Pro-Life Coordinator

Handbook 2019

Office of Marriage & Family

Diocese of SAINT CLOUD

Family Life ~ Respect Life ~ Natural Family Planning

305 North 7th Avenue, Suite 100 • St. Cloud MN 56303 320-252-4721

www.omf.stcdio.org • omf@gw.stcdio.org
The mission of the Office of Marriage & Family

is to assist families in living a Christ-centered life in accord with Catholic Church teaching on human sexuality, marriage & responsible parenthood.

Our programs promote growth throughout the different stages of life, fostering the dignity of the human person from conception to a natural death.

We are dedicated to proclaiming the presence of Jesus Christ in our families & our daily lives.

In living out our mission, we will . . .

Recognize the dignity of each person, seeking justice for all at every stage of life.

(from the Diocese of Saint Cloud Mission Statement)

Goals

Effectively communicate the Gospel of Life to the Catholic community and the general public.

• Communicate with Parish Pro-Life Chairs & support them in their work in parishes.
• Publish materials in The Visitor (Diocesan Newspaper).
• Maintain web-site with current details.
• Write monthly Respect Life column on current topical areas relating to life issues.
• Distribute annual Respect Life Parish Packets to priests for October Respect Life Month (packets arrive from the USCCB late July, early August).
• Organize & distribute flyers &/or postcards as requested by Pro-Life Secretariat & National Committee for a Human Life Amendment (NCHLA).
• Provide materials, videos, pamphlets, etc., on issues pertaining to life.
• Collaborate with The Visitor staff on the design & distribution of annual Respect Life Poster.
• Communicate with NCHLA representatives, Pro-Life Secretariat office, national & state legislative representatives on life issues.

Coordinate efforts of support to out-reach Crisis Pregnancy Centers, Project Rachel & homes for pregnant women.

• Distribute grant funds to Crisis Pregnancy Centers.
• Assist in promoting Project Rachel.

Keep priests, deacons, pastoral associates & pro-life chairs current on life issues.

Forward e-mail bulletin announcements & pertinent information to appropriate parish staff.
The Parish Pro-Life Coordinator shall organize and implement the efforts of the Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life at his/her local parish in consultation with the pastor of that parish. This Pastoral Plan specifically focuses on a consistent ethic of life, which includes the issues of abortion, infanticide and euthanasia. As the pastoral plan outlines, there are four major areas to devote our attention:

I. Public Information & Education
II. Pastoral Care
III. Public Policy
IV. Prayer & Worship

The Parish Pro-Life Coordinator serves both the parish and the diocese. Specific duties include:

1. Read and become familiar with the Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities (copies available from the Office of Marriage & Family). Review periodically, if necessary. This provides the background behind the Church’s teaching on the sanctity of human life. As coordinator, follow the direction from the diocesan Office of Marriage & Family in conjunction with the Bishops’ Pro-Life Secretariat in Washington, DC, particularly regarding public policy matters related to these life issues.

2. Organize a parish committee or structure to help plan and implement the specific pro-life programs and/or projects. The size and formality of this committee or structure depends largely upon the size of the parish. Some coordinators (particularly in small parishes) may find it unnecessary to establish a formal committee. However, every parish should at least have a group of volunteers available to help implement programs/projects as needed.

3. Meet regularly (preferably monthly) to plan an activity for the following month(s). Try to initiate some pro-life effort (no matter how small) at least three times a year, preferably around the commemoration of Roe V. Wade (January 22), the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25) and Respect Life Month (October). Review and evaluate these goals periodically. Some suggestions are included in this handbook.

4. Review with your pastor, before they take place, any pro-life activities, programs or events advertised or carried out at the parish.

5. Implement specific projects or requests sent from the Office of Marriage & Family.

6. Serve as a liaison between your parish and the Office of Marriage & Family, forwarding any information or concerns of the parish or pastor.

7. The Pro-Life Coordinator is at the service of your parish pastor. All activities must be supported by the pastor. Upon resignation, the coordinator will inform the pastor of his/her decision and, if possible, assist the pastor in choosing a new coordinator.

8. The Pro-Life Coordinator may be involved in other pro-life organizations and promote other pro-life events on the parish level, provided the pastor is informed and consents.

Checklist for a Parish Pro-Life Coordinator

- Do you delegate the work or provide opportunities for others to get involved?
- Do you have a good working relationship with your pastor?
- Do you have a cheerful & joyous attitude towards pro-life work & others?
- Do the bulletin blurbs of the Word of Life Series appear in the parish bulletin?
- Are the intercessory prayers of the Word of Life Series read at weekend liturgies?
- Is Project Rachel advertised in the bulletin or around the parish?
- Do you have at least one activity per year that helps pregnant women in need?
- Do you advertise Diocesan Pro-Life events & activities in your bulletin & try to attend?
- Do you plan pro-life prayer opportunities for your parish?
- Do you personally invite others to join you at meetings or activities?
- Do you understand the Church’s teachings on the life issues?
- Do you clarify the Church’s teachings to others as needed?
Getting Started & Getting Organized

**Step 1** Read and familiarize yourself with the *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities* (copies available from the Office of Marriage & Family). This is an official pro-life program of the Catholic Church in the United States and provides the general guidelines for our pro-life activities within the Church.

**Step 2** Read and familiarize yourself with the Job Description of Parish Coordinator (on previous page). This describes the specific role and duties of a Parish Coordinator more specifically.

**Step 3** Organize a parish committee or structure to help with planning and implementing the specific pro-life programs and/or projects. The size and formality of this committee or structure depends mostly upon size of the parish and wishes of the coordinator(s). Some coordinators (particularly in small parishes) may find it unnecessary to establish a committee. While it's important to involve others in the pro-life work, having a committee is not a prerequisite for a successful parish effort. However, most parishes should have at least a core group of organizers and a second group of volunteers available to help implement programs/projects as needed. The key is doing what it takes to get the job done.

**Step 4** Schedule a meeting with your pastor. If your parish has more than one coordinator, all should participate in the meeting. You should discuss the Pastoral Plan Program and its scope, how to implement it in your parish, the pastor's perspective on the pro-life cause, the role of the parish coordinator(s) and some potential program(s) that you may want to implement. [Note: *This meeting particularly applies to new coordinators, but also applies to veteran coordinators who haven't discussed the above with their pastor or who are assigned a new pastor.*]

**Step 5** Meet regularly (preferably monthly) to plan an activity for the following month(s). Consult the Activities Planning Calendar in this handbook for timely pro-life programs. Instructions on implementation of these programs may be obtained from the Office of Marriage & Family. Be realistic in setting goals, but try to implement some pro-life effort (no matter how small) at least three times a year, preferably around the commemoration of Roe v. Wade (January 22), the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25) and October (Respect Life month). It's important to remember that your pastor will need to approve any program/project before it is implemented. Consequently, it would be wise to choose programs that he is most likely to approve.

**Step 6** As time permits, but preferably as soon as possible, look through the rest of the handbook. There are many very important and helpful materials, including information regarding Church documents on human life as well as other educational reading and fact sheets. Educating yourself is very important to the success of your parish program and for your own confidence.

**Step 7** Implement projects that are sent to you from the Office of Marriage & Family. These projects are often legislative action items that need a prompt and large response.

**Step 8** Request a free subscription to the bi-monthly publication “Word of Life.” This publication is forwarded to the Office of Marriage & Family from the USCCB Pro-Life Secretariat and includes weekly petitions and bulletin announcements. The publication can be sent via e-mail or U.S. Mail. This will also put you on the list to receive Action Alerts that are issued from the NCHLA (National Committee for a Human Life Amendment).
Daily Prayer for Life

Heavenly Father, as the author of Life, touch with compassion the hearts of those women and men who with your help, have conceived human life and now think of abortion, not parenthood. Help them to understand that their newly created child and all children are made in Your image and likeness, made for eternal life.

Dispel their fears and helplessness and give them true and generous hearts to love their babies and give them birth and all the needed care that a parent alone can give. And when Your children turn away from You through abortion, penetrate their hearts to seek Your loving forgiveness and healing power.

Finally Lord, soften the hearts of the abortionists, and enlighten all elected officials, to accept Your loving grace and to recognize and protect the inviolability and sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Amen.

Prayer to End Abortion

Lord God, I thank you today for the gift of my life, And for the lives of all my brothers and sisters. I know there is nothing that destroys more life than abortion, Yet I rejoice that you have conquered death By the Resurrection of Your Son. I am ready to do my part in ending abortion. Today I commit myself Never to be silent, Never to be passive, Never to be forgetful of the unborn. I commit myself to be active in the pro-life movement, And never to stop defending life Until all my brothers and sisters are protected, And our nation once again becomes A nation with liberty and justice Not just for some, but for all, Through Christ our Lord, Amen!

- Priests for Life

Prayer of Commitment

Lord Jesus, I pledge to give my time, energy and talent for the defense of human life.

I promise to pray frequently for a renewed reverence for the sanctity of human life.

I pledge to exercise my rights and responsibilities of my citizenship to restore public policies which protect the inalienable right to life for the most vulnerable members of society.

I commit myself to work for a civilization of love in which the necessary assistance and resources will be available to families experiencing a difficult pregnancy.

I promise to do my best to awaken others to the assaults against human life in our day. I will strive to enlighten the hearts and minds of my sisters and brothers so that they may more fully appreciate the dignity of every human being – no matter their age, race, ability or creed.

Send anew your Holy Spirit to enkindle in my heart the first of your love. May the Holy Spirit give me the gift of courage, wisdom, and steadfastness so that I may effectively defend your precious gift of life. Amen.

- Most Rev. Joseph Naumann, St. Louis

The following Activities Planning Calendar is meant to assist you in planning & scheduling events throughout the year. Some suggested programs are listed. Detailed outlines of the programs, including bulletin announcements, planning timelines, pulpit announcements, handouts, prayers, etc. are available from the Office of Marriage & Family.
Light a Candle for Life! Ask the members of your parish, and if possible the wider community, to “Light a Candle for Life” by displaying a lighted candle in a prominent window of their home on the night of January 22. To give it more attention, send a letter to your local newspaper announcing this activity and the purpose behind it. Invite other members of the community to join in this awareness effort.

**Purpose of the Program** To communicate in a very specific way, the results of abortion. Often associated with death, church bells are a marked reminder that children’s lives are actually being lost through abortion. No euphemisms or semantics can be applied to the sound of ringing bells as the community is reminded in very strong terms that the *culture of death* is still the enemy.

**Instructions** Ask your pastor and the pastor of any other pro-life churches in your community to toll their church bells one minute for each million abortions since 1973. (Through 2008, nearly 50 million legal abortions occurred. In the year 2008, 1.21 million abortions were performed.)

Join the thousands of people standing up for life at the Minnesota State Capital on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade. It is a great way to express our support to pro-life public officials, to exercise our support to pro-life public officials, to exercise our civil responsibilities, and to teach our children the importance of voicing our concerns for life.
**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

1. **Solemnity Mary, Holy Mother of God**
   - Blessing of Mothers

3. **Most Holy Name of Jesus**

6. **Feast of the Epiphany**
   - Giving of gifts to the needy

13. **Baptism of Our Lord**

20. **Vespers for Life**

22. **Roe v. Wade Anniversary**
   - Church bells rung for babies killed since 1973.
   - Light a Candle for Life – Contact Office of Marriage & Family for sample.
   - Prayer Service at St. Paul’s Cathedral & March for Life to State Capitol in St. Paul. Arrange for buses to take families to the prayer service/march.
   - Coordinate a parish or regional Mass of Hope & Healing for anyone who experienced the loss of a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion, SIDS, accident, illness. For details on how to coordinate event, contact Office of Marriage & Family.

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Feast of the Presentation

Blessing of Infants, Babies and Children

Before the end of Mass, the main celebrant invites all children, (including very small children, infants and babies) escorted by a parent, to come up to the front of the altar for a special blessing in honor of the Feast of the Presentation.

The celebrant may say his own blessing or he may use the following blessing found in A Catholic Campaign for Putting Children and Families First.

From the lips of children and babes,
the praise of all creation rises to you,
O God of compassion and mercy.

Give us the mind of Jesus
that we, too, may bless all children
in our strong yet gentle care for them.

Set before us day after day
the gracious love of the Mother of God
that we may nurture and protect these little ones.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

World Day of the Sick can be celebrated the Sunday closest to the 11th.

Information on end of life issues can be found at http://omf.stcdio.org/respect-life-articles/

Including:

A Brief Ethical Primer on Medical Decisions Regarding Life-Sustaining Treatments in the Catholic Tradition
and
A Brief Ethical Primer on Medically-Assisted Nutrition and Hydration in the Catholic Tradition:
The State of the Question

For additional articles on end of life issues see:
http://omf.stcdio.org/respect-life-articles/

http://www.usccb.org/

http://www.vatican.va/

Monthly Holy Hour for Life

All of our efforts on behalf of the unborn child, the elderly, the handicapped, newborn, &, the terminally ill are in vain if they are not done in prayer. The most efficacious prayer is that made in the presence of the Lord of Life in the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Hour for Life can be conducted weekly or monthly.

This Pastoral Care Program can begin at any time.
**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

- **2** Feast Presentation of the Lord
  - Blessing of babies & little children
- **11** Memorial Our Lady of Lourdes
  - World Day of the Sick can be celebrated the Sunday closest to the 11th
- **14** Valentine’s Day
  - Message of chastity & true love
- **18** President’s Day
- **23** Catholic Men’s Conference
  (www.stcdio.org/mensconference)

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**FEBRUARY 2019**

Euthanasia and willful suicide are offenses against life itself which poison civilization; they debase the perpetrators more than the victims and militate against the honor of the creator. *Pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World, #27*
Prayer Before a Date

O Mary, Mother of us all, you have taught us the meaning of true friendship by your constant concern for helping and pleasing others, primarily your own Divine Son. Your life is a perfect example of genuine interest, generosity, courtesy, warmth and unselfishness.

Mary help us to make this date strengthen true friendship in our hearts. Only then will it be worthy to be offered to your Son as a pledge of our respect for Him and for each other. Help us to be an occasion of grace to each other and to all who share these hours with us. Protect us body and soul. Make us aware of the presence of God in one another.

Keep us chaste. O Virgin most pure. Make us wise. O Virgin most prudent. Brighten our date with laughter. O Cause of our Joy. We will then be rich in mind and heart for having shared each other’s company. We will strengthen in true friendship for you, for your Son, and for each other, through Christ our Lord. Amen.


Feast of the Annunciation Blessing of a Mother Before Childbirth

Lord God, Creator of human life, Your Son, through the working of the Holy Spirit, was born of a woman, so that He might pay the age-old debt of sin and save us by His redemption.

Receive with kindness the prayer of your servant as she asks for the birth of a healthy child. Grant that she may safely deliver a son or a daughter to be numbered among Your family, to serve You in all things, and to gain eternal life.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

This blessing can be used for an individual mother or for several mothers, in the presence of family & friends or the parish community at Mass after the homily or before the closing prayer.

Adapted from The Book of Blessings
Now the word of the Lord came to me saying: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I consecrated you; a prophet to the nations I appointed you.  
Jeremiah 1:5

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**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

6 Ash Wednesday
13 JRLC (Joint Religious Legislative Coalition) jrlc.org at State Capitol
17 St. Patrick
19 Solemnity St. Joseph – Most chaste husband of Blessed Mary Virgin
25 Annunciation of Our Lord
Poster & Essay Contest

Purpose of Program
To encourage elementary & high school age children to think about & promote respect for human life.
Contact the Office of Marriage & Family for instructions on how to begin. Below are some sample categories that can be used.

God's Children
You are a wonderful gift from God. You have your very own body, your very own mind, your very own feelings. God made you special! He loves you because you are unique. Draw a picture of yourself. Draw your hair, eyes, ears & your very own smile. Wear your favorite clothes. Add anything else to the picture that makes it just you—because no one else can be like you! Write on the picture: I AM SPECIAL!

God's Big Family
God has one family on earth. He loves all people no matter what their color, customs, etc. He wants us to love one another because He is the Father of us all. Find or draw pictures of people from other countries. Briefly tell something about them. How do we help people from other countries who need our help? Have you ever helped with the Church’s missionary appeals?

My Family Life
Your mother & father, brothers & sisters, all make up your family unit. Our Heavenly Father gave you your grandparents & many other people who love you. God gave you a special place in your family when you were born. Can you draw a picture of you with your family? Don’t forget to point yourself out!

Life Before Birth
You created my inmost self, knit me together in my mother’s womb (Psalm 139). To be created, to be born, is to be given the most precious gift of all—the gift of life. Write a diary of yourself as an unborn child. List the significant moments of your journey to birth. Show how you developed in the nine months before you were born; or make a poster showing the development of an unborn child or a poster showing how we can show respect for the pregnant mother and her unborn child.

The Dignity of God’s Creation
God created all people in His image & likeness. We must respect everyone created by God & give special help to those in need. Our elderly are people especially deserving of our respect. Show pictures of people helping the elderly. Or write an essay or poem about your experience with an elderly person or a grandmother or grandfather. How do you show your respect for the elderly?
Our witness to respect for life shines most brightly when we demand respect for each and every human life, including the lives of those who fail to show that respect for others. The antidote to violence is love, not more violence. From Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

- Begin Spiritual Adoption in parish (in April or September)
- 14 Palm Sunday
- 18 Holy Thursday
- 19 Good Friday
- 20 Holy Saturday
- 21 Easter Sunday
- 28 Divine Mercy Sunday

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Palm Sunday
Easter
Divine Mercy
St. Catherine Siena
Litany & Intercessions to Mary, Mother of Life

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, You showed us the preciousness of every human life, help us to protect and guard the lives of the people who are entrusted to our care, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Minister of Life, pray that we may have respect for life from the moment of conception until the moment of natural death, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Temple of the Lord’s Body, You were open to the Father’s call to be the mother of His Son. Help married couples to hear God’s call to be open to the gift of children, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Mother of God, You made holy the vocation of motherhood, pour out your heavenly aid on all mothers, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Bride of the Father, Along with St. Joseph and the child Jesus, you formed the Holy Family. Protect all families, watch over our homes and guard our nation, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Mother Most Pure, You whom the angel called “full of grace,” and who accepted the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, strengthen young people in living the virtue of chastity, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Blessed Among Women, God the Father asked you to be the mother of His Son. Help women in crises pregnancies to embrace and nurture the precious life in their wombs, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, Simeon’s prophecy foretold that a sword of suffering would pierce your heart. Bring comfort and hope to all mothers and fathers who suffer for their children, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Handmaid of the Lord, When asked to do God’s will, you said “Yes.” Help us to always say “Yes” to God’s will in our lives, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted, We lift up the poor, the displaced and the vulnerable members of our society. Help them never to abandon hope but to place their trust in the Author of Life, who gave them life, Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Morning Star, You bore in your womb Him whom the heavens cannot contain. Help us to image Christ in our lives and reveal to the world the extravagant love of the Father, Mary, pray for us.

(State your personal petitions here.)

Mary, Our Blessed Mother, Place all our petitions before the altar of God as we pray:

The Memorare...

Litany & Intercessions by Kathleen Jones with Theresa Notare, PhD.
MAY 2019

It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop. Pope John Paul II, The Gospel of Life (Page 110)

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**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

2 National Day of Prayer
4 Honoring Marriage Day
  • Contact Office of Marriage & Family for details
12 Mother’s Day
  • Sponsor Spiritual Bouquet cards or sell flowers after mass; proceeds to local crisis pregnancy center
  • Include prayer petition & blessing for mothers at Mass
  • Blessing for couples desiring a child or who conceived
  • Advertise Project Rachel
15 St. Isidore, Patron Saint of Farmers
19 Pentecost Sunday
27 Memorial Day
30 Ascension of Our Lord
31 Feast Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
  • Distribute & promote list of crisis pregnancy agencies

2 National Day of Prayer
3 Honoring Marriage Day
4 Honoring Marriage Day
11 St. Isidore, Patron Saint of Farmers
17 Solemnity of Pentecost
24 Solemnity Ascension of Our Lord
31 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Let’s Go to the Fair!

**Purpose of Program**  To provide pro-life educational materials to those attending your parish fair. Many of the parishes have a fair or carnival every summer. This is an excellent and easy opportunity to disseminate information.

**Instructions**

- Contact your pastor or parish center to reserve a table/booth.
- Make an eye-catching backdrop or banner for your table/booth. This could be a good volunteer project for students in the parish youth group.
- Have pro-life brochures available.
- If possible, have a pro-life video playing at your booth.
- Display fetal models.
- Consider selling balloons with a rose on it or one that says “Respect Life” on it as a fundraiser.
- Have volunteers staffing your booth to answer questions.

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**A Father’s Day Prayer**

Thank you, friend Jesus, for my father who loves me, for my grandfather who cares for me, and for God, your father and mine, who made me and is always with me. How lucky I am!

by Gaynell Bordes Cronin

—from Friend Jesus: Prayers for Children
JUNE 2019

For God, the Lord of life, has conferred on men the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life in a manner which is worthy of man. Therefore from the moment of conception life must be guarded with the greatest care while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes.  Gaudium et Spes #51

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Respecting Life from the very Moment of Conception...

Married Love & The Gift of Life

Have You Read *Married Love & the Gift of Life*?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved the teaching statement, *Married Love and the Gift of Life*, at their General Meeting. This beautiful statement explains God’s plan for married love in an appealing question and answer format. It addresses Catholic Church teaching on conjugal love, responsible parenthood, and the many benefits of Natural Family Planning.

The entire statement can be read online at http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/love-and-sexuality/married-love-and-the-gift-of-life.cfm. A flyer, with excerpts from the statement, can be downloaded from http://www.usccbpublishing.org/client/client_pdf/7-06nopixs.pdf. This condensed version is ideal as a bulletin insert or use with RCIA, Confirmation instruction, etc. For more information about *Married Love and the Gift of Life* and Natural Family Planning, contact Sheila Reineke at 320-252-4721 or sreineke@gw.stcdio.org

Celebrate Natural Family Planning Awareness Week
July 22 - 28, 2018!
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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- Independence Day
- Memorial St. Maria Goretti Patron Saint of Youth & Chastity
  - Have a picnic for youth in parish & hand out St. Maria Goretti prayer cards (available from Office of Marriage & Family)
- Memorial St. Kateri Tekakwitha
- St. Margaret of Antioch Patron Saint of women in childbirth
  - Include a prayer petition & blessing for pregnant women
- Natural Family Planning Awareness Wk
  - Distribute NFP brochures, hang poster
  - Have a couple witness their use of NFP
- Anniversary of Humanae Vitae 1968
- Humanae Vitae Mass & Award Reception
- Memorial Sts. Joachim & Anne Parents of Blessed Virgin Mary

For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Luke 1:44
Scriptural References to the Unborn Child

Conception is God’s Gift

**Genesis 4: 5-15** God tells Abraham Sarah will have a son.

**Genesis 21: 1-2** The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as He promised. And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.

**Genesis 25:21** And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

**Genesis 25:23** And the Lord said to (Rebekah), “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples, born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger.”

**Genesis 29: 31-35** The Lord causes Leah to conceive and bore four sons.

**Genesis 30: 22-23** God opened Rachel’s womb and she conceived and bore Joseph.

**1 Samuel 1: 19-29** The Lord answers Hannah’s prayer and gave her a son.

**Galatians 1:15** But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace.

**Jeremiah 1: 4-5** Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.’ I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

**Luke 1: 13** Birth of John the Baptist promised to “childless couple.” But the angel said to him, Zechariah, do not be afraid, your prayer has been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, is to bear you a son and you must name him John. He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth.

**Luke 1: 26-28** The Annunciation – The Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will bear the child, Jesus, before she is ever pregnant. Two of our most beautiful canticles, the Magnificat and the Benedictus are glorifying these two “annunciations” of John and Jesus.

God the Father is Creator of the Unborn

**Job 10: 8-13** Job acknowledges God as creator

**Job 31: 15** Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?

**Psalm 139: 13-16** You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb. I praise you, so wonderfully you made me; wonderful are your works! My very self you knew; my bones were not hidden from you. When I was made in secret, fashioned as in the depths of the earth. Your eyes foresaw my actions; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be.

**Ecclesiastes 11: 5** Just as you know not how the breath of life fashions the human frame in the mother’s womb, so you know not the work of God which he is accomplishing in the universe.

**Isaiah 44: 24** Thus says the Lord, your redeemer, who formed you from the womb; I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens; when spread out the earth, who was with me?

The Spirit is in the Unborn & Responds to God

**Ecclesiastes 11: 5** (see above)

**Luke 1: 15** For he [John the Baptist] will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.

**Luke 1: 41** When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit...

**Luke 1: 44** For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
**AUGUST 2019**

It is a very great poverty to decide that a child must die that you might live as you wish.  
Mother Teresa of Calcutta

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**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

14  Memorial St. Maximilian Kolbe, Patron Saint of Prisoners

15  Solemnity Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

1  St. Alphonsus Liguori

7  Transfiguration of the Lord

14  Memorial St. Maximilian Kolbe

15  Solemnity Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary
Spiritual Adoption Program

September is a great time to begin the Spiritual Adoption Program in schools. This program has been successfully piloted in some of our parishes and schools in recent years and has proven to be very educational and meaningful to children and adults alike. It touches on the three areas of pro-life involvement: prayer, education and service.

The program is very simple. Participants in the Spiritual Adoption Program pledge to pray for nine months for a baby in danger of abortion. While this child will remain unknown to his or her “spiritual parent,” God knows who the child is. Many people have found that naming “their child” helps to keep them focused on the reality that their prayers are helping to save a particular baby from the harm of abortion.

The purpose of this program is threefold:

1. To help inform & educate children & adults about the dignity & sacredness of all human life from conception to natural death.
2. To save the life of an unborn baby by asking God to give the parents the courage & grace they need to bring their baby into the world.
3. To provide mothers in need with assistance by donating gifts from the “baby shower” or “birthday party” held at the conclusion of the program.

One Woman Shares her Experience...

A woman who recently participated in the Spiritual Adoption Program had her prayers answered closer to home than she ever foresaw. After several months of praying for her spiritually adopted baby, she learned that her cousin was facing an unplanned pregnancy and had seriously considered abortion. She was taken aback when she learned her cousin later named her son Christopher–she had never told her cousin she spiritually adopted a baby or the baby’s name, but this was the same name she had chosen for her spiritually adopted baby. Little did she know it was her cousin’s baby she had been praying for all along! Her prayers were answered!

A Spiritual Adoption Program manual is available from the Office of Marriage & Family for $10. Includes simple step-by-step instructions on how to begin, program announcements, bulletin announcements, prayers, etc.

40 Days for Life

What is 40 Days For Life?

40 Days for Life is a focused pro-life campaign with a vision to access God’s power through prayer, fasting, and peaceful vigil to end abortion in America. The mission of the campaign is to bring together the Body of Christ in a spirit of unity during a focused 40 day campaign of prayer, fasting and peaceful activism, with the purpose of repentance, to seek God’s favor to turn hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life, thus bringing an end to abortion in America.

Why 40 Days?

God has used the period of 40 days throughout history to bring about major transformation: Noah-40 days of rain, Moses-transformed by 40 days of challenge; Elijah-transformed when God gave him 40 days of strength from one meal and of course Jesus transformed the world following His 40 days in the desert.

Website: 40Daysforlife.com
Fall Campaign: September 26-November 4
(call 320-252-4721 for details)

During Lent of 2009 more than 200,000 people joined in a 40 Days for Life effort to pray and fast for the end to the violence of abortion. Since 2004 40 Days for Life has been instrumental (by the grace of God) in closing three Planned Parenthood Abortion Clinics, saving 1,561 babies, and the abortion rate has been reduced by 28% during the prayer vigil time. We need your prayers, your fasting, your sacrifices to END this deadly scourge of our land. A website for 40 Days for Life will daily update your E-Mail with meditation, prayers and encouraging–on the scenes–stories of prayers that are being answered every day. Please join in this all-out effort to call on the grace of God to end abortion in America.
### Schedule of Events

- **Begin Spiritual Adoption in Schools**
- **Begin 40 Days for Life**
- Call Office of Marriage & Family for details

#### Labor Day
- Blessing the fruits of our labors

#### Birth of Blessed Virgin Mary
- National Grandparents Day
- Include a prayer petition & blessing for grandparents

#### Memorial Our Lady of Sorrows
- Advertise Project Rachel or conduct a Healing the Wounds—program ideas available from Office of Marriage & Family

- **National Eat Dinner with Your Children**
- **Sts. Michael, Gabriel & Raphael Archangels**

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**SEPTEMBER 2019**

The care of human life and happiness and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of good government.  
Thomas Jefferson, 1809

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Respect Life Month

The Living Rosary

The Living Rosary requires a person for each bead of the five decade rosary & a space large enough to hold those participating. It involves a large number of people participating in a prayerful way. The joyful mysteries with use of the Scriptural Rosary are highly recommended. A Marian refrain or stanza can be sung between each decade & in ending the rosary. “My Soul Rejoices” or “Immaculate Mary” is a suggestion.

Instructions

• Submit an announcement in the Sunday bulletin 3 weeks before the date of the Living Rosary to announce the activity & recruit volunteers. Continue this announcement until the week of the rosary:

“A Living Rosary will be prayed on _____ at ____ PM in the ____ for greater respect for all human life, especially for the unborn & their mothers. Volunteers are needed to participate as beads of the rosary. Adults & children alike are invited to partake. If you would like to be involved in this beautiful & prayerful activity as a bead of the rosary, please call ____ at _____. All are invited to attend. Refreshments will be served afterwards in the parish hall.”

• Schedule a cantor & an organist for the singing & music.
• Ask different parish organizations to have members take one of the decades to help in recruitment.
• Ask one of the parish organizations to serve punch & cookies afterwards.
• Draw a diagram of the church interior & decide where each bead will stand.
• Ask your parish priest to be a part of the living rosary.

One Week Before the Rosary

• Call each bead participant & communicate to them which bead they will be & their scripture reflection. Tell them to arrive no less than 20 minutes before starting time for last minute instructions.
• Mark each bead spot with a small piece of masking tape.
• Instruct the cantor & organist as to their singing & musical parts.
• Type & copy for each participant the scripture reflections for each bead, the rosary prayers & the songs to be sung.

Work with your Pastor & Liturgy Committee to assist in planning a Respect Life Sunday Liturgy using the Liturgy Guide from the USCCB Respect Life Packet

Display Respect Life Posters
Sponsor a Pro-Life Speaker
Get more people involved
Write letters to the editor
Respect Life & Domestic Violence Awareness Month

2 Holy Guardian Angels
6 Respect Life Sunday
   • Conduct special liturgy using Liturgy Guide from Respect Life packet
   • Organize a Living Rosary – invite high school students to participate
7 Memorial Our Lady of the Rosary
   • Importance of prayer
18 Feast St. Luke the Evangelist Patron Saint of Physicians
25 Mass of Hope & Healing, contact Office of Marriage & Family for details Domestic Violence Awareness Month When I Call for Help – Pastoral Reflection available from Office of Marriage & Family

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I fear the power of choice over life or death at human hands. I see no human being whom I could ever trust with such power—not myself, not any other...Since the fetus is a creature already alive and in the process of development, to kill it is to choose death over life. At what point shall we allow this choice? For me the answer is—at no point, once life has begun. —Pearl S. Buck, Nobel Prize Winning Author
Blessing Blankets

A baby blessing blanket can be made from soft flannel or fleece material to be given to expectant mothers or mothers of newborns as a special gift to welcome her child into the world.

This project needs . . .

Volunteers! Consider having an annual baby blanket sewing party.

Fabric, thread & possibly other sewing notions—ask for donations of fabric, thread, ruffles or other supplies.

A blessing blanket card—these can be handmade with a colored drawing by a child & attached to the blanket or perhaps a poem.

A baby is a blessing,
A gift from heaven above.
A precious little Angel,
To cherish and to love.

This blanket was made with love & prayer, that God will shelter you always with His loving care.
**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

*NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH*

1. **Solemnity All Saints Day**
   - Living a life of prayer & in service to others

2. **Conmemoration All Souls Day**
   - Conduct prayer service to remember the individual souls lost through abortion (samples available from Office of Marriage & Family)
   - Conduct Mass of Hope & Healing for those who have lost a child through abortion, miscarriage, still-birth, SIDS, sickness, disease or accidental death
   - Advertise local places were a monument to the unborn has been dedicated
   - Distribute educational documents on Church teaching regarding assisted suicide & euthanasia
   - Sponsor presentation or video on assisted suicide & euthanasia

10. **Mass Honoring Veterans**

22. **Thanksgiving Day – Thanksgiving for Life**
Feast of the Immaculate Conception
National Night of Prayer for Life

The National Night of Prayer for Life takes place each year on December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Churches are requested to invite the faithful to pray in unison with others throughout our country in Eucharistic adoration between the hours of 9:00 PM & 1:00 AM on the evening of December 8th & the early morning hour of December 9th. Those in attendance are asked to pray for an end to abortion in our country & to ask for reparation for the sins that have been committed against the unborn. The hours 9:00 PM to 1:00 AM were chosen to coincide with the time in which Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego. The four hour time frame was chosen because of the four time zones in the United States.

Directions

• Arrange with your pastor to have exposition & benediction.
• Use a promotional flyer to publicize the event at your parish.
• Contact various parish groups - Knights of Columbus, Council of Catholic Women, Youth Groups - ask them to cover one of the hours & lead the prayers at that time.
• One week before the event put the promotional flyer or an announcement in the parish bulletin & include it in the announcements at the Sunday Masses.
• Have sufficient copies of the prayers for each hour available as people enter the church.

Register of Innocents

Purpose of the Program: The “Register of the Innocents” holds in precious memory the lives of our children who have died from miscarriage, still birth, abortion, SIDS, sickness, disease or accidental death. Though they are no longer with us, we rejoice in the way in which our lives were blessed by theirs. The Register acknowledges these children’s place both in the human family and in the parish family.

Bulletin/Lector Announcement

On this Feast of the Holy Innocents, our parish is initiating a “Register of the Innocents” in memory of the precious lives of our children who have died. Parishioners are encouraged to record the names of any family members who have died as children & include some brief remarks about them. This includes children who have died from miscarriage, still birth, abortion, SIDS, sickness, disease or accidental death. In this register, we acknowledge these children’s place both in the human family & in our parish family.

This register will be located: ____________.

Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe

Virgin of Guadalupe,
Patroness of unborn children,
we implore your intercession
for every child at risk of abortion.

Help expectant parents to welcome from God the priceless gift of their child’s life.

Console parents who have lost that gift through abortion,
and lead them to forgiveness and healing through the Divine Mercy of your Son.

Teach us to cherish and to care for family and friends until God calls them home.

Help us never to see others as burdens.

Guide our public officials to defend each and every human life through just laws.
Inspire us all to bring our faith into public life, to speak for those who have no voice.

We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is Love and Mercy itself.

Amen.
DECEMBER 2019

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Just as you know not how the breath of life fashions the human frame in the mother’s womb, so you know not the work of God which he is accomplishing in the universe. Ecclesiastes 11:5

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- 2 First Sunday of Advent
  - Initiate Advent baby shower as culmination of Spiritual Adoption

- 6 Feast St. Nicholas

- 8 Solemnity Immaculate Conception
  - National Night of Prayer (sample available from Office of Marriage & Family)
  - Sponsor a speaker on Chastity
  - Blessing of expectant mothers

- 12 Feast Our Lady of Guadalupe
  - Prayer for the unborn—see above

- 25 Solemnity Nativity of the Lord
  - Christmas
  - Celebrate the gift of a child

- 28 Feast of the Holy Innocents
  - Implement the Register of Innocents

- 30 Feast of the Holy Family
  - Mass for pregnant mothers/families
  - Families Dedicated to Life (sample available from Office of Marriage & Family)
  - Blessing of families

- 6C Feast of Holy Innocents
Writing Letters to the Media

The age-old tradition of writing a “letter to the editor” is still one of the most effective methods in expressing one’s views. The letters to the editor section of the newspaper is generally one of the most read sections of the newspaper. With newspapers and magazines, your letter will generally get published.

The primary goal in writing the letter is to effectively and clearly express one thought or idea. If something in an article or television show bothered you, say so, and state your reasons why. Because of the large quantity of mail received by the public media, you need to state your point quickly and persuasively to make your letter stick out.

The true value of a letter lies in the sharing of opinions of one or several readers, viewers or listeners. One letter alone will not likely sway the media, but your letter along with others, can have a greater impact on the way the media covers or perceives the abortion issue.

Clipping Service

It is very important that you or someone read the local paper(s) and cut out any article commentary or letter to the editor that discusses the issues of abortion, infanticide or euthanasia (the so called “right to die”). Either yourself or someone else who is knowledgeable on a particular pro-life issue should write an immediate response.

Suggestions for Writing Letters

♦ If possible, type & double-space the lines. Write only on one side of the paper. If you do not have access to a typewriter or computer, write with ink, plainly & neatly.

♦ Express your thought or idea as clearly & concisely as possible. Editors usually prefer letters of 200 to 250 words or less.

♦ Deal with only one topic in a letter. If you are rebutting & there are several points, state that & make sure your meaning is clear. Use simple words. Short word sentences, short paragraphs, make for easier reading.

♦ Plan your first sentence carefully. If you begin with a reference to a news item, editorial or letter to the editor, your letter at once has added interest to the editor.

♦ Avoid violent language. It will make you appear irrational, uneducated, and extreme. A calm, constructive presentation of your thought is more persuasive than ranting.

♦ State the facts as they are, not as you would like them to be, & be prepared to document all your facts if necessary.

♦ Don't hesitate to use personal experience to illustrate a point, especially when dealing with abortion. When rightly told, it can be very persuasive.

♦ Do not discuss the issue from a religious point of view unless you are writing to Christian media and your readership will all agree from a theological point of view. It is best to stick to scientific & proven fact rather than theology, or you run the risk of being discredited for making it a religious issue.

Always sign your name. Many papers will not publish letters that are not signed and you will find people will respect you for standing up for what you believe in.

If your letter does not appear within a reasonable amount of time, call or visit the editor to see if he/she received it and when he/she plans to print it. Be nice!! Sometimes there are many letters on one topic and it may take a couple of weeks for yours to be printed. Once it has been printed, send a thank you to the editor for printing it and letting both sides be represented.

Editorial Replies

When you hear an opinion or specific viewpoint expressed in the media, a letter to the editor is not always enough to express yourself. Editorial replies offer an alternative method of vocalizing your opinion. Editorial replies include a response to an act or statement of management (i.e. refusing to allow pro-life ads run, but letting pro-abortion ads run) over radio, TV, participating in a “call in” show or submitting a guest editorial to a newspaper or magazine.

An editorial reply allows you more time and space to express your opinion compared to the traditional letter to the editor. There are limits though, so be fully aware of these for your specific area. For example, a taped reply on a radio or TV station permits a direct response to the station expression of opinion. Stations will decide who is given air time, but that is often determined by the number of requests or the originality of the opinion, or the professionalism of the presentation.
**Personal Contact**

Having personal contact with members of the media can help to create better understanding of your organization and viewpoints. Knowing a reporter does not guarantee coverage when you want it, but it contributes to accurate reporting. Good reporters never prepare stories they know to be false. (Note the word good.) They write using the facts they have gathered and at times it is the facts that are wrong, not the reporter. If a reporter errs, bring it to his/her attention nicely. If the reporter is uncooperative, approach the editor directly.

Personal contact can take various forms, but the best form is one on one. It is very easy for a reporter, or anyone, to have false impressions from a phone conversation or letter. Meeting one on one gives both a better feeling about each other. It lets the reporter know that you are not some “crazy pro-lifer who is out bombing clinics” and gives him/her a sense of security about you. Remember, not all reporters are bad and out to get you. The majority of bad press comes from national media and networks. You will find some excellent reporters at your local level who give fair and factual press coverage. Once you have gained a reporter’s trust, do everything in your power to keep it.

**Being Positive**

Always find something positive to say, especially when being interviewed by the media. Some would like nothing better than for you to admit hesitancy, doubt or defeat. Always find the most positive aspect you can about a situation. The better image you have, the more effective you will be. Our goal is to save women and their babies from the devastation of abortion, and that can be greatly enhanced by having good public relation skills.

It is very important that whenever you represent the pro-life movement—either when being quoted by the media or writing a letter to the editor or speaking to a group of people—you be sure to include in your message the pro-life movement’s genuine concern for the women as well as the unborn children. The pro-life movement has worked very hard to position itself as the champions of women while characterizing the pro-life movement as being concerned only for the “fetus” and uncaring and insensitive to women. Besides not being true, this is a losing position to be in because if the public thinks it must choose between women and unborn children, most people will side with women, because unborn children are an abstraction to them.

We must use every opportunity to inform the public that the pro-life movement cares not only for the unborn children, but for the mothers and fathers as well. This concern is embodied in the numerous pro-life pregnancy agencies throughout the country that meet the material and spiritual needs of women both before and after pregnancy. The Catholic Church’s credibility is unsurpassable in this area as the Church (through its largest charitable organization in the country – Catholic Charities) which is second only to the U.S. Government in money spent to help those in need.
Contacting Your State Representatives

General Tips

Be Polite  Establish a positive, friendly relationship, smile, be natural, be a good listener. Many people have a great deal of contempt for an elected official. If you are such a person, it would be better to stay away from lawmakers. Your attitude, whether positive or negative, always communicates itself.

Be Informed  Know the legislation, where it is in the process, some of the supporting arguments. For help, contact the Office of Marriage & Family. Read your parish bulletins and legislative alerts.

Be Honest  If you don’t know the answer, find out. Never lie, not even a little bit.

Don’t Be Intimidated—You have a right to call or visit your elected official. You have a right to ask that your opinion be considered before he/she casts a vote.

Be Firm & Consistent  – Do not compromise your convictions. Do not be taken in by pro-abortion double talk. Know your elected officials voting record, public statements, response to the Minnesota Catholic Conference. He/she cannot fool an informed voter.

Do Not Threaten  – Never threaten to “get” an elected official. This destroys all communication, credibility and respect. If you don’t like the way your representative votes, work for his/her opponent in the next election.

Multiply Your Efforts  – Your letter, call, or visit is important and can be a critical factor for some representatives, but you are one vote. The more people you urge to become involved, the more effective the citizen lobby program.

Be Thankful  For their time and their vote. This is too often forgotten but is essential to maintain an open, friendly, productive relationship.

Letters

Be Neat  Write clearly or type.

Get the Point  Brevity accentuates your point. Don’t lecture on abortion. Tell why you are writing – opinions, bill, event, their vote, information, etc. and what you want. Ask for a response.

Form Letters or Form Postcards  These carry less weight with a representative, but are better than no letter at all. Make it as easy as possible for the parishioners to write a letter (e.g. samples to guide them.)

Avoid Petitions  They have less meaning than one short sincere letter.

Consider a Letter Writing Campaign  Hold it on hospitality Sunday when a large number of parishioners are gathered together already. Also try to get permission to have a letter writing campaign during some other parish organization’s meeting.

Calls

Secretaries  Take and give messages and provide some factual information about the progress of specific legislation. Never argue with a secretary.

Talk or Message  It isn’t always necessary to talk to your elected official. Many times it is sufficient to say, “My name is ___. I would like (elected official) to vote yes/no on (bill number).

Be Considerate  Elected officials receive many calls at home, but avoid very early morning, late night or meal times.

Visits

Make an Appointment  If you just show up you can only expect a few, distracted minutes. This applies to both business and home visits.

Look Good  Elected officials dress in formal business attire. They take their jobs seriously, so should you.

Do Not Carry Picket Signs, chant, demonstrate or hold prayer vigils in the State Capitol. You are there as a citizen lobbyist to give your senator factual information and ask him/her to vote the way you want.

Share Your Experience  Invite someone to go along. Invite your elected official to your home to meet with friends/neighbors to discuss the abortion issue.

Attend Public Meetings  where your representative is a speaker. Ask specific questions about pro-life and anti-life legislation, his/her vote or opinion. This is an excellent tool for educating others on the issue and the position of their representative.

Do It!  Lobbying by citizens has a lasting effectiveness. It breaks down barriers that exist between most voters and elected officials. Personal contacts increase the positive, friendly relationship and develop mutual trust. Some elected officials will maintain a pro-abortion position regardless of the opinions of the voters, but most respond favorably to the sincere, positive concerns of pro-life people. And since re-election is a prime concern of most elected officials, increasing numbers of letters, calls and visits from pro-life people have a definite effect.
2016 Federal & State Voices

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MN SENATORS

MN REPRESNATIVES
Medical Decisions Regarding Life-Sustaining Treatments in the Catholic Tradition
by Father Thomas Knablach Ph.D.
Consultant for Healthcare Ethics, Diocese of Saint Cloud

Life is a Gift from God
The Catholic tradition acknowledges that life is a gift from God, our Creator. Indeed, human life is the foundation for the enjoyment of all other goods in this life. Further, the human person is made in the image of God and is called to eternal life. Thus the inviolable dignity of each individual human life, made in the image of God, is the basis of all other Catholic teaching.

Christ Reveals the Meaning of Our Lives
Because of the Incarnation, every moment of human life, from conception to death, has been transformed by the presence of Christ, Who has shared in our life fully. Suffering and death have not been eliminated from the human condition by the saving work of Jesus, but to the eyes of faith, their very meaning has been transformed. Our own sufferings can be joined to those of Christ and share in a profound way in His saving sacrifice. Death can be embraced according to God’s will as a passage to new life.

Medicine Is a Means of Stewardship 
Over the Gift of Life
The contributions of medicine and technology are valued as part of our stewardship and care for God’s creation. Yet healthcare is not an end in itself. The value of life-sustaining treatments is assessed in light of their impact on the individual human person, in his or her specific circumstances. We are given responsibility to take reasonable care to preserve life and health in this world, but we are also called to eternal life and wholeness with God.

The Middle Ground between Over 
Reliance on Technology & Euthanasia
Since we are stewards, not owners, of our lives, our faith allows us to avoid two extremes: first, to insist on useless or excessively burdensome medical treatments that merely prolong the dying process; and second, to act or to deliberately withdraw life-sustaining treatments precisely in order to bring about the person’s death. The Catholic tradition generally agrees with secular healthcare ethics in seeking this middle ground between absolutely mandating the use of medical technology on the one hand and euthanasia on the other. However, the Catholic position is based not on patient wishes alone (though autonomy has an important place) or on giving up on certain lives (though we do acknowledge the limits of medical interventions). Instead, it is rooted in our conviction that each person is of infinite value and dignity, and that life in this world is a preparation for a greater life to come.

Why Dying Can Be More Difficult Today
In some ways, dying is more difficult today than in the past for several reasons:

1) While the advances in medical technology have allowed improved quality of life and longevity for many, they have also created new ethical challenges. We are now able to sustain life by means of technology not available to previous generations. But simply because we can prolong life does not necessarily mean that we must or that we ought to do so. These advances can also make it more difficult to determine when death has occurred, blur the lines of ordinary care and extraordinary technological interventions, and raise questions about the allocation of limited medical resources.

2) While death was once a familiar part of the life cycle to most people, people now tend to expect that medicine ought to be able to keep them from suffering and death. Further, people tend to move more often, the population is aging, a patient often sees a wide variety of healthcare providers rather than “my family doctor,” and the culture we live in exalts youth, vitality, productivity, and individual choice. All of this tends to marginalize persons who are chronically ill, elderly, disabled, or dying. Thus death can become a threat to be avoided whenever possible, and controlled when it is no longer possible to avoid. Suffering, disability, and loss seem to be meaningless experiences for many, and euthanasia may seem like a reasonable solution to forestall having to experience such meaninglessness.

3) Despite many advances in high-technology medicine, inadequate management of pain and other discomfort that may accompany dying remains a concern.

Euthanasia: A False Mercy
Euthanasia literally means “good death.” Among the ancient Greeks, the term was descriptive, referring to the happy circumstance of dying after a long and full life, surrounded by family and friends, and free from pain and suffering. In recent years, however, this term has been used to refer to the active ending of life in order to alleviate physical and/or psychological suffering: “by euthanasia is understood an action or an omission which of itself or by intention causes death, in order that all suffering may in this way be eliminated.” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Euthanasia Jura et Bona [May 5, 1980], n. 2).

Sometimes euthanasia is known as “mercy killing.” It seems to some people that it is preferable to avoid suffering when possible, even by causing death, than to endure pain, despair, and a sense of being a burden on others. However, the Catholic tradition rejects euthanasia as a false mercy. We agree fully that suffering is an evil to be avoided when possible, and support pain and symptom management to alleviate physical discomfort and psychological distress. In fact, the Catholic tradition supports the palliation of pain by medications, even when this may hasten the person’s death, as long as this effect
is merely foreseen but not directly intended. However, there are limits to our ability to prevent suffering in a world marred by the effects of original sin. We do not believe that the elimination of suffering can be morally achieved by directly acting to end the person’s life.

**Sickness & Death Affect the Whole Person**

While “death” is an event (a particular moment in which the soul leaves the body and earthly life is ended), “dying” is often a process that extends over a period of time. This process of dying (especially in a prolonged illness) usually involves suffering at all levels of the person:

- **Physical**
- **Emotional/Psychological**
- **Relational/Social**
- **Spiritual**

**Physical** – Properly used, medicines for pain management are extremely effective. The Church teaches that the use of such analgesics is completely acceptable, even if their use may cause unconsciousness or even hasten death, as long as the intention in using the medications is solely to alleviate pain and not directly to cause death. No one need suffer unbearably.

In addition, all care that would normally be given to patients is to be given to persons who are terminally ill, dying, advanced in age, suffering from forms of dementia, or in the “persistent vegetative state.” We distinguish between therapeutic interventions, which intend to cure or heal an existing disease, and palliative means or interventions, which aim at providing comfort and alleviating suffering. Even when cure is not possible, we are still obliged to offer comfort and normal care.

**Psychological** – It is natural and normal for a person in severe illness, advanced age, or other situations of approaching death, to experience a range of emotions, including disbelief, fear, regret, anxiety, sadness, anger, depression, and eventual acceptance and peace. Sincere and empathetic listening, personal presence of family and friends, and gentle and understanding interactions by healthcare professionals will all help to alleviate the person’s emotional distress and reassure him or her of being valued as a unique person of infinite worth and dignity.

**Social** – The dying person may encounter isolation, loneliness, and inevitable changes in relationships with the need to bring closure and say good-bye to loved ones. The presence of family and friends are very important in times of illness, and especially as death nears. Being surrounded by loved ones brings great comfort, even if the person facing death cannot consciously respond to their presence. This presence is also important for the family members and friends themselves, so that they may say their good-byes and come to acceptance and closure. Sometimes, there may be a need for reconciliation and forgiveness so that the person can die with peace of mind and spirit.

**Spiritual** – The mystery of death naturally opens us to the transcendent dimensions of human life. Yet it can also be a crisis of faith, as one’s trust in God and hope for eternal life are tested. The dying person should be given the opportunity to visit representatives of their own faith community. Catholic patients in particular are to be strengthened in this final stage of life with pastoral care and in particular the sacraments of Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, and with the Eucharist if they are able to receive Communion.

When the time of death nears, our commitment to healing and care is not ended, but it takes a different form: we turn our attention from efforts at restoring health and function towards maintaining comfort and preparing for death. This time is unique to each person in his or her specific case, and a variety of factors and voices must come into play to discern it.

Determining when this time has come can be difficult. The complexity of some cases, from medical and moral standpoints, can blur the line between a morally justified “allowing to die” and a morally repugnant “causing death” in the minds of those involved. The simplest criterion for drawing this line correctly is to answer as honestly as possible this question: “what will cause this death?” Is it the underlying pathology or injury which resists all reasonable efforts to cure or manage? Or would death intentionally be caused by the action or omission taken, without which action or omission life would continue for the present? If the former, we are allowing the person to die by forgoing futile or excessively burdensome interventions. If the latter, it is euthanasia.

**Ordinary & Extraordinary Means**

The traditions of the Church and the consensus of the medical community have long distinguished between ordinary means and extraordinary means to sustain life. Other terms are sometimes used for this distinction. One may see a discussion of “proportionate” and “disproportionate” means, emphasizing the proportion between the expected benefit and the burdens incurred. Again, sometimes the terms “ethically obligatory” and “ethically optional” are used, to emphasize that evaluating the means to be used is not merely a medical assessment, but has an ethical component.

Whatever the terms used to make the distinction, the Catholic tradition holds that one is morally obliged to use ordinary means to preserve life; while one is not obliged, but may be permitted, to use extraordinary means. While this teaching is quite straightforward at the theoretical level, it can become quite difficult in actual cases to determine what, specifically, is...
ordinary and to be done, and what is extraordinary and therefore not required. As noted above, advances in medical technology, changes in healthcare delivery, and other factors have made it increasingly complicated to draw a clear line between the ordinary and the extraordinary.

Assessing Ordinary & Extraordinary: PREHAB

Useful criteria for determining whether proposed interventions are ordinary or extraordinary include consideration of the following factors: Patient Preferences; Risk; Expense; Hope; Availability; & Benefits/Burdens. The acronym PREHAB may help to remember these factors.

Patient Preferences: patient autonomy is an important value in healthcare ethics; the competent patient himself or herself has the primary say in what will or will not be done. Healthcare providers are normally obliged to follow the person’s wishes, as long as they are not contrary to law or the ethical standards of the institution rendering care. Each patient is also obliged to choose following these same criteria, with the responsibility to take reasonable measures to preserve life and health. When the person becomes incapable of so choosing due to unconsciousness or incompetence, family members or other proxy decision-makers enter the process. It is a great help in such instances to have an advance directive for healthcare decisions in place, which indicates the person’s wishes so that other decision-makers will clearly know them. More information on advance directives is found below.

Risk: when an intervention is still experimental, or when there is a danger in using the intervention for this particular person. Any medical procedure entails some risk; the degree of risk to be endured must be measured against the likelihood of potential benefits to the person.

Expense: can be in absolute or relative financial terms. Given contemporary concerns about rising medical costs and limited resources, it is important to assess expense carefully. While expense can be a factor in determining whether an intervention is extraordinary or not, it is not the sole factor; the person’s innate right to life takes precedence over costs. However, expense may be a confirming factor when risk or burden are high and hope of benefit is low, or when all possible means of financial support are exhausted.

Hope: refers to the reasonable, founded expectation that a particular intervention will have its intended benefits. This does not always mean hope of recovery or a return to full health and function. In some cases, such recovery is no longer possible, but the person’s quality of life can still be enhanced. Hope is to be assessed on the basis of whether a given means is likely to be effective or bringing about its own intended goal, as well as effective in the overall well-being of the patient.

Availability: refers to the relative access of this intervention, for this person, now. For instance, if a person could only have access to a particular surgery through a hospital which is distant, and if the required transport would present a grave risk, then such a surgery may be “unavailable” and thus extraordinary for that person, even if it is routinely done in the other hospital. Or, in situations of epidemic, when there is an overwhelming demand for the required equipment or personnel, those interventions may be “unavailable” in practical terms.

Benefits/Burdens: this is the core factor in determining whether a proposed intervention is ordinary or extraordinary. It refers to a carefully considered calculation or “weighing” of the proposed intervention in terms of the expected benefits to the patient in his or her concrete circumstances, measured against the burdens to be endured by the patient. These benefits and burdens refer primarily and fundamentally to the effects of the intervention on the patient. Only secondarily and subordinately are benefits and burdens on the person’s family, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and society as a whole to be considered. Benefits and burdens are considered holistically: that is, they include not only physical factors, but also psychological, relational, and spiritual effects.

When the burdens to be endured genuinely outweigh the expected benefits foreseen, the intervention is extraordinary and may be legitimately foregone. Whenever the person is competent, he or she has the right and responsibility to make this informed judgment. Sometimes, however, the person is not capable of making this decision due to unconsciousness, dementia, or some other factor. In such cases, proxy-decision makers and healthcare professionals dialogue together to make this discernment based on any known previously-expressed wishes of the patient and/or the patient’s best interests.

It is well to emphasize again that this discernment of ordinary and extraordinary means must be made on a case-by-case basis. It is unique to each individual in the concrete circumstances of the moment. It is to be reassessed regularly as time passes and the person’s status changes.

Withholding vs. Withdrawing Life-Sustaining Interventions

From an ethical standpoint, as long as the above criteria are observed, there is no moral difference between withholding an intervention and withdrawing one already in use. In either case, the discernment is made that the means in question is extraordinary and therefore ethically optional.

However, it can be far more difficult emotionally to discontinue a means currently in use; since death may result when the means is withdrawn, it can seem like the decision to withdraw is the direct cause of death. Yet, if the discernment is correct, it is the underlying pathology that causes death; the withdrawal of means simply allows that pathology to take its natural course, no longer forestalling death by technological means.

Withholding a means can seem less dramatic, but in fact takes greater moral certitude that the means would be extraordinary if used. When withdrawing a means in use, there is some evidence that the means is ineffective or excessively burdensome; while withholding a means relies on speculation that it would be ineffective or burdensome.
Nonetheless, this discernment can be ethically made according to the above criteria, with due diligence in assessing the medical facts and likely outcomes.

**Moral Certitude**

It is crucially important to realize ethical decisions about matters as weighty as using or forgoing life-sustaining treatments are very complex and often uncertain. As the great Greek philosopher Aristotle noted over four centuries before Christ, “It is wisdom to expect no more certitude than the subject matter allows.” Saint Thomas Aquinas noted the same reality: that we can have certitude at the level of principles, but the more we deal with specific cases, the greater the uncertainty we encounter. For this reason, the Catholic tradition does not look for absolute or metaphysical certitude about such complex decisions in the face of the mystery of death. We may not be able to come up with a completely satisfying, logically compelling argument about the course of action we choose to take; people of equally good will may differ; we rely on dialogue, honesty, and intuition; and we may have to live with ambiguity and probabilities rather than clear guarantees.

The Church does require, however, that we have “moral certitude.” We achieve this kind of certitude in dialogue with others. First, we listen to all the facts of the situation, including: the medical diagnosis and prognosis; the possible alternatives for treatment; the risks and benefits of each; the economic, psychological, and social costs foreseen with each; and we express our wishes and preferences of the person. We assess these facts without prejudice or bias and weigh them carefully in light of the accumulated wisdom found in the teachings of our faith.

We take time to listen carefully to the voice of our conscience and seek God’s will in sincere prayer. We consult with others who have special expertise in the various aspects of the question, and who can help us with honest discernment. Then, we reach a decision that we believe sincerely to be right in this specific case. This decision is an exercise of the virtue of prudence; these are sometimes known as “prudential judgments.”

**Advance Directives**

An advance directive is generally defined as a written document prepared by an individual to instruct healthcare professionals and family members about that person’s healthcare preferences in case he or she is unable to communicate them at the time when decisions need to be made. Advance directives are an extension of the legitimate right to direct one’s own health care and to exercise one’s responsibility and stewardship for the gifts of life and health. They are supported by the Church as long as they would direct care in accord with Catholic principles. Since 1990, each patient entering a healthcare facility that receives federal funds is obliged to ask if the person has an advance directive; and, if not, if he or she would like to compose one. No one may be denied services or given a different level of care if an advance directive is absent, nor is one required to have one.

Advance directives have taken two general forms in recent years, commonly called the “living will” and the “durable power of attorney for healthcare” (DPAHC). The living will was an earlier form of advance directive that attempted to be specific about inventions, spelling out particular conditions and technologies that would or would not be desired by the person in those conditions. Living wills proved ineffective in practice because they were made out well in advance of actual need, and it was impossible to predict one’s precise medical situation, and how one’s preferences might be affected by future circumstances and developments in medical technology. Many of them were vague and not helpful in the specific situations that arose. Finally, living wills only applied when death was imminent, and could not guide care earlier in the person’s illness.

The durable power of attorney for healthcare developed to address these concerns. In the DPAHC, the person appoints a surrogate or proxy decision-maker (and usually an alternate if the first person is not available when need arises) to make healthcare decisions in his or her stead. This power of attorney for healthcare operates only if the person is incompetent; the proxy can never override a competent person’s wishes.

Further, the surrogate advocates for the person’s ongoing care needs, rather than only in situations of imminent death. The surrogate must make a sincere effort to give truly informed consent and to speak on behalf of the patient’s best interests as the patient would view them. It is presumed that the patient has clearly expressed his or her values and preferences before decisions must be made.

This durable power of attorney gives authority only for healthcare decisions (it does not grant the surrogate any power over the person’s other legal or financial matters). The DPAHC formalizes what usually happens in the absence of any advance directive: those closest to the patient are asked to make decisions.

Among the issues the person should discuss with the surrogate decision-maker are his or her preferences regarding cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR); having a “do not resuscitate” order (DNR); the use of antibiotics to treat infections; surgery; hospitalization; medically-assisted nutrition and hydration; pain management strategies; continuing dialysis or other interventions or medications the person may be using; hospice care wishes; and desires for spiritual care.

Anyone can make an advance directive, and the services of an attorney are not required. An advance directive can be revoked at any time. Copies of one’s advance directive should be filed with one’s primary physician, with one’s surrogate decision-makers, and in one’s personal papers at home and perhaps in a safe-deposit box. Forms for completing a legally-acceptable advance directive are available from one’s healthcare provider. Since advance directives always require interpretation and application to the concrete specifics of each situation, the most important factor in honoring a person’s wishes is for those close to that person to have discussed his or preferences and values clearly, so they can speak with confidence should the need arise. In Minnesota, advance directives are known as “health care directives.” The Minnesota form adopted in 1999 allows one either to indicate preferences for specific interventions, or to appoint a proxy decision-maker, or to do both. To be legal in Minnesota, a health care directive must:
In dialogue with physicians, nurses, other healthcare professionals, ethics boards, family members, and other concerned persons, proposals for life-sustaining treatments can be considered in the light of these criteria to determine whether they are, in the specific circumstances of this patient, ordinary and thus required, or extraordinary and thus allowed but not necessary. The goal of this discernment is always to do what is judged best for the person who is facing the mystery of death, and who is called to eternal life with God.

(revised September 2005)

Conclusion

For Further Reading (Church Teaching):


John Paul II, encyclical on the Gospel of Life Evangelium vitae (March 25, 1995), especially nn. 64-67. Can be found at www.vatican.va.

**Pro-Life Information on the Internet**

**Post Abortion Sites**

- omf.stcdio.org/respect-life/project-rachel/
  Post-abortion counseling for Project Rachel, Diocese of St. Cloud

- www.hopeafterabortion.org
  A national link to Project Rachel throughout the country

- www.noparh.org
  National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation & Healing

**Pro-Life Sites**

- www.usccb.org/prolife
  Official website of the Pro-Life Secretariat of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

- www.mcl.org
  Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life

- www.nchla.org
  The National Committee for a Human Life Amendment. NCHLA works closely with the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and serves Church organizations at the national, state and diocesan level. They also offer a list of legislators and their contact information.

- www.priestsforlife.org
  Resources for students, controversial topics, activism in the Catholic Church, etc.

- www.godspalnforlife.org/index.htm
  Provides teaching, homily & activity ideas around pro-life issues

- www.feministsforlife.org
  Champions the needs of women. Excellent site for college outreach program. Hot topics discussed.

- www.thehelpline.org

- www.endroe.org
  Allows users to sign a pro-life message to be sent to their senators

- www.abortionfacts.com

- www.lifeissues.net
  “Clear thinking about critical issues.” Affiliated with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

- www.sfuhl.org
  Science for unborn human life– amazing facts & pictures

- www.humanlifereview.com
  A journal devoted to pro-life issues, primarily abortion

- www.ncbcenter.org
  The National Catholic Bioethics Center

- www.time.com/time/covers/1101021111/
  A Time-Life cover story entitled “Inside the Womb”

- www.secondlookproject.org
  Basic facts regarding abortion

- www.stemcellresearch.org
  Contains up-to-date reports on ethical issues surrounding stem cell research

- www.cloninginformation.org
  The Americans to Ban Cloning coalition promotes a global, comprehensive ban on human cloning

- www.nascccd.org
  Contains resources issued by state Catholic conferences

**Youth Sites**

- www.catholicyouth.freeservers.com
  Catholic youth networking. Includes a Catholic Youth Studio, how to start a Life Teen group, meeting young Catholics from around the world, & more

- www.lifeteen.org
  Features: Teen Talk, Ask Fr. J. Bible Geek, Webcast, Hot Topics, Saint of the Week, About the Faith, & more

**End of Life Issues**

- www.nightingalealliance.org/index.php
  Contains in-depth information on end of life issues

- www.priestsforlife.org
  Provides articles on end of life issues

- nrlc.org/
  Provides a downloadable Will to Live, as well as information on Living Wills and the differences

- terrisfight.org/
  The Terri Schindler Schiavo Foundation

- www.nchla.org
  The National Committee for a Human Life Amendment

  Direct link to Address of John Paul II to the Participants in the International Congress of “Life-Sustaining Treatments & Vegetative State: Scientific Advances & Ethical Dilemmas.”

When does human life begin? Read: The Facts of When Human Life Begins
