

Message of Bishop Martin Hayes on Day for Life – 21st June 2026.

Celebrating Life created by God.

The first Christians were known for their conviction and the joy they shared. They transmitted their conviction about the compassionate love of Jesus with joy. The first disciples exuded such joy and conviction that the Gospel message took hold. The early Christians lives were transformed and their lives attracted people to their way of living, their conviction about their purpose in life, their passion for life and appreciation of life created by God which was expressed in their sharing of resources in common for the common good.

According to Prof Huston Smith¹ the love, respect for each other, and the equality that was evident in the first Christian communities contributed to their growth. He highlights that the unity among them expressed itself in joy. They celebrated a joy that Jesus wanted for them. They had an inner peace that radiated from them. It meant that they cared for each other, especially, the weak, the vulnerable, the sick, the disabled, the elderly and their children as they acknowledged God as our Creator of all of life.

Today, as Christians, we are called to transmit that peace, joy and appreciation of life especially to the those who are most vulnerable; children who are beginning life, people who are suffering in life and persons at the end of their journey of life on earth. We have our opportunity to reflect on these priorities on this Day for Life, today. On this Day for Life 2026² we give thanks for '*the wonder of life in the womb*'. Today, is also Father's Day. As we celebrate fatherhood, we focus on the mothers and fathers who have lost a child before birth and in infancy. We reach out to them in sympathy, support and prayer on this Day for Life.

We are called to extend our concern to those women who find themselves facing an unplanned pregnancy. We must do all we can to

¹ Huston Smith, *The Soul of Christianity: Restoring the Great Tradition* (HarperOne, 2009), 76,78-79

² See CouncilforLife.ie

support them in their pregnancy to birth, to provide for them in the belief that all life is created by God for a purpose.

I invite you to visit the Irish Catholic Bishops' Council for Life website³ to read the full statement issued for the Day for Life (21st June 2026). It elaborates on how science reveals the wonder of our genetic makeup and makes the case for how life must be protected by law. The Day for Life message is affirmed by Pope Leo XIV who reminds us in his recently published, Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*⁴, (meaning 'magnificent humanity'), that from the very moment of conception every human being is endowed with an infinite dignity "*simply by virtue of existing, of having been willed, created and loved by God*".⁵

Regrettably, the fundamental right to life is no longer recognised here in Ireland, and unfortunately, the period of three days of reflection for a woman considering abortion is going to be removed arising from a vote in the Dail during the past week. While, I am saddened by this reality, we can give thanks for those who continue to advocate for the protection of life from conception until its natural end. (On Saturday, 20th June last, I had the opportunity to join in the Pilgrimage for Life at Knock).

May we grow in our appreciation of life created by God and help others to realise that we do not have the right to end life from its beginning at conception, in its inevitable suffering and with aging. In appreciating life, we grow in our care of the sick, we provide for the disabled, value the elderly and protect the unborn.

May we like the first Christians radiate that compassion of God shown by Jesus to all who are suffering. On this Day for Life, we offer our support to the women and men who are faced with an unplanned pregnancy and the parents who have suffered the loss of a child before birth and in infancy.

+ Martin Hayes,

³ <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/>

⁴ Magnifica Humanitas: On safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence by Pope Leo XIV, 2026.

⁵ *Ibid*, para. 52

Bishop of Kilmore,

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