



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

October 6/7, 2018

My dear friends in Christ,

This year's Respect Life Month theme, "Every Life: Cherished, Chosen, Sent," takes its inspiration from our Blessed Mother and her appearances as Our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego in Mexico. During her appearance in 1531, the Virgin Mary asked Juan Diego to build a church where the people, whose culture was gripped by oppression and death, could encounter her Son and receive her care. Juan Diego accepted this mission that would lead to the conversion of millions of people. By embracing his mission, Juan Diego showed us what it means to be chosen and sent.

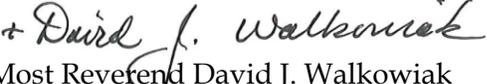
Today's world remains in the grip of oppression and death as shown in the many ways our culture diminishes the value of human life. How are we being called like Juan Diego to change our culture and place a priority on human life?

This year's theme emphasizes the immense value we place on human life and dignity as Catholics, from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. Before we are formed in our mother's womb, we are created in the image and likeness of God. This means nothing can diminish our worth. We are created for an eternal union with Him and called into a deeper relationship with our Savior. We are chosen through baptism to receive the love freely given to us by the Father and spread it throughout the world. God calls us to love our brothers and sisters as people chosen and cherished by Him.

In our interactions, whether face-to-face or through social media, do we view each person as someone created in the image and likeness of our Savior? Or do we see them as a silhouette of a person whose dignity does not register with us? We are called to reflect on how we treat each other and respond by enabling those we encounter to be accorded their inherent dignity and worth.

I thank those parishes, schools, and institutions throughout our diocese who participate in the Respect Life program during this month and who make respect life efforts a priority throughout the year. Building a culture of life is an indispensable part of our calling as Christians.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids