how the Catholic voluntary sector is supporting older people, further reading about euthanasia and liturgical resources.

This year we are, for the first time, having a collection in all the parishes of England and Wales. The proceeds will first be used to help fund the Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics. This Catholic Institute based in London has an international reputation and provides expert help to the Church in defending and articulating its moral teaching in new and difficult areas. We also hope to use funds raised by the collections to support some hospices and other Catholic charities providing care for elderly people – to help the Church to continue to celebrate the evening of life in a practical way. Please support the collection generously.

Thank you.

+ Bernard Longley

Bishop Bernard Longley
Bishops' Conference of England and Wales