



## Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities

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August 13, 2008

Dear Friends in Christ:

Thirty years ago, the bishops of the United States called upon each of us to recognize the face of Jesus in those who have disabilities. The 1978 *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities* describes how our Church can and should include people with disabilities in parish life and community programs. The bishops also declared that persons with disabilities have an inalienable right to life, because life itself is a gift from God.

These thirty years represent, literally, a generation's worth of hard work. Significant accomplishments have been made by this first generation of committed people, some with a personal experience of disability and some without: priests, deacons, religious, and lay leaders such as yourselves. Thank you for your efforts, expertise and optimism. Today, a new generation of leaders must be recruited and trained so we can continue to advance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century our Church's outreach, catechesis, advocacy and support in the important work of disabilities ministry. We join the National Catholic Partnership on Disability in calling on all people of good will to find new pathways, develop new partnerships, and bring new vitality to this ministry, ever mindful that we are one flock under the care of a single shepherd.

Our Holy Father called us to draw near to "Christ Our Hope" during his recent visit to the United States. Throughout this 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, let us "*Live Christ Our Hope*," as we honor the gifts that people with disabilities bring to their faith communities, and rededicate ourselves to ensuring their meaningful participation in all aspects of the Church and society.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Cardinal Justin Rigali  
Archbishop of Philadelphia  
Chairman  
Committee on Pro-Life Activities  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo  
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston  
Episcopal Moderator  
National Catholic Partnership on Disability  
Member, Committee on Pro-Life Activities  
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