“It is not the will of your heavenly Father that even one of these little ones be lost.”

Homily by Most Reverend John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo

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Mass for March for Life, Washington

Not too far from right here in Washington, battles were fought during our Civil War about 150 years ago, battles that were fought at least in part to put an end to slavery. Great armies of soldiers came together, and thousands died so that the rights of other human beings would be protected. It was a terrible and turbulent time in our nation, with much sadness and loss, but slavery was put to an end.

Now we’re in the midst of another battle, a battle to defend the right to life itself. You have come to join a vast army of people from all over our nation, but this army won’t be using guns and bayonets. Our weapons are prayer and the witness of our lives. We won’t set out to take lives but to save lives. We won’t succumb to hatred and anger but we will hold on to love.

I want to thank every one of you for being here today, for making this long and uncomfortable journey to the nation’s capital to take part in this annual March for Life. I can’t think of a more important reason to gather, to march, and to speak up. When we realize that over 50 million infants have been lost to abortion over the past four decades, how could we remain silent? How could we sit comfortably at home doing nothing? No, we have to be part of the army that proclaims the sanctity of life, the army that follows the Lord of life, because as Jesus tells us in the Gospel, “It is not the will of your heavenly Father that even one of these little ones be lost.”

We also must give thanks for the gift of life. God held each and every one of us in the palm of his hand, he formed us in his own beautiful image and likeness. And even with our human frailty and limitations, God gives each one of us such gifts and potential, such possibilities to make a difference in this world. Pope Francis tells us that no one is expendable, no one can be thrown away, no one is expendable. And our Lord says, “Do not despise these little ones, for their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.” Every day, my friends, we should give thanks for the gift of life, because this life is the beginning of our life in eternity with God. It is a time of great promise that leads to even greater things for each one of us.

We are beginning this day with the celebration of Mass because ultimately this is a spiritual battle. Our enemy has convinced the world that life is meaningless, and many of our brothers and sisters have fallen for this dark lie. So we come to the Lord of life, the One who himself was conceived in the womb of Mary and was born as a child to be our Savior. We come to the One who conquered sin and death by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. We come to the One who has already won the ultimate battle, and we join him in his great cause. We’re smart enough to know that we can’t win this battle ourselves, but with Christ on our side we cannot lose. This is a spiritual battle, and our Lord is fighting for the minds and hearts of our brothers and sisters throughout this land. He asks us to enter the fight, to join up with him, and to use the weapons of love to turn the tide.

Let me offer you a suggestion. There is a brother or sister out there that you don’t know who needs your prayers. Offer the Eucharist today for that one person, maybe an unborn child at risk, or perhaps a single mom, or maybe an abortion worker. Give your prayer today for that one person, and ask God to bless them. Offer the steps you take on the March today for that one person in need, known only to God, and let God work through you to save them. What we do here makes a difference, not just by changing laws, but by changing hearts. We can save lives simply by marching and praying for life, by giving witness to the world that every life is sacred. We are engaged in the most important battle of our times, and with Christ we will win.