



# How to Build a Culture of Life

## THE PROBLEM .....

*Watching the news and reading the headlines, we may feel helpless seeing the heartbreaking lack of respect for human life. How do we respond when our efforts seem small in the face of the culture of death?*

## OUR CHRISTIAN IDENTITY .....

To understand more fully how to defend and protect human life, we must first consider who we are, at the deepest level. God creates us in his image and likeness, which means we are made to be in loving relationship with him. The essence of our identity and worth, the source of our dignity, is that we are loved by God: *"We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father's love for us and our real capacity to become the image of his Son."*<sup>1</sup>

We are called to divine intimacy, true communion with God, and we can grow in this closeness with him through daily prayer, reading the Scriptures, and frequent participation in the sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist.

## OUR MISSION AS CHRISTIANS .....

The knowledge and realization of how deeply we are loved by God elicits a response of love that simultaneously draws us closer to God and, at the same time, impels us to share his love with others.

Embracing a relationship with God means following in his footsteps, wherever he may call. Just as Jesus invited St. Peter and St. Andrew to become his disciples, he invites us to do the same: *"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men"* (Matthew 4:19).

Being a disciple of Jesus naturally includes sharing the Gospel with others and inviting them into a deeper relationship with God. As Christians, our identity and our mission are two sides of the same coin; like the apostles, we are called to be missionary disciples.

## MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP .....

This doesn't necessarily mean quitting our jobs or moving to foreign countries. For most of us, our mission field is daily life: *"Christ teaches us how to evangelize, how to invite people into communion with him, and how to create a culture of witness: namely, through love. A Christian life lived with charity and faith is the most effective form of evangelization."*<sup>2</sup>

The first step towards living this life is allowing Jesus to meet and transform us daily. If we respond to his grace, our lives will show we have something beyond what the world offers: we follow a person whose love changes our lives, so we want others to also experience his transforming love.

When we live in union with God, open to his prompting, we're more able to see the opportunities for witness and his guidance in responding to these opportunities. We may fear doing the wrong thing or saying the wrong thing, but we do not need to be afraid. Jesus promised his disciples, *"I am with you always, until the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20).

## IDENTITY CRISIS .....

As a society and as individuals, we often measure ourselves by false standards: by what and how much we do, our successes or failures, how others treat us, the degree of our pleasure or independence, etc. And when these changeable substitutes prove to be insufficient, or when we are faced with challenges and suffering, we may feel helpless, alone, or abandoned; we may be tempted to feel as though our lives have decreased value or worth.