



NEWS ARCHIVE:

## Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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A white cloth was held by young adults during four Gospel readings at the vigil for life service in Saskatoon Nov. 27.

# *Prayers for life offered during Advent vigil service in diocese of Saskatoon*

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski



Prayers for life at every stage were offered during a moving “Gospel of Life” service held on the eve of Advent at St. Paul’s Cathedral in Saskatoon.

Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen presided at the prayer service, one of many services around the world held at the invitation of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, who celebrated a Vigil for All Nascent Human Life at Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome on the evening of Nov. 27, 2010.

The Saskatoon vigil began with four readings from scripture: each with a message about life and each involving the image of cloth.

In the first excerpt from the gospel of Luke, Mary wraps her newborn son in bands of cloth; in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan bandages the wounds of the beaten

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traveler; in an account of the crucifixion from the gospel of John, soldiers cast lots for Christ's woven seamless garment; and finally, Mary Magdalene and the disciples come to the empty tomb, and see the discarded linen burial wrappings, and realize that Christ is risen. As each reading was proclaimed, a young adult would step forward to enact the action in front of the altar, pulling forth a single long white cloth.

Prayers followed each scripture reading: for aborted children and for mothers in need of support and guidance; for those suffering the indignities of poverty, homelessness and abuse; for children and families afflicted by war and natural disasters; and for all those who proclaim the dignity of the human person.

Bolen prayed words composed by John Paul II, lifting up "the vast numbers of babies not allowed to be born ... the poor whose lives are made difficult... men and women who are victims of brutal violence... the elderly and the sick killed by indifference or out of misguided mercy."

In his reflection, the bishop said the starting point of Catholic theology is that life is a gift from God. "Every other gift that we receive from God, every other grace, every other possibility, every other experience, is premised upon the gift of life."



In order to draw near to humanity, God takes on human flesh and dwells among us – a profound truth that is set before us most especially in this season of Advent and Christmas, Bolen said. "The source of great joy which we celebrate, anticipate in the season of Advent, the birth of a saviour, also reveals the full meaning of every human birth, of every human life. The unborn child is a symbol, a sign of our creation for loving and faithful community, of our need for God and others."

Catholic commitment to life on every front is grounded in this conviction that life is a gift from God, Bolen said. "It's not that we have no understanding of the tremendous burden which life can be. It's not that we have no understanding that carrying a child can be a heavy burden. We are not without understanding that life itself in all its moments can be tremendously hard, it can even be a crucifixion." However, believing that life comes from God, that God wills us to have life and have it

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abundantly, that God journeys with us in our suffering, and that God has the power to bring life from death, we must therefore stand as witnesses to life, he said.

“The struggle to defend human life is embodied by Jesus who offers his life for the world. We are called to no less: to be a prophetic witness to the dignity and value of human life,” said Bolen.

He cited Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* in listing the many threats to abundant life in our world, as well as the many responses and initiatives undertaken to bind up these wounds and live out and promote a Gospel of Life. Bolen also quoted Cardinal Joseph Bernadin in calling for a consistent ethic of life, in which those working to address the many individual issues would stand in unity, not being “insensitive to or even opposed to other moral claims on the overall spectrum of life.”

Bolen ended his reflection with words of commissioning from *Evangelium Vitae*: “On our journey we are guided and sustained by the law of love: a love which has as its source and model the Son of God made man, who ‘by dying gave life to the world.’ We have been sent as a people. Together we all sense our duty to preach the Gospel of Life, to

celebrate it in the liturgy and in our whole existence, and to serve it with the various programs and structures which support and promote life.”

The bishop then invited those assembled to light individual votive candles from the Paschal Candle, and bring them forward to place before the altar as a symbol of their prayers for life.

Eucharistic adoration and benediction concluded the prayer service.