



**Message for the March for Life**  
**14 May 2026**  
**His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo**  
**Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

*May Jesus and Mary be in your souls.*

I am writing to you on the occasion of the *March for Life* taking place on 14 May 2026 in Ottawa. The theme of this year's annual march is "Follow Me" (Mt 4:19-20), taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew which recounts Jesus' call to the first disciples. The call of our Lord is ever present in the busyness and chaos of our world; this year's theme reminds us that amidst the cacophony of voices and ideologies vying for our attention, Our Lord's deepest desire is for us to live out of our relationship with him, to freely, joyfully, courageously and generously *follow him*. As faithful proliferers from across the country prepare to meet on Parliament Hill, I would like to encourage you and reflect together on the witness we are to bear to the inviolable dignity of human life.

One of the aspects that is striking about the call of Simon (St. Peter) and St. Andrew, and a little later, St. James and St. John, is the immediacy and totality of their initial response. Of course, their discipleship was not perfect, and later we hear how they failed; nevertheless, they answered the call, strived to be loyal and loving. The call of Christ is not a suggestion among many; it is a summons that demands a response of the whole person – mind, heart, and will (Mt 22:37; CCC 142-143). To follow Christ is to entrust one's life to him as the definitive truth about God and fullest revelation of our own humanity (*Gaudium et Spes* 22; Jn 14:6). If we extrapolate from the first disciples (their call, life with Christ, and mission to the world), to our present situation, we quickly see that failures, setbacks, and obstacles are part and parcel of what it means to both live in a pluralistic society and be fully committed to Our Lord and his Gospel.

Furthermore, the call of Christ does not diminish human freedom; it fulfills it (*Veritatis Splendor*, 41; cf. St. Augustine, *Tractates on John*, 41.8). To follow him is not to abandon reason or compassion, but to allow both to be purified and elevated by truth (*Fides et Ratio*, 7). Jesus reveals that authentic freedom is found not in self-assertion detached from truth, but in self-gift rooted in love (*Evangelium Vitae*, 96; CCC 1733). To *follow* our Lord is an invitation to see reality as God sees it – especially the dignity of human life – to banish false gods, self-deception, and live life to its fullest (cf. Jn 10:10).

This has profound implications when considering issues such as abortion, in vitro fertilization (IVF), artificial conception and euthanasia. Each of these reflects a broader cultural tendency to place human control at the centre of life's beginning and end (*Evangelium Vitae*, 22). Abortion asserts a right to decide whether a life is worthy to continue (CCC 2270; *Didache*, 2, 2). IVF, while often motivated by a deep desire for children, treats human life as a product rather than a gift that is received (*Donum Vitae*, II.B.5), and tears asunder the miracle of life (cf. Maximus, *Ambiguum*, 42). Artificial birth control denies a crucial dimension of the very profound meaning of married



sexuality and harms the unity in which the couple is called to nourish as it undermines the total, mutual gift of two persons in its integrity, separating, as it were, the unitive and procreative ends of marriage. Euthanasia (MAID) presents death as a solution to suffering, suggesting that some lives are no longer worth living (*Iura et Bona*, II; CCC 2277).

Our presence at the *March for Life* in Ottawa is a sign that we stand firmly, yet compassionately, for the sacrosanct dignity of every human person from conception to natural death (*Evangelium Vitae*, 57). It is to affirm the fundamental truth that life is not ours to create or destroy at will, but a *sacred trust given to us by God*. This stance is not merely a set of prohibitions; it is a coherent vision of love and true freedom – one that recognizes each human being as willed for his or her own sake and called to live in God (*Gaudium et Spes* 24).

Like the first disciples, we are asked to leave our “nets” – those attachments, assumptions, and cultural comforts – that prevent us from fully embracing the truth (Mk 1:17-18). In a pluralistic society as ours, this may involve standing apart from prevailing norms, sometimes at great personal cost (Rom 12:2). But it also opens the way to a deeper participation in Christ’s mission: to be “fishers of people” (Mt 4:19) drawing others not by coercion, but by the radiant witness of truth lived in love (*Dignitatis Humanae* 1).

In closing, I would like to thank those who participate in this year’s *March for Life*, and the many volunteers and who prophetically witness to the love of God, answering his call, and giving a voice to the weakest in our society. Your determination, advocacy and fidelity are an inspiring example to us all. To those unable to attend, please pray for those who will be in Ottawa. May the Blessed Mother protect you under her mantle on May 14 and through her powerful, maternal intercession may you stand firm in your courage and conviction as you give witness to the lifegiving love of God. Be assured of my prayers and support.