

APPENDIX 1

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities

These excerpts, quoted directly from the Pastoral Plan, state how the program works.

Implementing the Program

Restoring respect for human life in our society is an essential task of the Church that extends through all its institutions, agencies and organizations and embraces diverse tasks and goals. The following schema suggests a model for organizing and allocating the Church's resources of people, services, institutions and finances at various levels to help restore and advance protection in law for unborn children's right to life and to foster a true culture of life.

State Coordinating Committee

The California Catholic Conference (CCC) provides overall coordination on state matters concerning public policy. A working state coordinating committee, comprised of the CCC director and staff members, along with the pro-life and family life coordinators and directors from each diocese, meet by telephone monthly and in retreat once a year. The primary purposes of the committee are to:

- Monitor social, legislative and political trends in the state that have implications for the pro-life and family life effort, analyzing relationships within the various political parties and coalitions at the state level as they affect local implementation efforts.
- Coordinate the efforts of the dioceses in the state in regard to public policy and evaluate progress; although grassroots efforts are often undertaken in dioceses and parishes, the state coordinating committee can encourage the dioceses to undertake a particular project simultaneously for maximum impact.
- Encourage cooperation among pro-life groups in the state.

Diocesan Pro-Life Committee

The diocesan pro-life committee coordinates activities of the pastoral plan within the (arch)diocese. The committee, through the diocesan pro-life director, will receive information and guidance from the national conference's Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities and from the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment. The diocesan committee is headed by the diocesan pro-life director, a person appointed by and responsible to the (arch)diocesan bishop. Its membership, in addition to the diocesan pro-life director, may include the following: the diocesan respect life coordinator (if a separate post); representatives of diocesan agencies (e.g., family life, education, youth ministry, post-abortion ministry, pregnancy crisis ministry, diocesan newspaper, liturgy, health apostolate, social services, etc.); representatives of lay organizations (e.g., Knights of Columbus, Council of Catholic Women, Legion of Mary, etc.); medical, legal, public affairs and financial advisors; and representatives of parish pro-life/respect life committees. The diocesan pro-life committee's objectives are to:

- Direct and coordinate the diocesan and parish pro-life information and educational program, providing appropriate resources as necessary.

- Provide educational opportunities and time for sharing program information among members of parish pro-life committees.
- Support local programs that counsel and assist women with problems related to pregnancy and promote establishment of new programs where needed.
- Encourage and support a diocese-wide post-abortion ministry.
- Encourage and support local programs that provide care for the dying.
- Encourage and coordinate programs of prayer and worship that focus on the sanctity of all human life.
- Maintain working relationships with local pro-life groups and encourage the development of local pro-life lobbying networks.
- Maintain a local public information program that monitors print and broadcast media's treatment of pro-life issues and prepare appropriate responses.
- Develop responsible and effective communications with each elected representative; getting to know them personally through one-on-one visits, telephone calls, letters, e-mails.
- Maintain communications with the USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities and with the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment.
- Report periodically to the diocesan bishop on the status of implementation of the Pastoral Plan.

Parish Pro-Life Committee

Actively promoting a renewed respect for human life is the responsibility of every Catholic. The parish pro-life committee assists in a special way by helping to make the parish a center of life, a place where parishioners understand the issues and the importance of meeting the needs of those who are most vulnerable—especially mothers and their unborn children, and those who are seriously ill or dying and their families. It may be a distinct committee, or it might be a subcommittee of another parish organization. Whatever its structure, its membership should include representatives of both adult and youth parish groups, members of organizations that represent persons with disabilities, persons of minority cultures, and those responsible for education and pastoral care. The chairperson of the parish committee is appointed by the pastor, and it is important that the two be able to work well together. The chair recruits volunteers to help meet the needs the committee serves. Parish committees should be mindful of the need for renewal from time to time in regard to membership, talents and interests. The parish committee relies on the diocesan pro-life director for information and guidance. The committee should play a vital role in parish life and enjoy the strong support of priests and other key personnel. The committee should also dovetail its efforts from time to time with other programs of the parish. For example, in many parts of the country, parishes conduct programs where parishioners study and discuss the teachings of the faith. Members of the pro-life committee should take part in such programs and invite other program leaders to take part in pro-life initiatives. The objectives of the parish pro-life committee are to:

- Coordinate parish implementation of the annual Respect Life Program, promoting it to agencies and organizations in the parishes, especially schools and religious education programs, and to encourage parish discussion groups to use the Program as a basis for their discussions.

- Promote and assist pregnancy counseling and comprehensive maternity support services, as well as post-abortion counseling and reconciliation programs, and to make these well known in the parish and local community.
- Develop or adopt, where feasible, a parish-based ministry to pregnant women and their children.
- Encourage and support parishioners' involvement in services to help those who are chronically ill, disabled or dying and their families.
- Sponsor programs of prayer in the parish to pray for mothers and their unborn children, for those who are dying, for those who are disabled, for prisoners on death row and those they have harmed, and indeed, for all who are in need---that the culture of death that surrounds us may be replaced by a culture of life.
- Foster awareness of the need to restore legal protection to the lives of unborn children to the maximum degree possible and to safeguard in law the lives of those who are chronically ill, disabled or dying.
- Keep parishioners informed of upcoming important legislation and, at the direction of the diocesan pro-life director, organize letter-writing, postcard campaigns or similar appropriate activities when important votes are expected.

Public Policy Effort at the Local Level

To secure federal pro-life legislation or to pass a constitutional amendment requires the support of members of Congress. Efforts to persuade members to vote for such measures are part of the democratic process and are most effective when carried out locally. This can be done through activities organized on a congressional district basis, comprised of citizens within a particular congressional district, or it can be accomplished through effective parish efforts. Regardless of how it is carried out, its purpose is to organize people to persuade their elected representatives to support pro-life legislation. The following program objectives can be met effectively by a small group of politically aware and dedicated people:

- Educating parishioners and others about the destructiveness of abortion to unborn children, to women and their families, and to society, and about the need for pro-life legislation and a constitutional amendment.
- Enabling parishioners and others to organize effectively so that their views will be heard and taken into account by elected representatives and political parties.
- Building effective mechanisms for lobbying elected officials and candidates for public office to support effective legal protection of human life from conception to natural death. Mechanisms might include telephone trees, postcard campaigns, fax and e-mail systems, letter-writing programs in the parish, etc. Collaborative work with other churches is highly encouraged.

In this regard it should be noted that the Church does not engage in partisan politics. Rather, it fosters the responsibility of every Catholic to exercise his or her citizenship faithfully by being well informed on issues. It recognizes the right to vote as a privilege and a civic responsibility.