

**Message for Day for Life 2026 by Archbishop John Sherrington, Bishop John Keenan and Bishop Kevin Doran, Lead Bishops for Life Issues at the Conferences of England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.**

**“The humanity of the unborn child”**

Every year our Day for Life falls on Father’s Day and we wish our fathers a blessed day. Today we remember with gratitude the loving care and direction our parents gave to us, whether they are still with us or have gone to the Lord.

Parenthood is a vocation of joys and hopes, of griefs and anxieties. On this year’s Day for Life, we would like to acknowledge the particular grief of mothers and fathers who have lost a child before birth or in infancy. Mother’s Day and Father’s Day can be especially difficult for parents who experience the loss of an infant. Such loss often takes its bodily toll upon the mother, and it can leave fathers feeling helpless and unsure of how to support their family, or of how to express their own grief.

The Church wants to be especially close to parents who have suffered the loss of an infant. We try to offer spiritual support through the pastoral care and blessing of our priests, and through the comfort of our liturgy. You only have to reach out to your priest or deacon if you would like to know more about this.

Just as importantly, many parents find consolation in their faith and its assurance that God has created, willed and deeply loves from all eternity every child, including those who lose their life before they are born or soon after. We have the LORD’s promise from the Scriptures that: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you” (Jer 1:5).

The Word of GOD reveals the sacred humanity of the unborn child and perhaps helps us understand why we feel such profound grief at the loss of a baby. Parents instinctively grasp how precious and unique the child is whom they have lost and whom they often name. They know how no other child can ever replace them.

From this perspective, how inconsistent is the language that the life in the mother’s womb is just a clump of cells. How can that life be a someone so precious and loved to parents and at the same time a mere something to be disregarded as worthless.

Science is clear that life begins at fertilisation when a new and unique living human being comes into existence. Every technological development in recent decades has given us insight into how life in the womb unfolds for each of us. At conception, our gender, genetic makeup, and eye and hair colour are already determined. As early as five weeks, our heart begins to beat. By ten weeks, we can move and respond to touch and, beginning two weeks later, we have the capacity to feel pain. By eighteen weeks, our mother can sense our movement in the womb. By twenty-seven weeks, we can recognise the voices of our parents. For some decades, parents have been able to observe some of these stages through ultrasound scans during pregnancy. The more we learn about the science, the more we understand the teaching of the Church on the unique value of the unborn baby.

This understanding, however, is not complete without the recognition that, from the beginning, every human being is not just a body but also an immortal soul, with a unique and eternal connection with God, our Creator.

It is because of what both science and faith reveal to us that the Church and many people of good will have always held that the unborn child merits the full protection of the law, and why we have always rejected elective abortion.

This Day for Life 2026, we reflect on the wonder of human life from the moment of fertilisation. We remember how the LORD Jesus Christ Himself sanctified and experienced the beginning of life in the world as an unborn child, hidden in the womb of Mary. Mary knew that she was carrying the Son of God – God and man – as soon as He was conceived. John the Baptist leapt in his mother Elizabeth's womb when Mary greeted her. Our Lady treasured Our Lord in her heart and womb until His birth.

We, in our turn, commit ourselves to work and pray for our society to cherish the value of every little one, especially those at the earliest stage of human life, and to help our parish communities support all those in our midst who have suffered the loss of a child.

Day for Life – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2026