

## **First Place, Brandon Wells – St. Cecilia**

Life is a precious gift that God gave all humans to cherish. We cherish the life he gave by doing the good works that God wants us to carry out and perform. We also show our appreciation of this gift by not only treating ourselves right, but by treating others right too. We learn about God's plan for us and how he wants us to act by reading the sacred Scriptures and including the lessons taught in the parables. The Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us about respecting human life and loving others. In the September 30<sup>th</sup> issue of the Messenger, Pope Francis says, "Even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn, and the poor are deserving of the utmost reverence and respect." The Good Samaritan achieved God's mission of compassion because he helped the Jewish traveler who was wounded and left to die by the side of the road. The Good Samaritan is a role model of how to show mercy to others and how to appreciate God's gift of life.

The Bible gives us the honest answer that all God created is good. The New Testament teaches us about God's creation and its value. "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected when received by thanksgiving." (1 Timothy 4:4) When adults knowingly and deliberately commit abortion they break many of God's laws, and show a disrespect for the miracle of life. The Bible states, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you the prophet of all nations. (Jeremiah 1:5) The Good Samaritan gives a voice to his neighbor in need and shows compassion and respect for his life. The wounded traveler was weak and vulnerable and could not call out for help similar to an innocent baby in his mother's womb. If we could hear the soft voice of this precious little life, what would it call out to us? Abortion steals the life of a young baby and extinguishes any possibility that unborn life could have achieved. We should follow the example

set by the Good Samaritan by revering life and giving a voice to those who cannot speak up for themselves.

Not only does abortion go against God's teachings and ignores the value of human life, but euthanasia also shows a disregard for the sacred gift of life. The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that we should never give up on life because the injured traveler did not give up, even in the face of suffering. Even though the robbers, the Levite, and the priest dismissed the traveler to die, he fought to stay alive. Our lives hold much meaning even at the end or in times of tremendous pain. We never know when our Good Samaritan could be right around the corner. The Catechism of the Catholic Church asserts, "Those whose lives are diminished or weakened deserve special respect. Whatever its motives or means, direct euthanasia is morally unacceptable." Last year, I was inspired by a local college basketball player, Lauren Hill, as she battled a terminal brain tumor; she chose to use the end of her life to help raise money for children's cancer research. She lived her life with the utmost dignity and reminds us that life is a gift from God and should not be taken for granted. Her motto was "Never give up" which, like the injured traveler, shows her courage and grace in times of terrible struggle. We should strive to be like the Good Samaritan, the injured traveler, and Lauren Hill and recognize the value of life.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us many good lessons about helping others and about the sanctity of life. The Good Samaritan is a role model showing us how to be compassionate towards others, especially those in most need of our help. He showed the injured traveler mercy, just like God shares His mercy with us in our lives. The Good Samaritan used his life to help others and gave a voice to the vulnerable, injured man. In John we read, "love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another." What would you do if you saw

another person in need of your help? Would you pass by quickly to get on with your day, or would you stop and help?