

9 DAYS FOR LIFE

Thursday, January 21 – Friday, January 29, 2021

Pray one Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and one Glory Be each day with the daily intentions and reflections listed below. The full novena, including daily suggested actions and additional information can be found at www.9daysforlife.com.

DAY ONE: May the tragic practice of abortion end.

Reflection: At every stage and in every circumstance, we are held in existence by God's love. The presence of an illness, disability, or other challenging situation never diminishes the value of a human life. God does not call us to perfection of appearance or abilities, but to perfection in *love*. Christ invites us to embrace our own lives and the lives of others as true *gifts*. Abortion tragically rejects the truth that every life is a good and perfect gift, deserving protection. This violent practice ends the life of a human being at its very beginning and horribly wounds all those involved. But Christ came that we "might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10), taking on human flesh for the sake of our redemption. May our culture experience the power of God's transforming love, that all eyes may be opened to the incredible beauty of every human life.

DAY TWO: May all unborn children be protected in law and welcomed in love.

Reflection: Today, on this 48th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we mourn the many children's lives ended by abortion and remember in prayer those who suffer the aftermath. The Church comes together today to pray for the protection of all unborn children and to make reparation for abortion, trusting that the Lord hears our prayers. The importance of prayer is reflected in *Evangelium vitae*, which says, "A great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world. Through special initiatives and in daily prayer, may an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and lover of life, from every Christian community, from every group and association, from every family and from the heart of every believer" (*EV* 100). May that prayer arise in our hearts today and each day forward until every human being is protected in law and welcomed in love.

DAY THREE: May every expectant mother receive compassionate care and support as she nurtures the life in her womb.

Reflection: When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she opened her heart to receive his message that she would conceive the Son of God in her womb. As a young, betrothed, but unmarried, woman, Mary knew that her pregnancy presented many challenges. Despite this knowledge, she faithfully responded, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Like the Blessed Mother, women who unexpectedly become pregnant often face significant challenges. They, too, are called to place their trust in God and faithfully respond to His *gift* of new life. And we are called to walk with them in their time of need. As Jesus taught us, when we love and serve others, we are loving and serving Him. May all expectant mothers be encouraged by Mary's example and receive support and grace in lovingly welcoming their children into the world.

DAY FOUR: May expectant fathers lovingly support the mothers of their children in welcoming new life.

Reflection: Fatherhood has its origins in God, who chose to reveal Himself to us as Our Father, sending his only Son for the sake of our salvation. Fathers therefore have a special role "in revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God" (*Familiaris consortio* 25). Fathers are called to exhibit "generous responsibility for the life conceived under the heart of the mother" (*FC* 25). They are uniquely entrusted with the protection and defense of both mother and child and, in this way, in safeguarding the sanctity of human life. As evidenced in our world today, the role of the father "is of unique and irreplaceable importance" (*FC* 25). Often women choose abortion because they do not have the support of the child's father, or—even worse—the father of the child pressures her to make the decision to abort. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge with compassion that men can also be overwhelmed by an unexpected pregnancy and that society increasingly tells them that they should have no say in their children's lives. In the face of these false messages, we pray that expectant fathers will find courage in the example of Saint Joseph—who embraced the role of father amid difficult circumstances—and offer loving, life-affirming support to the mothers of their children.

DAY FIVE: May each person suffering from the loss of a child through abortion find hope and healing in Christ.

If you or someone you know is suffering after abortion, confidential, compassionate help is available. Visit hopeafterabortion.org.

Reflection: After more than four decades of legalized abortion, many children's lives have been ended, and many parents and family members suffer that loss—often in silence. Yet God's greatest desire is to forgive. No matter how far we have

each strayed from His side, He says to us, “Don’t be afraid. Draw close to my heart.” Be assured that it is never too late to seek God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Consider the parable of the Prodigal Son. After repenting of sinning against his father, he returns from far away to seek forgiveness and work as a servant. But the father sees him approaching, runs to warmly embrace him, and hosts a banquet to celebrate his return. So, too, does God welcome all of His repentant children, no matter how serious the sin. Let us turn confidently to Our Lord, Who is love and mercy.

DAY SIX: May expectant mothers choosing adoption receive grace and support in embracing this loving option.

Reflection: Mothers placing their children for adoption often face many challenges along the way. One of the greatest obstacles can be inaccurately perceiving adoption as abandonment. But mothers who make an adoption plan for their children are not abandoning their children. Rather, they are exemplifying the sacrificial love of Christ on the Cross in choosing to do what is best for their children, even at great cost to themselves. Like Christ, they pour out their bodies and souls for the sake of another. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that, in the face of fears and trials, we can “hold fast to the hope that lies before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm” (Heb 6:18-19). We pray that each expectant mother choosing adoption will be filled with “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7) as she makes a loving choice for her child. Let us all cling fast to the anchor of hope, for we have received “a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:15).

DAY SEVEN: May all who support or participate in abortion experience a conversion of heart to seek and receive the Lord’s boundless mercy.

Reflection: When God fashioned the human person in His own image and likeness, He destined us for eternal life with Him. Yet because of the sin of our first parents, death entered the world. The book of Genesis recounts the first occasion in which a person takes the life of another, as Cain violently kills his brother Abel. This instance of brother rising up against brother “at the very dawn of history is thus a sad witness of how evil spreads with amazing speed” (*Evangelium vitae* 8). From the time of creation, disregard for human life has continued to spread. When we, like Cain, allow sin to find a place in our hearts, we become blinded to the truth. Sometimes this blindness might be so deep that we fail to recognize the undeniable humanity of unborn children. We may even tragically believe the lie that abortion is an act of compassion. But we know that “life, especially human life, belongs only to God: for this reason whoever attacks human life, in some way attacks God himself” (*EV* 9). Let us pray that all who support abortion will encounter the transforming love of the Father and, with repentant hearts, seek His mercy.

DAY EIGHT: May civic leaders work for the protection of all human life, in every stage and circumstance.

Reflection: The Declaration of Independence boldly affirms that first among our inalienable rights is the right to life, given to us by the Creator. Yet despite being so solemnly proclaimed, the right to life is today threatened and often denied, particularly at the moments when life is most fragile. Our laws should—first and foremost—protect life. But “our highest Court does not recognize children in their mothers’ wombs as persons and claims that abortion is a constitutional right. Further, many political leaders work actively to increase access to abortion. Some falsely describe it as health care and even as a basic human right” (*Priorities at the Polls*). Laws and policies that legalize or promote an intrinsic evil like abortion violate the virtue of justice. Those who work as public officials and civic leaders have a duty to serve the common good, and therefore have a profound obligation to safeguard this most fundamental right to life. Through our own prayer, witness, and civic participation, we can encourage our leaders to truly answer their call to protect the rights of all people. For “there can be no true democracy without a recognition of every person’s dignity and without respect for his or her rights” (*Evangelium vitae* 101).

DAY NINE: May all who defend life find strength and renewal in the Holy Spirit.

Reflection: God has carefully, tenderly created every person in His own image and likeness, to be in a loving relationship with Himself. From each tiny child knit within a mother’s womb, to every person approaching death, all are loved perfectly and completely by God: “It is therefore a service of love which we are all committed to ensure to our neighbor, that his or her life may be always defended and promoted, *especially when it is weak or threatened* [emphasis added]” (*Evangelium vitae* 77). In a world in which those who are most vulnerable are so often overlooked and disregarded, Christ calls us to embrace and uphold the unconditional dignity of every human life. In answering this call, we help to build “a new culture of life, the fruit of the culture of truth and of love” (*EV* 77). May the Holy Spirit continually renew us as we strive to faithfully defend God’s gift of life.