

April 5 (Easter Day) – Alleluia, Christ has risen! This is *the* pro-life proclamation! Our Lord has defeated death to give life to the world. There is no person whom Jesus does not wish to rescue from the curse of death, as “God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34). And we, who have already “been raised with Christ” through faith and Holy Baptism, “seek the things that are above” (Colossians 3:1), desiring that all would have life, now and when He appears in glory (Colossians 3:4).

April 12 (Easter 2) – Jesus sent out His apostles with His Spirit to be His witnesses, bringing His peace to the world through the forgiveness of sins (John 20:21; Acts 5:32). Through their witness and the witness of the believers who followed, we too have been brought to faith and are therefore blessed even though we have not seen Jesus with our eyes (1 Peter 1:8; John 20:29). When we “praise the Lord” (Psalm 148:1) with our Gospel-motivated voices, our neighbors are also brought to see Jesus through us, that they too may believe and “have life in His name” (John 20:31).

April 19 (Easter 3) – The practice of abortion rests on the argument that the unborn should not be considered real persons, worthy of dignity and protection under the law. How different that is from the way God views these little ones! St. Peter reminds us that the death and resurrection of Jesus are “for you and your children and for all who are far off” (Acts 2:39). If all children have been purchased by the “precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19), surely they are worthy of our love and care, both inside and outside of the womb.

April 25 (St. Mark, Evangelist) – Today we honor “John” Mark (Acts 15:37), the Gospel-writer and missionary companion. He and Paul got off to a poor start. In fact, Mark deserted the team (Acts 13:13)! Yet despite this early failure, this same Mark later proved to be very useful to Paul (2 Timothy 4:11). One’s past, even one’s shameful sins against life like abortion or euthanasia, does not preclude one from service in God’s kingdom. After believing the Gospel of forgiveness and salvation for ourselves (Mark 16:16), we too can become effective evangelists according to our vocations.

April 26 (Easter 4) – The first generation of Christians were “selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:45). They did this because they recognized that the Gospel of Jesus grants worth and dignity to every person. This doesn’t mean that each Christian needs to sell all they have. But it does mean that we would “die to sin and live to

righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24), loving the poor and needy as well as the unborn, the sick, and the dying.

May 1 (St. Philip and St. James, Apostles) – Today we remember Philip and James the Less/Younger (not the brother of John). These two men were among the original twelve disciples and apostles of Jesus. But Scripture speaks nothing more of this James, and only a handful of times and in minor roles about this Philip. Still, they are no less a part of the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Neither one’s accomplishments nor popularity, nor size, nor age determines one’s value in the household of God. Every stone has its place in God’s holy temple—even you! (Ephesians 2:19-22).

May 3 – Fifth Sunday of Easter – The truth of God’s Word is not always welcomed by “stiff-necked people” who “resist the Holy Spirit,” and even become enraged at hearing the truth. Stephen faithfully proclaimed that Word even though it led to his martyrdom (Acts 7:51, 59-60). Many angry voices today demand unfettered access to abortion or physician-assisted suicide. But we must continue to sound the trumpet of truth, for only the power of God’s Word can open the eyes of the blind and execute justice for the oppressed (Psalm 146:7-8). It is the narrow road of faith in Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that gives us access to our Father in heaven (John 14:6). Baptized into Christ, we are living stones, being built up into a spiritual house, that we may proclaim the Good News of the One who calls us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

May 10 – Sixth Sunday of Easter – Like Athens at the time of the Apostle Paul’s preaching (Acts 17:16), this world is full of idols. Today’s idols may take on a different shape, but they are just as deadly. These idols craftily disguise themselves with practical-sounding words and phrases, such as “reproductive health care” and “death with dignity.” The One True God, the Lord of Life, offers a better way. Jesus says, “Because I live, you will also live” (John 14:19). Though in this life we may be tested and tried like silver, and what may appear to be a crushing burden is laid on our backs, the Lord God has promised to bring us into a place of abundance (Psalm 66:10-12). We have been given the Helper, the Spirit of Truth, who dwells in us (John 14:16-17), that we may serve God in our various vocations as Gospel-motivated voices for Life, always being ready to make a defense for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15).

May 14 (The Ascension of Our Lord) – In the Ascension of Christ, we behold the fulfillment of Psalm 47:5, “God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.” Knowing that the Lord Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God

(Ephesians 1:20), where He rules all things for the good of His Church, gives us great comfort and assurance as we continue to advocate for those whose voices are being silenced by abortion. There will be a day of reckoning, when the Lord Jesus returns with the clouds in the same way as He once ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11). We thank God for the hope to which He has called us and pray for His Spirit of wisdom and enlightenment (Ephesians 1:17-18), that we may continue to speak the truth in love and call people to repentance, that they might receive the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ our Lord (Luke 24:46-47).

May 17 – Seventh Sunday of Easter – “Sing to God, sing praises to His name; lift up a song to Him who rides through the deserts!” (Psalm 68:4). What a wonderful picture of Christ, God-in-the-flesh, who entered the desert wilderness of this world to bring light into the darkness and life to the dead! In a world that fosters a culture of death, Jesus came to give us eternal life. In Him, grace and peace rain down in abundance (Psalm 68:9). What hope this brings to those who are suffering, facing an unexpected pregnancy, or have lost their mooring in life! Christ brings forgiveness and restoration. Although we endure fiery trials (1 Peter 4:12), and the devil prowls like a roaring lion, seeking to devour (1 Peter 5:8-9), yet by the power of God’s Word, we resist him, firm in the faith. We are blessed as we follow Jesus, who suffered once for all on the cross, accomplishing the work that the Father gave Him to do (John 17:4). Risen, ascended, and glorified, Jesus restores, confirms, strengthens, and establishes us in the true faith (1 Peter 5:10).

May 24 – The Day of Pentecost – The Holy Spirit, like streams of living water (John 37:38), flows forth from Christ, just as the blood and water flowed forth from His side when He was pierced on the cross. The Spirit brings life. The Spirit gives birth to the New Testament Church, which proclaims the message of abundant and eternal life in Christ crucified and risen (Acts 2:1-4). The Spirit makes us to know God’s ways and teaches us His paths. He leads the humble in what is right (Psalm 25:4-5, 9). He enables us to share the Good News of Life with those who are troubled or afraid, that they may know that they do not face life’s crises alone. As the Spirit rested on Eldad and Medad (Numbers 11:26) and rested on the heads of the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), so the Holy Spirit emboldens us to be Gospel-motivated voices for Life in an otherwise dark and frightening world.

May 31 – The Holy Trinity: First Sunday after Pentecost – “O Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:1). The Triune God who made heaven and earth and all things, and who breathed into Adam the breath of life (Genesis 1), is the same God into whose name we are baptized—the Father, the

Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). This Jesus, who was crucified by men, but whom God raised from the dead (Acts 2:23-24), brings hope and courage to those who have lost their way in life. Through the forgiveness of sins in Christ, the past can no longer haunt us, and we are free to live in the light of God's Word. Whether the woman facing an unexpected pregnancy, or the person who has received a terminal medical diagnosis, or the one who feels as though their life no longer has purpose or value, Jesus—the Lord of Life—will not forsake us. The promise of Christ stands: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

May 31 (The Visitation) – Today we journey with Mary to the hill country of Judah to visit her relative Elizabeth. Both women were blessed by God with miraculous pregnancies. Even in the womb a child can be filled with God's Spirit and recognize the Savior's presence! (Luke 1:39-45). The pregnancies in our midst may not be as miraculous, but every new human life is a cause of rejoicing. And every child in the womb is in fact a blessing from God.

June 7 – 2nd Sunday after Pentecost – Sin is the cause of all our woes in this life. God says so. Does it mean we can pick out particular sins as being the cause of particular woes? Quite often not. But we do know the cure to all our woes: the death of Jesus. His death paid for all our sins. His death gives us eternal life, no matter what sins we carry and no matter what woes we suffer. Jesus is greater than them all, and Jesus has paid the price for them all. So, as St. Peter says, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:38-39). Repent of your sins and let Him cure all your woes.

June 11 (St. Barnabas, Apostle) – The name Barnabas means “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). The disciples did not trust that Saul (Paul) was converted, but Barnabas believed and vouched for him (Acts 9:27). Although Paul is seen as premier, he would not have achieved that position without Barnabas. There is no telling how your encouragement can catapult the lives of others to greatness! Encourage young and old alike to live with sexual integrity and pursue marriage. Encourage a scared mother to keep her preborn baby alive and perhaps pursue adoption. You can do it!

June 14 – 3rd Sunday after Pentecost – Sin and death came into the world through one man, Adam. If you are able to die, you know that sin's infection has

gotten you. We are able to die from the moment of conception because sin's infection is so deep in our very existence. But as Paul reminds us, God's mercy is also for all men. He sends out His servants to proclaim God's Word and the gift of eternal life that is yours in Christ Jesus. Do not stop the little ones from hearing God's Word and believing but let them come into the presence of God before they even exit the womb and hear God's Word. When they exit the womb, give them God's gift of Holy Baptism and continue to let them hear God's Word. That is the way to cure sin's infection and see your children in eternity.

June 21 – 4th Sunday after Pentecost – “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions” (Romans 6:12). Our world has been a culture of death since sin entered through Adam. We seek to make our passions our gods. We make our hobbies, careers, lifestyles, plans, and happiness all gods. But what happens when God throws us an unexpected gift? Will we rejoice, or will we destroy? That gift may be a spouse, it may be a child, it may be a friend in need, or it may be time with a dying family member. But will we stop and enjoy the time God gives, or will we hurry the “inevitable” and seek to destroy what God has given? Cain was warned that he must rule over sin and he didn't, thus the blood of his brother cried out from the ground. Seek God's gift of Life so that He may bless you with His grace and mercy and you may live with Him eternally.

June 24 (The Nativity of St. John the Baptist) – On this day the Church from ancient times has honored the birth of the one who would proclaim a Baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel (Acts 13:24). In our time and country, this day also marks the anniversary of a Supreme Court decision that restored states' ability to restrict abortion. Inspired by John the Baptist, we continue to call our nation to repentance. But the goal is not merely to outlaw abortions, but to also speak to hurting hearts the comfort that their iniquity is pardoned (Isaiah 40:1-2).

June 28 – 5th Sunday after Pentecost – Jesus said: “And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42). God does not demand from us that we have success with everyone to whom we proclaim the Word of God. God knows the hearts of men. He knows that many have turned their hearts from hearing God's Word and desire death and not life. They desire to stay in their sins and not hear God's mercy and love for them. They will still kill their children, murder their elders, and seek to destroy life at every step because of who their father is. But we as God's children are to speak the truth even when it is received with hostility and even when it seems meager and worthless. For God says if we

even give a cup of cold water, God will bless us. If we seek to save the life of a human being according to God's Word, God will bless us.

June 29 (St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles) – Peter and Paul could not have been more different! Peter was among Jesus' original disciples. Paul was a persecutor of the Church before his conversion. Peter's ministry focused on the Jews; Paul's was to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7-10). Yet on this day, Peter and Paul are honored as equal pillars of the Church. The Church is built on the communal confession that Jesus is the Christ (Matthew 16:16). So let us all have confidence in proclaiming the For Life message, wherever our particular mission field is!

Life Thoughts in the Church Year authors: Rev. Paul Clark (May), Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske (April), Rev. Joseph Signore (Festivals), Rev. Caleb Stoeber (June), Rev. Dean Suehring (April).