

RESPECT LIFE MONTH

HOMILY HELPS

Suggested for use on Respect Life Sunday | October 3, 2021

These homily notes are provided to help priests and deacons highlight the Gospel of life with a focus on St. Joseph, defender of life. Other Catholic leaders can also use these notes in other settings, such as Bible studies, small groups, or other faith formation or ministry settings. You are welcome to use these bullets as a set or as individual pieces.

- Each year the Church in the United States celebrates October as *Respect Life Month*, and today (October 3), we celebrate *Respect Life Sunday*. This is a time we can use to deepen our understanding of why, as Catholics, we “Respect Life” and what that looks like day-to-day.
- We are also in the midst of celebrating the Year of St. Joseph. So, this year, we are looking to the witness of St. Joseph as a defender of life. He didn’t hesitate to follow God’s will of faithfully caring for and protecting Jesus and the Blessed Mother. St. Joseph’s example reminds us that we are also to care for, protect, and defend the lives of our brothers and sisters.
- In the Bible, we see that St. Joseph makes sacrifices out of his love for Jesus and Mary. Over and over, he shows himself to be a faithful protector of them both.
- After an angel of God appeared to St. Joseph in a dream, he welcomed Mary into his home, even though her pregnancy was mysterious. On the long road to Bethlehem, Joseph guided and provided for Mary and the unborn Christ Child. He welcomed Jesus as his own son in a humble stable and loved Him with a father’s heart. When the infant Jesus’ life was threatened by Herod, Joseph left the comfort and familiarity of his homeland and fled to Egypt with Mary and Jesus to protect Him. And as Jesus was growing up, He learned from Joseph to do the will of the Father. In every circumstance, St. Joseph cared for, defended, and protected the gift of life that had been given by God.
- During this Respect Life Month, we can start to become more like St. Joseph by asking ourselves a few questions and reflecting on them: Do we realize how precious every person is? As we go about our day, do we treat people accordingly? How can we help those in our society who are struggling to welcome new life, like moms who are pregnant or parenting in difficult circumstances? How can we reach out to those having a hard time seeing the worth of their own lives? How do we reassure those at the end of life who are afraid they are a burden or feel like their lives don’t have meaning?
- At times, we may feel like we can’t make a difference, or that we’re unequipped for what God is asking of us. But St. Joseph “teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses” (PC, 2). When human life is threatened, when our brothers and sisters need support welcoming or embracing life, may we lovingly respond with the faithfulness of Joseph.
- [Optional] There are St. Joseph prayer cards as you exit the church. Please take one after Mass and pray with it throughout this Respect Life Month.

