

#Livelife - Protect and Cherish Life

Pope Francis knows and loves young people. At World Youth Day in Rio last year, to over three million young people, the Pope said, “young hearts want to build a better world.” He invited them to be “protagonists of transformation” and urged them not to be mere “observers of life, but to get involved. Jesus did not remain an observer, but he immersed himself. Don’t be observers, but immerse yourself in the reality of life, as Jesus did.”

We all know heroic young people who are getting involved in the messiness of life – helping the young; the weak, the elderly, the vulnerable - and putting the needs of others above their own. In this year’s Message for Day for Life the Bishops of Ireland, Scotland, England & Wales would like to follow in the footsteps of Pope Francis and invite everyone to get involved in caring for, nurturing and protecting life at every stage and in every condition. To young people especially we want to say “#Livelife!” from its beginning to its natural end.

In a ‘throwaway’ culture, it is easy for life to be undervalued. Last year, Donal Walsh, an extraordinary 16-year-old from Kerry in Ireland, suffering from terminal cancer, taught us how to value every second of life and to show gratitude

for all that we can so easily take for granted. Donal had “wanted to live, to play for Munster, to travel the whole world to raise children and die when I'm 100” and instead of reacting with anger and despair at the news of his cancer, he embraced life to promote his anti-suicide #Livelife message. He wrote and spoke widely in the media about young people and suicide – urging teenagers to “appreciate what you have, know that there are always other options and help is always there”. His #Livelife message has touched many hearts and changed lives.

Every one of us, young and old alike can play our part in the promotion of life. Our every thought, word or action can promote or extinguish life – we all have a valuable contribution to make.

Pope Francis tells us that being a protector of life is about, “protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world... It means respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live.” The pope speaks of “protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about.” He emphasises the importance of the family, “husbands and wives first protect one another, and then, as parents, they care for their children, and children themselves, in time, protect their parents.”

And of caring for society by “building sincere friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness. In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it.”

Let’s all be builders of a better world and protect life.