

2020-2021

RESPECT LIFE PROGRAM

Live the Gospel of *Life*

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

What is the Respect Life Program?

The annual Respect Life Program is a year-round, nationwide effort by leaders like yourselves to help Catholics understand, value, and become engaged with building a culture that cherishes every human life. The U.S. bishops produce materials each year to assist you in these efforts.

Whom is it for?

Sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Respect Life Program is essentially comprised of the efforts of leaders throughout the Church like you—parish priests, staff, and volunteers; those serving in pro-life ministry; teachers, catechists, and school administrators; diocesan staff; and so many others.

How do I use these materials?

These materials are designed to be brought to life as tools in your hands. Many of these ready-to-go materials include action ideas and examples to get you started—but we encourage you to build off or adapt them to fit your specific needs!

Where can I find Respect Life materials?

Everything you need—including free, digital resources—can be found at [respectlife.org](https://www.respectlife.org). Materials can be downloaded, printed, reproduced, and shared for in-person or virtual use in your parish, school, or ministry (on the condition that any reproductions are distributed free of charge).

NEW! PROGRAM RESOURCES

The following resources are all available online at [respectlife.org](https://www.respectlife.org). These resources may be downloaded, printed, and reproduced for use in your parish, school, or ministry to help build a culture of life (on the condition that you distribute them free of charge). Many resources are available in a variety of file formats to best meet your needs. These materials can be adapted for either in-person or virtual use. Visit [respectlife.org](https://www.respectlife.org) for all of these resources and more.

◆ **Respect Life Reflection: "Live the Gospel of Life"**

This short reflection unpacks the 2020-21 Respect Life theme, "Live the Gospel of Life." It explores how Jesus becoming man and redeeming us through his humanity reveals the dignity of all human life and how the Gospel of life is therefore essential to our identity as followers of Christ.

How do I use it? The reflection can be used as the basis for a homily or talk, shared in parish bulletins, printed in your diocesan paper, and included in newsletters. It could also be used as the basis for small group discussions in parish pro-life meetings, high school religion class, or simply among friends.

◆ **Serving Moms in Need: Living the Gospel of Life**

In honor of *The Gospel of Life's* 25th anniversary, the U.S. bishops have invited parishes to join an exciting initiative to serve pregnant and parenting women who are in difficult circumstances. This two-page bulletin insert explores the inspiration behind *Walking with Moms in Need: A Year of Service* and how it seeks to respond to Pope St. John Paul II's call.

How do I use it? Read this article to better understand the vision behind *Walking with Moms in Need* and our responsibility to help build a culture of life through concrete actions. Consider sharing this with your pastor and discerning how your parish may be able to participate.

◆ **Catholic Priorities at the Polls**

This article provides a brief overview of Catholics' responsibilities to protect and defend human life as we approach the polls. It explains why the U.S. bishops recently affirmed, "The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority."^{*}

How do I use it? This article can be used to help educate Catholics about our obligation to help protect human life through civic engagement. Print this in your parish bulletin, share it on social media and your website, or include it in ministry emails.

◆ **The Gospel of Life: A Brief Summary**

This two-page summary of *The Gospel of Life* highlights key themes and foundational teachings from the papal encyclical. It explores how the Church's teachings regarding human life are at the heart of Jesus' entire Gospel message.

How do I use it? This brief summary serves as a great introduction to the Church's teachings on the dignity of the human person. Use it as the basis for a small group discussion, include it in your bulletin or a newsletter, or link to it on your website.

◆ **The Gospel of Life: Compendium**

In honor of the 25th anniversary of *Evangelium vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*), the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities has developed a condensed version of this landmark pro-life encyclical. This thorough summary makes Pope St. John Paul II's prophetic writing more concise and easier to understand for those looking to deepen their understanding of the Church's beautiful teachings on the sacredness of human life. An introductory foreword provides background and context to help readers better understand *The Gospel of Life*.

How do I use it? This resource is perfect for exploring *The Gospel of Life* when time is too limited to read the full encyclical. It's also great for reviewing key topics, themes, and teachings regarding the dignity of the human person.

◆ **The Gospel of Life: Study Guide**

This study guide was developed for use either with the "*The Gospel of Life: Compendium*" or with the full encyclical text. The study guide provides scriptural reflections, prayers, and discussion questions to help readers reflect more deeply on *The Gospel of Life*. While specifically designed to help facilitate small or large group studies, individuals can also use this tool on their own to increase their understanding of the text and make real-life connections.

How do I use it? The study guide is ideal for use in parish group studies, diocesan or parish pro-life meetings, high school theology classes, youth or young adult book studies, adult faith formation series, Catholic book clubs, and more! It can be easily adapted for in-person or virtual use.

◆ **Parish Action Guides**

Originally featured in the 2019-20 Respect Life Program, these parish action guides have been updated for perennial use in parishes, schools, and ministries.

They are designed to help make use of opportunities to highlight and integrate Respect Life themes throughout the year. Each action guide is designed to complement existing parish life and manifest that the Gospel of life is part of the very fabric of the Gospel itself. As Pope St. John Paul II wrote, "The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel" (EV 2).

By focusing on existing liturgical celebrations and other annual calendar occasions, these guides highlight how the Church's teachings on the sacredness of human life are part of daily life. The action guides are structured around six main calendar occasions, including:

- Respect Life Month (October)
- The Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children and related events (January)
- The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord (March*)
- Sunday of Divine Mercy (Second Sunday of Easter)
- Mother's Day (May)
- Father's Day (June)

**While normally observed on March 25, the Solemnity of the Annunciation is sometimes moved to accommodate celebrations and observances within the Lenten and Easter seasons.*

How do I use these? Review the various action guides and consider what might work well within your parish, school, or ministry. You might choose one or two to implement fully, or perhaps it would work better to use one idea from each throughout the year. Consider how these action ideas and resources can specifically help you to build a culture of life within your own community throughout the year.

FIND US ONLINE

usccb.org/prolife

Learn about the work of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities to protect and defend human life.

respectlife.org

Get easy-to-use, free tools and resources to share the Gospel of life in your parish, school, or ministry.

walkingwithmoms.com

Walking with Moms in Need is a year of service in which Catholic parishes and communities “walk in the shoes of” local pregnant and parenting women in need to better help them. Learn how you can get involved!

hopeafterabortion.org

Find healing stories, letters, prayers, and local ministry contact information for the Church's Project Rachel Ministry for healing after abortion.

votervoice.net/usccb/register

Take action and contact your elected representatives about important pro-life issues.

DIGITAL CATALOG

Our catalog provides a complete listing of the Respect Life print materials that are available for purchase. Descriptions of the resources are provided with corresponding prices.

Visit → respectlife.org/catalog

EVEN MORE

In addition to the new resources highlighted here, countless additional resources are available for free online.

Visit → respectlife.org



Prayers



Articles



Action Ideas



Leader Toolkits



Graphics

...and more!



Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Website: usccb.org/prolife

Toll-free order number: (866) 582-0943

Email: prolife@usccb.org

*“Introductory Letter,” in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States (with New Introductory Letter)* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2019), <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-introductory-letter.cfm>.

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