

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY PRESENTS: INFORMATION WE CAN ALL USE!

*The Mission of the St. Francis of Assisi Parish Respect Life Ministry is to provide educational resources and information applicable to all life-related matters for the purpose of understanding that life, **created by God**, needs to be respected from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death.*

The theme for this year's United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) Respect Life Program is:

LIVE THE GOSPEL OF LIFE:

***"to imitate Christ and to follow in His footsteps."
from The Gospel of Life, 51***

My dear friends in Christ,

This year the Church celebrates the 25th anniversary of the landmark pro-life encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (The Gospel of Life). Written by Pope St. John Paul II, this prophetic document passionately reaffirmed the Church's constant teaching on the value and sacredness of every human life. It remains a foundational text for all our efforts to ensure that the life of every human person is protected and cherished.

This special anniversary is the inspiration behind this year's Respect Life theme, "Live the Gospel of Life," as well as many of the new materials. Thank you for responding to the call to actively live out the Gospel of Christ, which necessarily includes cherishing, serving, defending, and protecting human life. May we always strive to "see in every human face the face of Christ" (EV 81) and treat each person as we would treat Christ Himself.

Sincerely yours in Jesus, the Lord of Life,
Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities

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RESPECT HUMAN LIFE

Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.

—CCC, no. 2258; citing *The Gift of Life*

The Fifth Commandment calls us to foster the physical, spiritual, emotional, and social well being of self and others. For that reason, it forbids murder, abortion, euthanasia, and any life-threatening acts. This presents us with three challenges.

1. We need to counter the relativism that imperils human life, by recognizing that human freedom needs to be consistent with God's intentions and the laws that govern moral life.

2. We must witness God's providential presence to all creation and particularly to each human being. "Where God is denied, and people live as though he did not exist, or his commandments are not taken into account, the dignity of the human person and the inviolability of human life also end up being rejected or compromised" (Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life [Evangelium Vitae; EV]*, no. 96).

3. We need to confront the weakening of conscience in modern society. Too many people fail to distinguish between good and evil when dealing with the value of human life. Moral confusion leads many to support choices and policies that desecrate life. Choices that were once considered criminal and immoral have become socially acceptable. Many consciences that were once formed by the Ten Commandments, Christ's moral teachings, and the Holy Spirit's grace-filled guidance are now swayed by the moral confusion of the spirit of the times. We should deal with the weakening of conscience by helping people to understand the Church's teaching on conscience as the capacity to make judgments in agreement with God's law, to protect human dignity and reject any- thing that degrades it.

Above from: CHAPTER 29, Fifth Commandment: Promote the Culture of Life (United States Catholic Catechism for Adults)

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The General Election is November 3, 2020. We are morally obliged to exercise our right to vote. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), Part Three, Section Two, Chapter Two, Article 44, The Fourth Commandment, The Duties of Citizens, Para 2240: ***"Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes, to exercise the right to vote, and to defend one's country..."***

During the election, and perhaps just as importantly in their daily lives, Catholics are reminded to allow their faith to guide their politics. The principles of faith that govern one's daily life should also guide political viewpoints, and when necessary, "transform the political party...to which [he or she] belongs." (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2019: bit.ly/2CY57yl.*) Rather than considering what a certain party would do, Catholics have the opportunity to ask:

- What does God want me to do?
- How will my voting choice help to promote the common good and protect human dignity?
- How can I speak up about the issues that matter in a respectful way?

The previous item is from the "**focus**" publication, from the Michigan Catholic Conference (MCC), Vol. 48, No. 3, September 2020 and may be viewed in its entirety at:

<http://www.micatholic.org/advocacy/focus/2020/the-issues-the-candidates-and-your-vote-2020.pdf>

Prayer Before an Election

Lord God, as the election approaches, we seek to better understand the issues and concerns that confront our city/state/country, and how the Gospel compels us to respond as faithful citizens in our community.

We ask for eyes that are free from blindness so that we might see each other as brothers and sisters, one and equal in dignity, especially those who are victims of abuse and violence, deceit and poverty.

We ask for ears that will hear the cries of children unborn and those abandoned, men and women oppressed because of race or creed, religion or gender.

We ask for minds and hearts that are open to hearing the voice of leaders who will bring us closer to your Kingdom.

We pray for discernment so that we may choose leaders who hear your Word, live your love, and keep in the ways of your truth as they follow in the steps of Jesus and his Apostles and guide us to your Kingdom of justice and peace.

We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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As we reflect on the COVID-19 national crisis, we are reminded of the innate human dignity of every person. Politicians of any stance on abortion and end of life issues agreed to stop the spread somehow. Together, though all at our own homes, we witnessed a new chapter in history with worry, prayer, and concern for our neighbors and the most vulnerable among us.

Now is an even greater time to remember that life is precious from conception until natural death and reflect what we can do to protect each other. Let's ask for the intercession of the saints who undoubtedly lived with love for others, respecting their human dignity despite circumstances.

St. Gianna Molla, who as a mother and doctor sacrificed her own life for that of her child and who is patroness of unborn children, mothers, and physicians, pray for us and the vulnerable, especially those who are pregnant with health complications.

St. Gerard Majella, who is sought after for miracles such as the ones from his lifetime and the young girl whose life and the life of her baby were saved through his handkerchief after his death and who is patron of expectant mothers, pray for us and the vulnerable, especially those in extreme pain and in need of miracles to live.

St. Raymond Nonnatus, who miraculously survived his own birth by cesarean section, though losing his mother in the process, and lived his life working to

evangelize despite being held ransom, and who is the patron saint of obstetricians and midwives, pray for us and the most vulnerable, especially those who need to hear the word of God or have lost a life during pregnancy or childbirth.

St. Anne, who is the mother of Mary and Jesus' grandmother and who is patroness of pregnant mothers, pray for us and the most vulnerable, especially those grandparents who are raising grandchildren or children who are caregivers to parents.

<https://catholic-link.org/a-litany-of-pro-life-saints-for-may/>

A PRAYER AFFIRMING LIFE

God, you are the Lord and Creator of Life.

You have blessed men and women

With the privilege

Of bringing new life

Into the world.

You have imparted in our hearts
The desire to nurture and protect life
At all its stages.

I accept these gifts as a sacred trust.
Through the power of the Holy Spirit
Help me to affirm the value of life.

Grant me the wisdom and courage
To speak out and defend human life.

Give me compassion
So that I may lovingly counsel
Those who would reject the gift of life,
Which is the reflection
Of Your image and likeness.

Amen.

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SPIRITUAL ADOPTION

Please spiritually adopt an unborn baby. Every day over 4,000 babies are killed by abortion. They have so little protection, only the hand of God can end this massacre. Prayer is the best weapon to help them. Say this prayer every day for nine months to save a baby's life!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I love you very much. I beg you to spare the life of the unborn baby that I have spiritually adopted who is in danger of abortion.

*-Prayer of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen
"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." -
Jeremiah 1:5*

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ACTION ITEMS:

Become a member of the Respect Life Ministry! Just contact the parish secretary! Why not get involved?

VOTE: Be a faithful citizen, exercise your right to vote and do so with a well-informed conscience.