

EVERY LIFE IS WORTH LIVING



2015-16 Respect Life Program Prayer and Program Guide



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

Every Life is Worth Living

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Bonus!

See examples of parish/school Respect Life Month display on the back cover!

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Suggestions for “Every Life is Worth Living” Respect Life Month Parish/Classroom Display



There are many ways to celebrate Respect Life Month, so the following suggestions are provided simply for your benefit. Your parish or school could put up a display table for one day, for all of Respect Life Month, or leave it up throughout the year. Use what's helpful, adapt ideas for your particular circumstances, and disregard what's not helpful. Materials used in the display pictured above and on the back cover were either purchased from local dollar, craft, and office supply stores or gathered from what was on hand. Have fun thinking outside the box—the sky's the limit!

**These suggestions are just to provide some ideas for parish, school, or personal use. Be sure to follow the parish, diocesan, and school policies in place, especially safe environment and parental rights*

policies, and obtain permission from the pastor/principal before moving forward.. If you have any questions about applicable policies, contact your parish, school, diocese, and/or other relevant authoritative entity.

Tri-fold Poster Board Display

Add dimension and visual interest to your display table by using a tri-fold poster board.

Supplies:

- Tri-Fold board (approximately \$4.00)
- Fabric or Poster Paint (approximately \$3.00—\$12.00)
- Glue gun (optional)
- Advertisement/Flyers/Posters

Here's what to do:

1. Add some color to your tri-fold board! Use some poster board paint or cover it with a colorful piece of fabric, using a glue gun to secure the fabric.
2. Use the board to post the Respect Life Poster, flyer or any other information your parish wants to display.
3. Add your own photos.

Twine Photo Display:

Supplies:

- Twine (approximately \$3.00)
- Clothespins (approximately \$2.00)
- Photos (approximately \$4.00)
- Thumbtacks or tape (approximately \$2.00)

Here's what to do:

1. Collect photos.
 - A. Ask parishioners or students to submit photos of their family members doing various things that depict the 2015-16 Respect Life Program theme, "Every Life is Worth Living." The photos could be of teenagers participating in volunteer work, families spending time together, ultrasounds, grandparents and their grandchildren, or any number of other scenarios. These photos can be black or white, old or new. The goal is to represent the lives of your students or the families in your parish from the beginning of life to the end of life and all the stages in between. Students/minors submitting photos will need parental permission.
 - B. Suggested method (parish): Place an announcement in the bulletin and ask the celebrant to draw the congregation's attention to the announcement a few weeks prior to when the display will be set up. Once the display has been set up, the celebrant could draw attention to the

display in the back. Consider another bulletin announcement requesting photos again, in order to allow as much of the parish community to participate as possible. (When setting up the display, you might consider clipping empty clothespins on the twine to "save room" for the photos that may be submitted after the display is already up.)

C. Suggested method (school): Ask students to bring in pictures that can be used for a classroom display (*conditional upon parental consent*).

2. Cut a piece of twine to fit the size of the space you are using, with a little extra on each side. For example, you could display it on a tri-fold board, or you could hang the poster on a wall and extend real twine out from the poster on either side, with pictures hanging from it. Whatever format you choose, please be sure to obtain the necessary approvals.
3. Clip your photos to the twine with the clothespins. (If you want to add some flair, you can mount photos onto patterned scrapbook paper before hanging the photos.)
4. Hang the display up so everyone can see the beauty of life in your parish!

"Every Life is Worth Living" Sign

Supplies:

- Printer Paper or Colored/Scrapbook Paper
- Twine (approximately \$3.00)
- Clothespins (approximately \$2.00)
- Glue (approximately \$2.00)

Here's what to do (see back cover for examples):

1. Print out the letters using one of the many free fonts available online. (These can be found by doing an online search.)
2. Print out 22 square pennants. (Free templates can be found by doing an online search.)

3. Cut out the letters and square pennants.
4. Paste the letters onto the square, or print the letters out onto the square pennants.
5. Clothespin the pennants to the twine just like you did with the photo display.
6. Put it up behind your table or in another visible location!

Simple Brochure Stands:

Supplies:

- Pocket folders or manila folders (approx. \$2.00-\$3.00)
- Scissors (approx. \$2.00)

Here's what to do:

1. Print the easel template from the website for the USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities (accessible from www.usccb.org/respectlife.)
2. Trace along the edge of the easel template onto any side of the folder (if you are using a pocket folder, make sure to remove the pockets before you start tracing).
3. Cut out the easels from the folder (2 or 3 easels can be made out of each folder).

4. Fold the easel in half so that the ends are touching. You now have a pop-up brochure easel!

Other Ideas:

1. Include a bouquet of silk flowers with some marbles at the bottom for decoration.
2. Candles are an excellent accent, especially if you can find the flameless kind to add a little twinkle to your table. However, even if you aren't able to find flameless candles, unlit candles also add a lovely touch.
3. Pictures frames are an inexpensive, fun, trendy way to display information or direct people to materials on your table. Paint one of the glass panes with chalkboard paint, which can be written on with chalk, and put a piece of scrapbook paper in another, which can be written on with dry-erase marker.
4. To add some color and polish, use a colored tablecloth and/or some wide burlap off a spool as a table runner.
5. Use a cake stand to add height and dimension to your table, and fill it with treats.

2015 Respect Life Sunday Homily Suggestions

“Every Life is Worth Living”

How to Use This Resource

These homily suggestions are written to be adaptable to the varying needs of homilists. Clergy can either use the entire structure and phrasing of the homily that is suggested, or they can pull whatever pieces from it that are useful for incorporation into their own message.

Please note that the story of Maggie Karner and her father is told in a three-minute video at www.goo.gl/4HM8Ib* and in the 2015-16 Respect Life Program article, “Maggie’s Story: Living Like Dad,” which is available in bulletin insert format at www.usccb.org/respectlife.

Readings

(These homily notes are written for use on Respect Life Sunday, but adaptable for other occasions.)

Respect Life Sunday: October 4, 2015

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

- First Reading—Genesis 2:18-24
The Lord saw that it was “not good for the man to be alone” and created Eve from Adam’s rib. From this, we see that we are created to walk with each other and be interdependent.
- Responsorial Psalm—Psalms 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6
The Psalmist says, “may you see Jerusalem’s prosperity all the days of your life” and calls people who “fear the Lord” blessed. This is a good reminder both that our lives, from beginning to end, are under God’s watch, and that we are invited to follow him.
- Second Reading—Hebrews 2:9-11

The Son’s redemptive suffering has made us adopted brothers and sisters with Christ.

- Gospel Acclamation—1 John 4:12
John reminds us that loving each other leads us to God.
- Gospel Reading—Mark 10:2-16
Jesus teaches on marriage, the human relationship of mutually self-giving love that reflects God’s love for humanity. He also calls us to be like little children, that we might enter the kingdom of God.

Homily Summary:

- *Each of our lives, and every life, is worth living, no matter the circumstances.*
- *As Christians, we know that suffering is not the end of the story; it can be the path by which the Lord perfects us in love and leads us to Heaven.*
- *We are called to respect and protect our lives and the lives of others, and we are called to be the hands and feet of Christ to all, especially the most vulnerable. We have been given one life to live, which has inestimable value—how will we choose to live it?*

I. Introduction

Call attention to the Respect Life Month display in the back of the church.

On your way into Mass today, you may have noticed the display set up in the vestibule with pictures of families, friends, and loved ones. Perhaps

you recognized some of the people, or even submitted one of the pictures yourself.

Introduce the theme for the 2015-2016 Respect Life Program cycle, “Every Life is Worth Living.”

The display proclaims that every life is worth living, and we see depictions of happily-lived lives clearly in many of the pictures, which portray grandparents, children who are waiting to be born, couples on their wedding day, and many more.

But we know that life is not always “picture perfect.” There is uncertainty, fear, heartbreak, and sorrow. We may find out that a family member has a terminal illness, or we may discover that our unborn child has been diagnosed with a disability—life-threatening or otherwise.

In the face of heart-rending circumstances, can we still say, truthfully, that every life is worth living?

II. Tell the story of Maggie Karner and her father (or show the three-minute video).

Maggie and her father had a good relationship, but didn’t talk much about life’s deeper questions.

Maggie Karner knew her father as “Dad,” the guy who loaned her the car keys in high school and made sure she could balance her checkbook in college. When she married a wonderful man—with whom she eventually had three beautiful daughters—her dad was there for her still. But Maggie and her dad didn’t really talk much about life’s more significant topics.

Maggie’s active dad had an accident that left him as a quadriplegic, and the transition was hard on him and his family.

Later on, her always active dad had a spinal cord accident, which left him without the use of his arms and legs. His age and the stress of the

accident caused his health to decline quickly, and Maggie said watching her father come to terms with his prognosis was agonizing.

Because he was unable able to do anything in return, it was difficult for her dad to receive attention from his family, and the gift of time they spent with him. However, it became clear that the gift was mutual.

The time spent with her father quickly became a time that Maggie’s family cherished; it was a time in which they gave to each other and drew closer together.

Although it was awkward at first, trying to converse with him, the conversation eventually deepened, and she learned more about her dad in his last months than she had ever known. Her father remarked at one point how great it was to have the time to just talk together, and it soon became a time that their family cherished.

Years later, Maggie shared that she and her siblings still cherished those moments with him. She said, “*It was a gift that my dad gave to us because he spent that time with us. I saw with my own two eyes what joy can be found in just valuing every moment. . . . He left us a legacy of that time that he gave us. He could have checked out right away and said, ‘I’m done with this.’ But he didn’t. He stuck around, and he said I’m here for you.*”

The time spent with her father in his final days helped Maggie deal with the question of her own suffering as she faced terminal brain cancer.

The legacy that Maggie’s father left, and the lessons she learned from him during this time, were gifts her father gave her in his final days, which became especially important to her later in life when she was diagnosed with brain cancer at age 50. Maggie explained that during her time with him near the end of his life, her dad taught her that Christ experienced and understood suffering,

and that our suffering is not meaningless when we unite it with His.

What Maggie learned from her dad is true. In today's Second Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews, we hear about Christ's suffering—through which we have received the gift of redemption. Although suffering comes to all of us—even God's own Son suffered, for our sake—it does not decrease by an ounce the worth of any of our lives. He was not forced to, but Jesus endured to the end for something greater, giving meaning to His suffering and at the same time making it possible for our own suffering to take on great meaning.

Maggie's time with her dad at the end of his life, and her own journey of facing terminal illness, made the question of assisted suicide (and her opposition to it) very personal.

In the midst of a national debate about assisted suicide, Maggie shared what she learned from her experience with her father and her own personal experience facing terminal illness:

I know that in some states, I could legally seek to end my life with a lethal prescription. However, I also know that there is much more to my story, and many more people involved in it, than just myself. Assisted suicide wouldn't end suffering; it would increase it for those left behind.

*The current debate about legalizing physician-assisted suicide isn't about me or any other individual; it's about all of us together—as a society and as a community of faith. **We are meant to be interdependent, to serve each other in humility, and to walk together in suffering** (emphasis added).*

III. Conclusion

Maggie's story gets to the heart of our very nature: We are created to be in communion with each other and with God. We are created to love—for as long as we are given on earth, that we might live with God in perfect love forever.

Today's First Reading and the Gospel both remind us that the Lord himself knew that “it is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18), and that the relationship which most reflects his own nature (marriage) is one of selfless love. The Gospel acclamation reminds us that by “lov[ing] one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us” (1 John 4:12). We are given the gift of our lives here on earth in order to be perfected in love so that we might live forever with God in Heaven.

Take courage, take hope in the Cross—the path to our salvation.

When we are faced with mystifying and heart-breaking circumstances, we can draw hope from the words of Scripture, which proclaim, “We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

This is not a cliché or the slogan for a trite greeting card. Life is difficult, and we each have a cross to carry. But the very cross we fear can become the path to our salvation. This is the paradox—and the beauty—of Christianity.

Rather than glossing over the fact of suffering, we are able to embrace it as an opportunity to unite ourselves with our Lord, and to let him use it to make us, as gold tested by fire, more like him. And as we become more like him, we become more ourselves—more the person he has created us to be.

The Cross: Love (self-gift, self-sacrifice). How will we live the life we are given?

Jesus gave us a new commandment to love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34). He showed us the self-sacrificial nature of love when he laid down His life for us, and we are called to follow in his footsteps. We are called to be his hands and feet, caring for and loving others.

Pope Francis continuously calls us to “go out to the peripheries” to care for those “on the outskirts

of society.” In remarks made earlier this year, he talked about the “sacredness of each human person” and explained that “loving life means always taking care of the other, wanting the best for him, cultivating and respecting her transcendent dignity.”¹

Ours is a dignity that is rooted in the fact that we were created in love and redeemed in love by God Himself, who is unchanging. Regardless of

any circumstances, this God-given dignity can never be decreased.

Pope Francis also raised a challenging question that we each need to consider seriously: “[I]n recognizing the inestimable value of human life, we must also reflect on how we use it. Life is first and foremost a gift.”

God has given us each the gift of life. How will we live it?

* Full URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJwWKDGBS5o>

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(Endnotes)

- 1 Pope Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Meeting Sponsored by the Science and Life Association” (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015).

Intentions

October 4, 2015

Respect Life Sunday

For Catholics throughout the world:
May the Holy Spirit help us bear witness to the truth that every life is worth living;
We pray to the Lord:

For all who are vulnerable, especially unborn children, persons with disabilities, and those who are poor, elderly, or suffering from illness:
May they be respected and cared for according to their God-given dignity;
We pray to the Lord:

For women who are unexpectedly pregnant and filled with anxiety:
May the Blessed Mother help them to know they are not alone;
We pray to the Lord:

For public authorities:
May God grant them the humility, wisdom, and courage to defend human life;
We pray to the Lord:

For those facing a terminal illness:
May they be comforted by God's love through the support of family, friends, and the local community;
We pray to the Lord:

For married couples considering adoption:
May the Holy Spirit grant peace and clarity as they seek the will of God;
We pray to the Lord:

For people with disabilities:
May those around them recognize that every person is a good and perfect gift and treat them accordingly;
We pray to the Lord:

For single adults who desire marriage:
May God help them grow in perfect love and fill them with trust in His loving care;
We pray to the Lord:

For young people:
May they discover the freedom and peace that comes from following Jesus' call to purity;
We pray to the Lord:

Intentions

January 22, 2016

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

(and anniversary of Roe v. Wade)

For an end to abortion and for the legal protection
of unborn children everywhere;

We pray to the Lord:

For women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy:

May they be treated with kindness and receive
support in welcoming their unborn children;

We pray to the Lord:

For unborn children who are in danger of abortion:

May they be given the chance to live the life God
has planned for them;

We pray to the Lord:

For those who are suffering after abortion and
desire help:

May God grant them the courage to seek healing
and peace through the Church's Project Rachel
Ministry for post-abortion healing;

We pray to the Lord:

For those who work in post-abortion healing
ministries:

May the Holy Spirit work through them to bring
healing, freedom, and peace to those wounded
by abortion;

We pray to the Lord:

For medical staff caring for infants not expected to
live long after birth:

May they affirm the priceless worth of each child's
life, no matter how brief;

We pray to the Lord:

For parents who have received a prenatal diagnosis
of disability or illness:

May the Lord fill their hearts with peace and help
them to trust in His loving plan for their child's
life;

We pray to the Lord:

For those who doubt the value of their lives:

May they see themselves as the irreplaceable gift to
the world that they are;

We pray to the Lord:

For all members of the Church:

By exemplifying the Father's mercy in our lives,
may we bear witness to the truth that every life is
worth living;

We pray to the Lord:

Coffee and Conversation

“Coffee and Conversation” is a model for individual reflection or small group discussion where participants can explore the various topics presented in this year’s Respect Life Program.

This guide can be used in whatever way is most helpful – to guide personal reflection, to plan and host a one-time group event, or to put on a 7-week series. There is no “one-size-fits-all” formula to using this guide, but here are a few suggestions to help you get started.*

Preparation for a Small Group Discussion:

How? Obtain the approval of your pastor, and collaborate with other parish groups.

Who?

1. Decide who your intended audience will be. (Examples: youth, young adults, women’s group, men’s group, religion class, RCIA classes, parish school of religion classes, a group of friends, family, etc.)
2. Decide who will moderate the discussion (for example, a youth minister, pastor, teacher, catechist, etc.). *Note: The moderator should prepare for the discussion in advance by reading the pertinent article, reflecting on the questions, and making use of the related resources list for that article. Resource lists for each article are available at www.usccb.org/respectlife.*

When? Designate a date and time appropriate for the intended audience.

Where? Pick a location where the event can take place (for example, a local coffee shop, the parish hall, etc.).

Invite! After determining your intended audience, promote the event accordingly. (Examples: bulletin announcement/insert 2-3 weeks in advance, pulpit announcement week before and/or week of, church bulletin board, social media, newsletters, etc.)

The Event:

- Open in prayer. Use the “Every Life is Worth Living” prayer card from the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, use a standard prayer like an *Our Father* or a *Hail Mary*, or ask someone to lead extemporaneously.
- Depending on the amount of time available, read one or more of the Scripture verses suggested either silently or aloud.
- Discuss each question. (To encourage an environment suited for group sharing, you may consider breaking into small groups of 12 or fewer if there are a large number of people in attendance.)
- Consider, share, and discuss how the Church’s teaching affects our everyday lives and how we can be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Mt 5:13,14) in each of the areas discussed. Commit (aloud or privately) to do one thing that helps yourself and/or others on their journey toward Heaven. Use one of the resolutions provided, or come up with one on your own.

* These suggestions are just to provide some ideas for parish, school, or personal use. **Be sure to follow the parish and diocesan policies in place, especially safe environment policies.** If you have any questions about applicable policies, contact your parish, school, diocese, and/or other relevant authoritative entity.

Love 101: Back to Basics

Read (as a group or beforehand): Love 101: Back to Basics

Scripture passages for reflection: Psalm 51(50):10, John 10:10, Galatians 5:13

Discussion Questions:

1. What is chastity? How does it affect all our relationships, romantic or otherwise?
2. What does it mean to say that the human person is both a body and a soul? What implications does this have on how we treat others, particularly in the realm of sexuality?
3. Why are certain actions that are engaged in outside of the marital relationship considered “not loving”? How do they fall short of a fully integrated, loving relationship?
4. How does living a chaste life help us to clearly view our relationships with others?
5. What are some concrete ways that we can express love to others, outside of a sexual context? How can these enhance even our romantic relationships?
6. How am I responding to God’s call to love others chastely?

Make a resolution:

- Pray for the grace to look at others with purity. Ask for the intercession of Our Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph to love chastely.
- Implement some of the concrete expressions of love from question # 5 into your daily life.
- Write a letter to a friend, expressing your gratitude for them and their influence in your life.

Love, Sex, and Sterilization

Read (as a group or beforehand): Love, Sex, and Sterilization

Scripture passages for reflection: 1 John 4:18-19, 1 John 3:18, Proverbs 3:5-6

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it harmful to separate the “life-giving” aspect of sex from the “love-making” aspect?
2. How does sterilization close the door to a fruitful marriage? Why is this contrary to God’s plan for life and love?
3. What are some ways that we can learn to trust God more deeply? Particularly in our marriages and our family lives?
4. Outside of physically bearing children, how can couples build fruitful marriages? What are some characteristics of a fruitful marriage? (It may help to think of couples that you know.)
5. Think of a time when you felt called to follow a challenging path. Did you walk down that road? If so, what did you learn in the process? How might these life lessons apply to Christ’s call to trust him within this area of our marriages, or regarding any Church teaching we might find difficult to understand and embrace?

Make a resolution:

- Pray for couples who struggle with the Church’s teaching on the fruitful aspect of married love, and pray for all married couples to love each other more perfectly—with their whole hearts, minds, and bodies.
- If you are married, choose one way you will intentionally seek to reveal God’s love through your marriage.
- Reflect upon some of your own life experiences when you took the more challenging road. What did God give you through those experiences?

A Perfect Gift

Read (as a group or beforehand): A Perfect Gift

Scripture passages for reflection: Matthew 17:20, Psalm 139(138):14

Discussion Questions:

1. How do clinical labels fall short of describing the whole human person?
2. Why is it important to distinguish loving someone for what they can do versus loving someone for who they are? What implications does this have for our society as a whole?
3. Do I love others in my life with a sacrificial love?
4. How can suffering help us to love others more deeply? Does suffering increase our capacity to love?
5. How can children like Charlie teach us that every life is good and a perfect gift?

Make a resolution:

- Pray a Rosary for people with disabilities, for their families, and for those who struggle to see their dignity and worth.
- Offer to help a friend/family/community member who has a child with a disability.
- Spend time getting to know someone who puts you outside your comfort zone. Ask the Lord to help you see them as he does, and keep your eyes (and heart!) open to see what he reveals.

Maggie's Story: Living like Dad

Read (as a group or beforehand): Maggie's Story: Living like Dad

(Bonus!) Watch:

Meet Maggie in a three-minute video, and hear her share her story at www.goo.gl/4HM8Ib.

(Full URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJwWKDGBS5o>)

Scripture passages for reflection: Psalm 23(22):4, Romans 5:3-5, 1 Peter 1:6-7

Discussion Questions:

1. Is our suffering meaningless? What can suffering teach us about loving and living well?
2. Why does our ability to "function" not have any bearing on our dignity as persons?

3. Does a person's "quality of life" determine his or her dignity? Why is physician-assisted suicide falsely compassionate?
4. What implications does physician-assisted suicide have on the larger medical community? On society as a whole?

Make a resolution:

- Pray a Divine Mercy Chaplet for those who are nearing death or who are struggling with end-of-life decisions.
- Take time to visit someone in the nursing home or hospital.
- Make a meal or offer to help with household chores for a friend or member of your local community who is ill.

Supporting Families Who Receive a Prenatal Diagnosis

Read (as a group or beforehand): Supporting Families Who Receive a Prenatal Diagnosis

Scripture passages for reflection: Revelation 21:4, Jeremiah 1:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the effects that a prenatal diagnosis may have on a family?
2. In these cases, why is abortion not the answer? What further negative effects might an abortion have on the situation?
3. How does perinatal hospice help to affirm the dignity of the child and the parents?
4. Why is it important to pay attention to the way we try to support people in difficult situations? What are some words and actions that might be helpful? What are some words and actions that would be unhelpful?
5. What are concrete ways that we can support a family who is facing a prenatal diagnosis?

Make a resolution:

- Pray the Rosary for families who are suffering the loss of their child.
- Spend time with a friend, family, or community member who has lost a child. Make

them a “care” basket, or simply write a card or note, letting them know of your support, love and prayers.

- Look into local perinatal hospice opportunities and promote them in your parish and community. If one doesn’t exist, research opportunities to start one.
- Volunteer with a perinatal hospice opportunity or at a NICU center.

10 Ways to Support Her When She’s Unexpectedly Expecting

Read (as a group or beforehand): 10 Ways to Support Her When She’s Unexpectedly Expecting

Scripture passages for reflection: John 16:33, Psalm 139(138):13, Galatians 6:2

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important to be supportive of a woman who is facing an unexpected pregnancy, even if the circumstances are difficult? What are some ways that we can avoid passing judgment and instead, be supportive of those who find themselves with an unexpected pregnancy?
2. Why is every life worth celebrating, no matter how it began?
3. How might supporting a woman facing an unexpected pregnancy look different in different situations (i.e., a teenager versus a married mother of 5, a well-off woman versus someone who is struggling to make ends meet, etc.)?
4. What are some ways you can support mothers who are unexpectedly pregnant in your own community?

Make a resolution:

- Donate time, money, or resources to a local crisis pregnancy center.
- Pray at an abortion clinic for all those who are facing unexpected pregnancies, or look into sidewalk counseling.

- If you have a friend who is facing an unexpected pregnancy, take her to a movie, to get her nails done, or even just out for ice cream. Let her know that you are there for her.

10 Surprising Tips for Love the Culture Won’t Tell You

Read (as a group or beforehand): 10 Surprising Tips for Love the Culture Won’t Tell You

Scripture passages for reflection: Matthew 5:8, Matthew 5:27-28; Ephesians 3:20-21; Psalm 51(50)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is chastity? Why is it so much more than a bunch of rules?
2. What are some aspects of chastity that I find particularly difficult to live out? How can I learn more about them and live them more fully?
3. What challenges does modern media (movies, TV shows, music, etc.) present to living a chaste lifestyle? How can we protect our minds and hearts from being flooded with messages contrary to the truth about ourselves, love, and God?
4. Who inspires me to live a chaste life? What qualities does this person have that I want to have? What can I do to be like that person in those ways?

Make a resolution:

- Pray for a deeper understanding of the virtue of chastity; ask God how he is calling you to live a pure life.
- Limit the amount of media you consume daily; get rid of TV shows, movies, magazines, books, etc. that hinder a chaste lifestyle.
- Assess your wardrobe: If your clothes don’t reflect a person who is trying to live a chaste life, get rid of them.

9 Days for Life

Your prayers matter. Your sacrifices make a difference.

What: *9 Days for Life* is a focused period of prayer, penance, and pilgrimage. Marking the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* (the Supreme Court case which legalized abortion during all 9 months of pregnancy), this novena has as its overarching intention the end to abortion.

However, as Catholics, we recognize the inherent dignity of every person in every circumstance and at every stage of life—from conception to death. In addition to the topic of abortion, this novena highlights many other ways we are called to bear witness to and defend the immeasurable worth of each person and his or her life.

9 Days for Life is an opportunity to:

- Pray for the respect and protection of each person and his or her life.
- Reflect upon God, our relationship with him, and our role in his loving plan.
- Make reparation for “violations to the dignity of the human person” (GIRM, no. 373).
- Inform ourselves about life issues that affect daily life in this country.
- Build up a culture of life through prayer and other concrete actions.

This initiative includes different intercessions, reflections, actions, and resources for each day of the novena.

When: January 16-24, 2016

Who: Leaders in local parishes, schools, dioceses, ministries, and other organizations are encouraged to incorporate *9 Days for Life* into their regular programming and/or to host special, related events during this time.

Catholics throughout the country, as well as anyone else who wants to join, are invited to participate in both the nationwide novena, as well as local programming.

How:

- *Nationwide novena (available in both English and Spanish):* Visit www.9daysforlife.com to download a free app for your Android or iPhone or to sign up for daily emails or text messages. Print versions of each day’s content are also available to download.
- *Leader Resources:* Visit www.goo.gl/JzZak6* for promotional, prayer, and programmatic resources: social media kit; pulpit and bulletin announcements; promotional flyer, graphics, and articles for redistribution; youth/young adult ministry guide; pro-life Rosary prayer intentions; Holy Hour template; and more! (Most resources are available in both English and Spanish.)



* Full URL: <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/january-roe-events/9-days-for-life-resources-for-leaders.cfm>

9DAYS FOR LIFE
PRAYER • PENANCE • PILGRIMAGE

**YOUR PRAYERS MATTER.
YOUR SACRIFICES MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

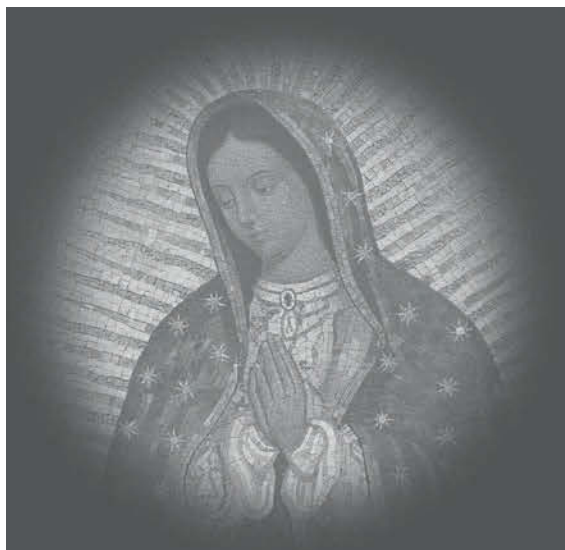


Image: A mosaic of Our Lady of Guadalupe decorates a side altar in the Church of Santa Maria della Famiglia at the Vatican. Dec. 15. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

4 WAYS TO JOIN

 Email

 App (iPhone & Android)

 Text Message

 PDF

Who:

You and thousands of other Catholics across the country!

What:

9 Days for Life is a focused period of prayer, penance and pilgrimage set aside to mark the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* (the Supreme Court case which legalized abortion during all 9 months of pregnancy).

During this time, all are invited to participate by taking part in local events and by joining together with thousands of Catholics across the country in prayer for a new intention each of the 9 days.

When:

Sign up now & participate January 16-24. (If you're getting started after January 16, it's okay!)

How:

Visit 9daysforlife.com to download a free app for your Android or iPhone or to sign up for daily emails or text messages. Printable versions of each day's content are also available on the website.



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www.usccb.org/prolife

9daysforlife.com



DAY ONE

January 16, 2016

Intercession

For the conversion of all hearts and the end to abortion.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

Today's Gospel reading (Mk 2:13-17) recounts Jesus dining with tax collectors and sinners. When the Pharisees question Jesus about this, he responds, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." In a society where millions of people have fallen prey to the false promises of the culture of death, let us witness to the mercy of Jesus and invite all who've been wounded to experience his abundant love and healing.

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Go to an abortion clinic and pray, or set aside an hour today to pray for those who are struggling with a decision of life or death for their unborn child.
- Spend some time reflecting upon today's Gospel passage.
- Use Facebook or another form of social media to post something that builds up the culture of life.

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One Step Further

Pope Saint John Paul II described the "culture of life" as "the fruit of the culture of truth and of love" in his encyclical *The Gospel of Life* (no. 77). Do we build up the culture of life by living in truth and in love? Are we the kind of people whom a woman could and would come to if she found out she were pregnant and needed loving support and encouragement?

If a woman did come to you after becoming unexpectedly pregnant in difficult circumstances, would you know how to support her? "10 Ways to Support Her When She's Unexpectedly Expecting" (www.goo.gl/cX06ol)* provides simple, concrete tips on how to provide loving, life-affirming support for a friend who is unexpectedly pregnant.



*Full URL: <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2015/10-ways-to-support-her-when-shes-unexpectedly-expecting.cfm>

Image: A mosaic of Our Lady of Guadalupe decorates a side altar in the Church of Santa Maria della Famiglia at the Vatican. Dec. 15. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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DAY TWO

January 17, 2016

Intercession

May those near the end of their lives receive medical care that respects their dignity and protects their lives.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

When Maggie's active father suffered an accident that eventually led to his passing, Maggie's conversations with him turned to life's more serious topics, and his final days became a time that was cherished by the whole family. During this time, Maggie's dad taught her that "dignity can't be diminished by pain or loss of personal control," that "Jesus was walking along with him," and that "our suffering is not meaningless when we unite it with Christ's own suffering."

As a 50-year-old wife and mother of three, Maggie needed this message in a dramatically new way when she was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Instead of giving up hope, she embraced the legacy her father had left her, cherishing the life she still had left: "[M]y life is, always has been, and always will be, worth living." Read more about her experience in "Maggie's Story: Living like Dad" (www.goo.gl/QuLz1P).*

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Take time to write a handwritten note to someone who is lonely or needing encouragement.
- Read about the life of a modern (19th or 20th century) saint. You might be surprised by how much you have in common with them.
- Go to bed a little early tonight, and spend some time talking and listening to God.

One Step Further

Meet Maggie in the brief, 3-minute video (available at www.goo.gl/4HM8Ib)* that inspired the article, "Maggie's Story: Living like Dad" (www.goo.gl/QuLz1P).*

"I saw with my own two eyes what joy can be found in just valuing every moment. ... [My dad] left us a legacy of that time that he gave us. He could have checked out right away and said, 'I'm done with this.' But he didn't. He stuck around, and he said, 'I'm here for you.'"

– "Maggie's Story" (video)



*Full URL for article: <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2015/maggies-story-living-like-dad.cfm>

*Full URL for video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJwWKDGBS5o>

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DAY THREE

January 18, 2016

Intercession

May those who long for a child of their own be filled with trust in God's loving plan.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

It can be very difficult and painful when the Lord doesn't answer our prayers the way we hope. We may have many doubts and questions, wondering why we face the challenges that we do. Yet even though our suffering is often shrouded in a sense of mystery, we believe that the Lord loves us with great tenderness and compassion that is beyond our imagination. Knowing this, we can trust that "all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Smile. Ask God today for the grace to be extra joyful, and share your love for Christ with those who need that encouragement the most today.
- Today, pray the Rosary, or even just a decade, for someone who has hurt or disappointed you, and ask for the grace to forgive that person.
- We can sometimes forget how blessed we are to have many of our daily comforts. Give up sleeping with your pillow tonight.

One Step Further

The article on infertility on the USCCB's For Your Marriage website (www.goo.gl/Jdmuy3),* addresses the topic sensitively and gives practical guidance for married couples who are walking on this road. Although geared to such couples, the article is also helpful for anyone to read, offering insight into the experience of infertility and giving awareness of the need for sensitivity in our relationships with those who may be affected.



*Full URL:

www.foryourmarriage.org/everymarriage/overcoming-obstacles/infertility/

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DAY FOUR

January 19, 2016

Intercession

May children awaiting adoption be welcomed into loving families.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us to “hold fast to the hope that lies before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm” (Heb 6:18-19). We pray that children awaiting adoption would be filled with the hope of Christ and “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7). We also remember that we too can cling fast to this anchor of hope, for we have received “a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:15). May our loving Father envelop each of us in his love today and open our eyes in faith, that we may see and rejoice in his love.

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Make an act of faith, hope or love. (www.goo.gl/QiIqQW)
- Today, ignore your sweet tooth. Make healthy eating choices.
- Make a “quiet hour” today, turning off all electronic devices (cell phone, iPod, computer, television, radio, video game system), and retreat to your room. Spend some time in prayer or prayerful reading.

One Step Further

In “An Adoption Love Story,” Jenny* shares her and her husband’s story of adopting their son, Andrew. Read about some of the challenges, concerns, and joys on their journey at www.goo.gl/S5OxL7.*

*Names changed for privacy.

Full URL: <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2014/an-adoption-love-story.cfm>



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DAY FIVE

January 20, 2016

Intercession

For an end to the use of the death penalty in our country.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

As Catholics, we believe and put our hope in a merciful and loving God. We are conscious of our own brokenness and need for redemption. Our Lord calls us to imitate him more perfectly by witnessing to the inherent dignity of every person, including those whose actions have been despicable. Our faith and hope is in the mercy of God who says to us, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Mt 5:7) and “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Mt 9:13). As Christians we are called to oppose the culture of death by witnessing to something greater and more perfect: a gospel of life, hope and mercy.

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Clean a room in your house without being asked or without telling anyone. Pray for your family members while you clean, “[a]nd your Father who sees in secret will repay you” (Matthew 6:6).
- Read about a Church teaching you don’t understand in the Catechism (www.google.com/cu4OBs).
- Make an honest assessment of your “giving finances” — are you giving too little? Make a resolution to give a set weekly or monthly donation to your parish or favorite local charity.

One Step Further

For some people who are committed to upholding the sanctity of human life, the death penalty can present a challenge. Properly understood, however, Catholic teaching against the death penalty is both persuasive and eminently pro-life. Find out why in “Life Matters: A Catholic Response to the Death Penalty” at www.google.com/OIEb7P.*

*Full URL: <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2013/life-matters-a-catholic-response-to-the-death-penalty.cfm>



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DAY SIX

January 21, 2016

Intercession

May all people reject pornography and discover the true meaning of love through an encounter and relationship with Christ.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

Today we honor the life of St. Agnes, a 12 or 13-year-old girl martyred in Rome in 304 AD. Agnes never wavered in her commitment to remain a virgin and to give her whole life to the Lord, refusing proposals to marry. Her innocence and heroism facing death helped bring an end to the persecutions of Christians in Rome. Following the example of St. Agnes, let us remain steadfast in recognizing Christ, who is Love Incarnate, as the source and summit of our lives. May his love give us the determination and courage to live for him and for others, especially the most vulnerable among us. St. Agnes, pray for us!

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Don't push the snooze button. Get right out of bed and offer your day in prayer to God.
- Fast from snacking today. Eat three meals only.
- It's easy to put our headphones on and ignore our siblings or parents. Instead, enjoy the opportunity you have to talk to them; ask them how they are doing.

One Step Further

We are created with a desire to love and be loved. We long to be known, understood, and accepted for who we are. Pornography, in contrast, distracts us from our call to love. Learn more about the spiritual, emotional, and neurological impact of pornography in *Life Matters: Pornography and Our Call to Love*" (www.goo.gl/TkTpTV).*

*Full URL: <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2012/life-matters-pornography-and-our-call-to-love.cfm>



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DAY SEVEN

January 22, 2016

Intercession

May each person suffering from the loss of a child through abortion find hope & healing in Christ.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

Today, on this 43rd anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we consider the past four decades in which our society has legally permitted abortion. Since that tragic decision, many children's lives have been lost, and many suffer that loss—often in silence. Yet God's greatest desire is to forgive. No matter how far we have each strayed from his side, he says to us, "Don't be afraid. Draw close to my heart."

"In the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, also called confession, we meet the Lord, who wants to grant forgiveness and the grace to live a renewed life in him. ... We bishops and priests are eager to help you if you experience difficulty, hesitation, or uncertainty about approaching the Lord in this sacrament. If you have not received this healing sacrament in a long time, we are ready to welcome you" ("God's Gift of Forgiveness": www.goo.gl/oXNDBj).* Let us run into the arms of Jesus, who is love and mercy.

*Full URL: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/penance/upload/Penance-Statement-ENG.pdf>

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Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Today, go visit an adoration chapel and spend some time with Jesus.
- Go to confession—today, if possible—or during this week. Before you go, look up St. Faustina and learn a little about the message of Divine Mercy she shared during her life.
- Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet (www.goo.gl/hD0ijW) for those who are suffering the loss of a child through abortion, asking that they find healing and peace.

One Step Further

- Hope After Abortion (www.hopeafterabortion.com)
- "How to Talk to a Friend Who's Had an Abortion" (www.goo.gl/bz3pld)*
- "Life Matters: Forgiveness and Healing after Abortion" (www.goo.gl/J2WGnW)*



*Full URL ("How to Talk to a Friend Who's Had an Abortion"): <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2014/how-to-talk-to-a-friend-whos-had-an-abortion.cfm>

*Full URL ("Life Matters: Forgiveness and Healing after Abortion"): <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2013/life-matters-forgiveness-and-healing-after-abortion.cfm>



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DAY EIGHT

January 23, 2016

Intercession

For an end to all domestic violence.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

“A correct reading of Scripture leads people to an understanding of the equal dignity of men and women and to relationships based on mutuality and love. Beginning with Genesis, Scripture teaches that women and men are created in God's image.” (“When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women,” USCCB 2002. See: www.goo.gl/3n0373).

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Do you love your cup of tea or coffee in the morning? Fast from caffeine today, or try your coffee black.
- Learn how to pray the Angelus prayer and consider saying it every day — on awakening, at noon or at 6 p.m. (or all three times).
- Give up your favorite form (or all forms) of social media for the day. Spend some of the extra time meditating upon a Scripture verse or passage.

One Step Further

Three in four Americans are reported to know a victim of domestic violence. Learn to recognize some of the signs in “Life Matters: Domestic Violence,” which discusses the painful assault on human dignity that is domestic violence. Read the article at www.goo.gl/gVJ9fd.

(Additional resources available at www.goo.gl/CpKtLF and www.goo.gl/ajGdPz.)

If you believe someone you know may be in a troubled situation, you should call a domestic violence hotline number for assistance, or encourage the person to call the hotline or emergency services themselves.



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DAY NINE

January 24, 2016

Intercession

May we see and live the truth that every life is a good and perfect gift, and that our lives—all our lives—are worth living.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

Our culture is obsessed with perfection—a superficial perfection. Photos are airbrushed, and social media sites depict seemingly perfect lives. God calls us to seek perfection, too. He does not call us, however, to perfection of appearance or abilities, but to perfection in love.

In “A Perfect Gift,” one parent shares about the experience of raising a child with Down syndrome, contrasting it with what onlookers might perceive: “It’s like looking at a stained-glass window from the outside: The colors look dark, and you can’t quite make out the figures. From the inside, however, with the sun shining through it, the effect can be brilliant. From inside our family, love illuminates our life with Charlie.* What may seem dreary to others, perhaps even unbearable, is actually filled with beauty and color.” May each of us experience the power of God’s transforming love, that our eyes may be opened to the incredible beauty of the people the Lord places in our lives.

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Say a prayer for your parish priest (www.goo.gl/jqOiNS). Without our priests, we could not have the Mass or the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Pray for your deceased relatives and those who have no one to pray for them.
- Spend quality time with a family member or friend; offer to help them with something with which they need assistance.

One Step Further

Charlie’s mother shares in “A Perfect Gift” that when people say, “I could never handle a child with a disability,” she explains to them, “[Y]ou aren’t given *a* child with a disability. You are given *your* child with a disability. ...You are not called to ‘handle’ a disability. You are called to love a particular person, and caring for him or her grows out of that love. ...Our [family’s] hearts...have become larger [by caring for Charlie].”

She also talks about the “secret” that is the fundamental truth of our existence, which she and other parents of children with Down syndrome share. Find out what it is in “A Perfect Gift,” available at www.goo.gl/QbXpcn**

*Name changed for privacy.

**Full URL: <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2015/a-perfect-gift.cfm>

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