

This Sunday the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales are asking all the churches to observe a Day for Life, the day in the Church's year dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition. The Catholic Church teaches that life is to be nurtured and protected from conception to natural death – without exception.

“Life from conception, no exception” was the slogan adopted by the March for Life in Birmingham a few weeks ago, but there were some other slogans in evidence as well, from the pro-choice activists, who had come to protest against the March for Life – they were shouting things like: “my body, my choice” and “not your body” – which sum up the pro-choice position, that a life is only valuable and worth protecting if the mother wants it, if not it can be “terminated”; and that no-one, not the state and certainly not the church has any right to tell a woman what she can and can't do with her own body.

Our day for life this year falls on the Feast of Corpus Christi, the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, who said “This is my body, which will be given up for you.” Christ gave us his body, he gave up his body for the salvation of all; how different is that from “my body, my choice, and “not your body”; Jesus is saying the opposite; Mary too, when she became his mother, she willingly gave her womb to be a safe dwelling place for the Son of the eternal Father – she gave not just her

body, but her whole being; she submitted herself to God in complete obedience to his will. As a result of that willingness, the eternal Son of the Father took flesh within her, the great mystery of the Incarnation. Mary and Jesus in the gospels teach us how wrong is this attitude that has led to the widespread acceptance of abortion – that our bodies belong to us, and that we can do what we like with them. Jesus and Mary show us how we should see our human bodies, as gifts of God's creation, and his desire for us is that we freely submit ourselves to his loving and creative purposes. The natural processes by which we are formed are the marvellous design of God, and we co-operate with him in the wonder of creation.

Imagine if Mary had said to God “My body, not yours; when asked to become the mother of Christ; - but instead she said “Let it be done to me according to your will;”

And what if Christ had said to God and the human race “My body, not yours; at the prospect of giving his body for us on the cross, and shedding his blood for the salvation of the human race? Then there would have been no crucifixion, no resurrection, no Church, and of course there would have been no Mass either; for on this feast of Corpus Christi, the feast of the body and blood of Christ, we remember how he said “This is my body, which will be given up for you; this is my blood

which will be poured out for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven.

Jesus, in his every word, his every action is showing us that he did give himself for us, every moment of his life, right up to the cross. He gave his body, for our sake.

And when we say and think, as we sometimes do “It’s my body, my life, I will do what I like,” we are actually saying it to God, and we are committing a sin. We are saying we know best, and we prefer our own way of living rather than trying to follow God’s way.

On this feast of Corpus Christi, Jesus shows us another way, his way, a way we must try and follow in our lives, a way we must hold out to the world, we must proclaim it to the world that needs a renewal of faith, a world that has lost its faith in God – which is why abortion is legal in so many countries.

Corpus Christi ; the body of Christ; my body, given up for you, out of love.

Finally, a few words from St Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
with compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.