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To All Priests, Deacons and Parish Secretaries
of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Respect Life Sunday will be celebrated on October 6, 2019. While the Mass for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time will be celebrated that day, parishes are encouraged to give some attention to the Life-Issues, especially in the Universal Prayer, in the homily, by musical choices and perhaps by means of liturgical environment displays. "The annual Respect Life Program is a year-round, nationwide effort to help Catholics understand, value, and become engaged with building a culture that cherishes every human life."¹

To assist you in preparing the liturgy on Respect Life Sunday, I am providing for you the resources below.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Glenn D. LeCompte".

Rev. Glenn D. LeCompte
Director, Office of Worship
Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux

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¹<http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2018/respect-life-program-faq.cfm#WhatisRLP>

LITURGICAL AIDS FOR RESPECT LIFE SUNDAY

When we hear the phrase, "Respect Life," we often think exclusively of the right to life of the unborn. However, respect for human life encompasses the 7 principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Below I provide for you examples of papal and episcopal teaching which demonstrate a connection between the 7 principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the concept of respect for life. Hopefully these quotes will be useful to you in homily preparation and perhaps providing you with guidance to communicate the principles visually through liturgical environment displays.

1) Life and Dignity of the Human Person (which addresses the issues of abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment, but also the violence which has lately been rampant in our country and world).

A. Brother kills brother. Like the first fratricide, every murder is a violation of the "spiritual" kinship uniting mankind in one great family, in which all share the same fundamental good: equal personal dignity. Not infrequently the kinship "of flesh and blood" is also violated; for example when threats to life arise within the relationship between parents and children, such as happens in abortion or when, in the wider context of family or kinship, euthanasia is encouraged or practised [sic] (Pope Saint John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae #8).

B. Some threats come from nature itself, but they are made worse by the culpable indifference and negligence of those who could in some cases remedy them. Others are the result of situations of violence, hatred and conflicting interests, which lead people to attack others through murder, war, slaughter and genocide (Pope Saint John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae #10).

C. Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.

Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person”, and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide (Catechism of the Catholic Church #2267)²

D. For many years, the USCCB has supported a number of reasonable measures to address the problem of gun violence. These include:

A total ban on assault weapons, which the USCCB supported when the ban passed in 1994 and when Congress failed to renew it in 2004.

Measures that control the sale and use of firearms, such as universal background checks for all gun purchases;

Limitations on civilian access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines;

A federal law to criminalize gun trafficking;

Improved access to and increased resources for mental health care and earlier interventions;

Regulations and limitations on the purchasing of handguns;

Measures that make guns safer, such as locks that prevent children and anyone other than the owner from using the gun without permission and supervision; and

An honest assessment of the toll of violent images and experiences which inundate people, particularly our youth (USCCB, Backgrounder on a Mercy and Peacebuilding Approach to Gun Violence).

2) Call to Family, Community and Participation,

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the

²FRANCIS, Address to Participants in the Meeting organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, 11 October 2017: L'Osservatore Romano, 13 October 2017, 5.

central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable (USCCB).

3) Protection of Human Rights,

...values such as the dignity of every human person, respect for inviolable and inalienable human rights, and the adoption of the "common good" as the end and criterion regulating political life are certainly fundamental and not to be ignored (Pope Saint John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae #70).

In the Encyclical Pacem in Terris, John XXIII pointed out that "it is generally accepted today that the common good is best safeguarded when personal rights and duties are guaranteed. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are recognized, respected, co-ordinated, defended and promoted, and that each individual is enabled to perform his duties more easily. For 'to safeguard the inviolable rights of the human person, and to facilitate the performance of his duties, is the principal duty of every public authority'. Thus any government which refused to recognize human rights or acted in violation of them, would not only fail in its duty; its decrees would be wholly lacking in binding force" (Pope Saint John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae #71)

4) Option (including care for) for the Poor and Vulnerable,

A. ...now, when another category of persons is being oppressed in the fundamental right to life, the Church feels in duty bound to speak out with the same courage on behalf of those who have no voice. Hers is always the evangelical cry in defence of the world's poor, those who are threatened and despised and whose human rights are violated (Pope Saint John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae #5).

And how can we fail to consider the violence against life done to millions of human beings, especially children, who are forced into poverty, malnutrition and hunger because of an unjust distribution of resources between peoples and between social classes? (Pope Saint John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae #71)

B. People have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families....Because of the belief that newcomers compete for scarce resources, immigrants and refugees are at times driven away, resented, or despised. Nevertheless, the first principle of Catholic social teaching regarding immigrants is that people have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families. This is based on

biblical and ancient Christian teaching that the goods of the earth belong to all people. While the right to private property is defended in Catholic social teaching, individuals do not have the right to use private property without regard for the common good.

Every person has an equal right to receive from the earth what is necessary for life—food, clothing, shelter. Moreover, every person has the right to education, medical care, religion, and the expression of one's culture. In many places people live in fear, danger, or dehumanizing poverty. Clearly, it is not God's will that some of his children live in luxury while others have nothing. In Luke's Gospel, the rich man was condemned for living well while the poor man starved at his doorstep (Lk 16:19-31).

The native does not have superior rights over the immigrant. Before God all are equal; the earth was given by God to all. When a person cannot achieve a meaningful life in his or her own land, that person has the right to move (USCCB, Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration and the Movement of Peoples)

5) Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers,

Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or wilful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed. They poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practise [sic] them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonour to the Creator (Gaudium et Spes #27, see Evangelium Vitae #3).

...a century ago it was the working classes which were oppressed in their fundamental rights, and the Church very courageously came to their defence [sic] by proclaiming the sacrosanct rights of the worker as a person....(Pope Saint John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae #5)

6) Solidarity (which calls us away from racial, ethnic, economic and ideological divisions),

A. Racism arises when—either consciously or unconsciously—a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. When this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons on the basis of their race or ethnicity, it is sinful. Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the

persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39) [Open Wide our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love, A Pastoral Letter against Racism, USCCB, 2018].

B. On the one hand, the various declarations of human rights and the many initiatives inspired by these declarations show that at the global level there is a growing moral sensitivity, more alert to acknowledging the value and dignity of every individual as a human being, without any distinction of race, nationality, religion, political opinion or social class.

On the other hand, these noble proclamations are unfortunately contradicted by a tragic repudiation of them in practice (Pope Saint John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae #18)

C. We need both to hold people accountable and offer them concrete help and hope for a better future. We also need to encourage a commitment to civility and respect in public life and communications -- in the news media, politics and even ecclesial dialogue. The search for the common good is not advanced by partisan gamesmanship, challenging other people's motives, or personal attacks. The focus on the sensational, the search for conflict, and the assumption of bad will are not the basis for dialogue, and hurt the search for common ground (USCCB, Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action).

7) Care for God's Creation

Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity. So we cannot fail to consider the effects on people's lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development and the throwaway culture (Pope Francis, Laudato Si #43).

At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both "the human environment" and the natural environment. It is about our human stewardship of God's creation and our responsibility to those who come after us. (Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, USCCB).

Homiletic Commentary on the Scriptures for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

Habakkuk's short book, 56 verses in all, begins with two dialogs between the prophet

and God (1:2-2:5), and is followed by a series of divine woes pronounced over Judah (2:6-20) and finally a canticle in chapter 3. This week's reading comes from the dialogs between Habakkuk and God. The prophet poses a group of questions to God and the latter responds.

The reading for this Sunday begins with the first set of questions posed by Habakkuk (1:2-4) and is in fact in the form of the initial parts of a psalm of lament. Habakkuk begins with a phrase, "How long?" that typically begins a psalm of lament. Then the addressee, the Lord, is mentioned. Next there is a general complaint: the prophet has cried out to God for help, but God seems to be deaf to his pleas. Then the complaint is given content: the prophet wants to know why he has had to witness destruction and violence and why strife and discord persist in Judahite society.

The divine answer provided is not from Habakkuk's first complaint (the one given in the reading) but from his second complaint. In the answer to the first complaint (1:5-11), God responds that he is raising up a conquering people, the Chaldeans (= the Babylonians). Habakkuk, perhaps surprised at God's answer challenges the justice of God, as he characterizes the militarily mobilized Babylonians as evildoers who are being permitted to torment the just. It is the divine response to this second complaint by Habakkuk that appears in the latter half of the reading for today. God commands Habakkuk to write down the vision in large letters, so that one who is approaching at attack speed may see it. The vision is a series of woes (2:5-20) directed against those who abuse power; it would certainly apply to the Babylonian attackers. The divine response in 2:2-4 is a word of assurance that God will exact justice upon the evildoers cited in 2:5-20. God is on the side of the powerless who suffer at the hands of those more powerful.

"The vision...will surely come; it will not be late" (2:3). Here we have divine assurance to the victims that help is coming, and therefore there is reason to hope. The prophecy contained in the first two chapters of Habakkuk depicts God as at once being a God of justice and mercy. The divine response to Habakkuk's second set of questions portrays God as defending those who are powerless against a more powerful and abusive enemy. This reading can relate to the issues of Life and Dignity of the Human Person, since that category encompasses the defense especially of those who suffer violence. In addition this reading may address the issue of Option for the Vulnerable." It is the duty of Christians and society to stand not with those who would use power abusively, but with those who are victimized by such abuse.

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

The "Pastoral Epistles" (Titus, 1-2 Timothy) have as their background a time when Christianity has been around for a time and is facing new challenges, particularly regarding the true teaching of Christianity. The section of 2 Timothy from which we read is sandwiched between the letter's Thanksgiving (1:3-5) and the author's specific exhortation on countering

false teaching (2:14-4:5). Before instructing Timothy on his duty to maintain the flock in correct teaching and to counter obscurities and errors that creep in, the author reminds Timothy of the reason he should stand fast on the Christian doctrine he knows to be true. One reason is that Paul himself authorized Timothy to oversee the Ephesian community and that authorization only came when Paul was convinced that Timothy was himself solid in the true faith. But the faith was apparently handed on to Timothy through his mother and grandmother, who may have been disciples of Paul. Timothy is encouraged to “stir into flame the gift that **is**” within him. Just as a person revives a fire by stoking the burning embers once the fire has subsided, so Timothy needs to rekindle the original dynamism of faith at the time when Paul appointed him overseer of the Ephesian community. Timothy will have to rekindle the strength of his belief if he is to counter false ideas of faith. The fact that it was handed on to him gives what he has received veracity. Moreover, the author is careful to specify that Timothy is to stir into flame the faith that **is**, currently, within him. The author uses the present indicative of the verb “to be” (*estin*) here to emphasize that Timothy currently possesses the faith, even though it was received in the past.

The author then seeks to strengthen Timothy in his task by reminding him that he must be firm in what was handed on to him in order to distinguish false doctrine and correct it. However, this is not an easy task. That is why the author, writing in the name of Paul, exhorts Timothy to bear his share of the hardship for the sake of the Gospel, even as Paul bore it in his lifetime.

If there is any connection we can make between this reading and Respect Life Sunday it may be in the observation just made. Promoting the Gospel of Life is not always an easy thing in our world today. This is obvious in the struggle that is faced by those who speak for the life issues. We need only consider the struggle to get all of our society to recognize that the unborn have a right to life. But there is also a tension regarding the Christian opposition to capital punishment, because, despite the evidence, there still persists a myth that the death penalty deters capital crime. Even if it did it would still be immoral because “*the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes*” (Pope Francis, see above). Furthermore, there is increasing criticism of assistance given to the poor because of the philosophy that poverty is always the consequence of irresponsibility and laziness, and that the poor constitute a burden to society.

Luke 17:5-10

After Jesus has emphasized to the disciples the importance of not scandalizing the “little ones” and being thoroughly grounded in the virtue of forgiving others whenever they request it (17:1-4) the disciples, seemingly overwhelmed, ask Jesus to increase their faith. He responds by telling them that with only a small amount of faith (the size of a mustard seed) they can accomplish great things in the spiritual life. Lest they become self-impressed with this ability, Jesus instructs them that they should view their mastery of Christian virtue, however

outstanding that mastery may seem, not as heroic, but as the performance of expected duty.

A connection to Respect Life Sunday might be found in the first paragraph of the Gospel reading. As I said in the commentary on the reading from 2 Timothy, promoting the Gospel of Life is sometimes challenging. Because it is challenging it at times may seem insurmountable. But Jesus reminds us that with even a little faith we can accomplish great feats. The greatest enemy to our proclamation of the Gospel of Life is to doubt that God will give us what we need to promote it despite the obstacles to it.

Universal Prayer

The following are sample intercessions which are based on the 7 principles:

1. That all people, especially law-makers and members of the judiciary, will embrace a thoroughgoing respect for life that seeks to eradicate abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment and violence from our society, we pray to the Lord.
2. That our society will embrace a vision and implement strategies to enable all people to participate in society so that the common good and well-being of all will be upheld, especially in the case of the poor and vulnerable, we pray to the Lord.
3. That we as a society will live up to our duty and responsibility to protect the God-given rights of all human beings, we pray to the Lord.
4. That we as a society will actively reach out to those who lack the necessities of life by unselfishly sharing our abundant blessings, we pray to the Lord.
5. That our society will afford all people the opportunity to engage in productive work and enjoy decent and fair wages, we pray to the Lord.
6. That racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences will cease to divide us in order that we might recognize our familial relationship as children of God, we pray to the Lord.
7. That we will be moved by grace to do our part to cooperate with God to preserve and sustain life on planet earth by being good stewards of God's creation, we pray to the Lord.

Musical Suggestions

Worship III

“All Creatures of Our God and King”

“Come, Let Us Love the Unborn Generations”

“For the Beauty of the Earth”
“Help Us Accept Each Other”
“In Christ There Is No East or West”
“Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace”
“O God Empower Us”
“O God of Every Nation”

Gather Comprehensive

“The Harvest of Justice”
“Abundant Life”
“God of Day and God of Darkness”
“Let Justice Roll Like a River”
“Now It Is Evening”
“For the Healing of the Nations”
“Now Join We to Praise the Creator” (especially vv. 4-6)
“Voices that Challenge”
“Let Us Be Bread” (especially verse 3)
“Bread for the World”
“O Taste and See”
“They’ll Know We Are Christians”

GIA Publications Online Catalogue

“We Choose Life” (David Haas,
<https://www.giamusic.com/store/search?elSearchTerm=we+choose+life&elGuitar=null&elInstruments=&elTuneName=&elSundayFeast=null&elChurchRites=&elTopics=&elBible=>)

“Child of God” (The Dameans,
<https://www.giamusic.com/store/search?elSearchTerm=child+of+God&elGuitar=null&elInstruments=&elTuneName=&elSundayFeast=null&elChurchRites=&elTopics=&elBible=>)
This song works well with children.

Spirit and Song

“Christ Be our Light”
“Go Light Your World”
“Power of Peace”
“The Cry of the Poor”
“The Summons”
“We Are One Body”
“We Will Serve the Lord”
“What Is our Service to Be” (especially verse 3)