



# PARISH WEBINAR

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Respect Life Action Guide:

*Respect Life Month*

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PRAYER FOR  
RADICAL SOLIDARITY

O Blessed Mother, at the angel's word you went in haste to the aid of your cousin Elizabeth. Although pregnant yourself, you placed her needs before your own.

By your example of radical solidarity, teach us to reverence and protect those in need, without conditions or expectations. Ask your Son to give us unfailing determination to witness to the profound dignity of every person, at every stage and in every circumstance.

In that first Eucharistic procession, you carried Jesus to Elizabeth in her time of need. Obtain for us the grace to bring Christ to any expectant mother who is alone and afraid.

May our support help them to find hope and strength in the Lord. Amen.



Carl Heinrich Bloch, *'Besøget Hos Elisabeth' / Mary's Visit to Elizabeth*, 1866. Photographed by Hans Petersen. Used and cropped with permission from The Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle. All rights reserved. © 2023, USCCB, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

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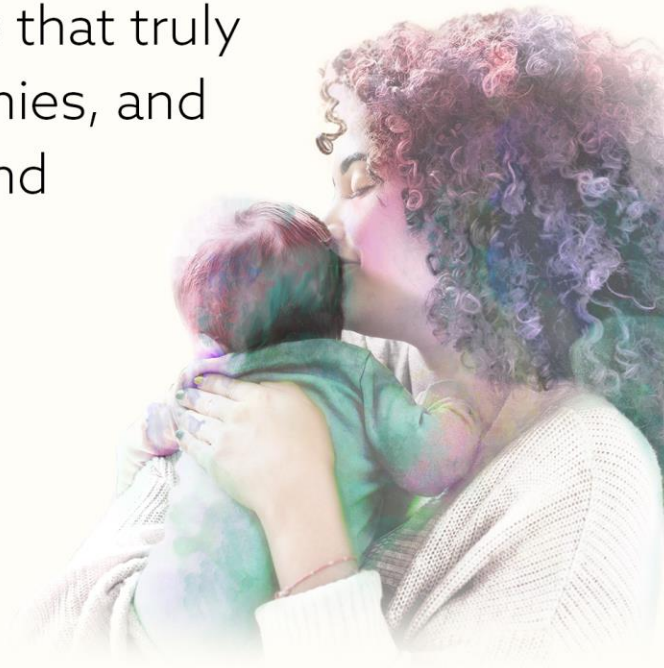
# Respect Life Month

What is it?



# *radical* **solidarity**

to be courageously pro-woman,  
promoting a choice that truly  
protects, accompanies, and  
supports women and  
their children



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# What You Can Do







# 2023 Respect Life Month Print Materials

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RESPECT LIFE 


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# 2023 Respect Life Month Digital Materials



*radical*  
**solidarity**

In the Gospel of John, shortly before he is to suffer his Passion, Jesus proclaims to his disciples: *"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another"* (Jn 13:34). And it is love for one another that Jesus says will be the identifying characteristic of his disciples.

The Church's entire social doctrine is guided by the fundamental principle that every human life has innate dignity and incomparable value: "Every human being is the object of God's infinite tenderness, and he himself is present in their lives."<sup>1</sup> As disciples of Christ, we are called to make a sacrificial gift of ourselves for the sake of our neighbor, for "to love someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it."<sup>2</sup>

Fulfilling Christ's command to love one another takes shape in our practice of solidarity. Solidarity is the means by which we put our love for others into action, making the good of others our own. Solidarity "is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people... On the contrary, it is a firm and

persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good...to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all."<sup>3</sup>

In reaction to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, some areas of the country now protect the child in the womb, while others are doing all they can to increase access to abortion. At this critical moment, we have been entrusted with *new opportunities* and *new responsibilities* to build a civilization of authentic love. Our culture claims to offer women so-called "choice," but ultimately abandons mothers to make tragic and painful decisions alone. We must lead the way in showing the alternative: *"In firmly rejecting 'pro-choice' it is necessary to become courageously 'pro-woman,' promoting a choice that is truly in favor of women. ... The only honest stance,*

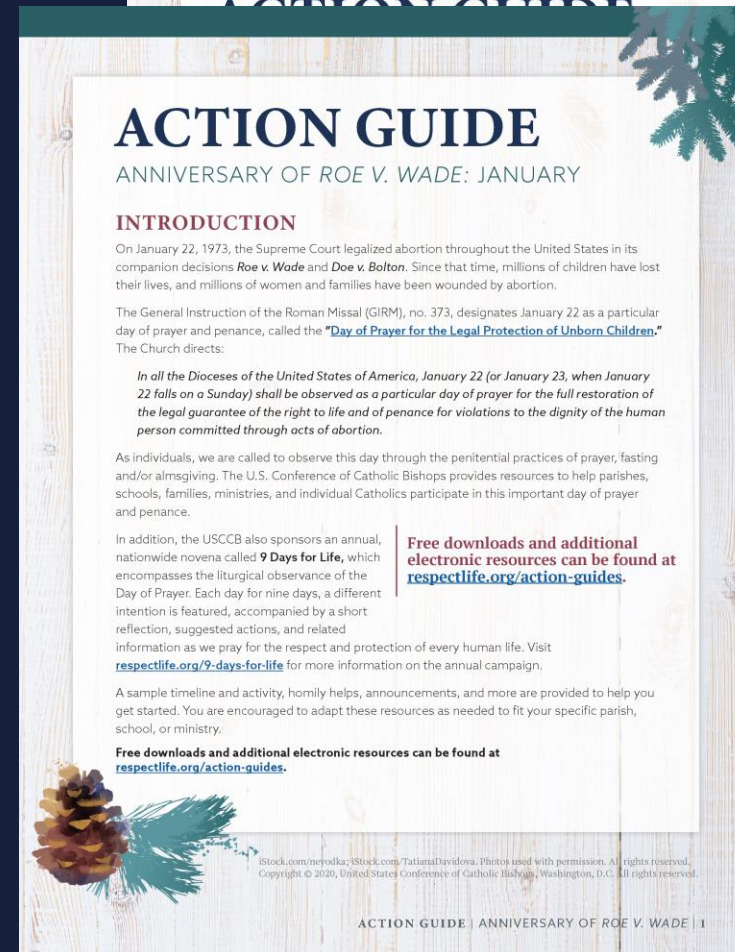
**"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."**  
John 13:34

- Poster & prayer card
- Novena
- Reflection
- Graphics
- October Word of Life
- Homily helps
- Chairman's Statement
- Leaders' Toolkits
- Action Guide

# Parish Action Guides

1. January: Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*
2. March 25: Annunciation of the Lord
3. April: Sunday of Divine Mercy
4. May: Mother's Day
5. June: Father's Day
6. October: Respect Life Month

[www.respectlife.org/action-guides](http://www.respectlife.org/action-guides)



**ACTION GUIDE**  
ANNIVERSARY OF ROE V. WADE: JANUARY

**INTRODUCTION**

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court legalized abortion throughout the United States in its companion decisions *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*. Since that time, millions of children have lost their lives, and millions of women and families have been wounded by abortion.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 373, designates January 22 as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the "**Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children.**" The Church directs:

*In all the Dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion.*

As individuals, we are called to observe this day through the penitential practices of prayer, fasting and/or almsgiving. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops provides resources to help parishes, schools, families, ministries, and individual Catholics participate in this important day of prayer and penance.

In addition, the USCCB also sponsors an annual nationwide novena called **9 Days for Life**, which encompasses the liturgical observance of the Day of Prayer. Each day for nine days, a different intention is featured, accompanied by a short reflection, suggested actions, and related information as we pray for the respect and protection of every human life. Visit [respectlife.org/9-days-for-life](http://respectlife.org/9-days-for-life) for more information on the annual campaign.

A sample timeline and activity, homily helps, announcements, and more are provided to help you get started. You are encouraged to adapt these resources as needed to fit your specific parish, school, or ministry.

**Free downloads and additional electronic resources can be found at [respectlife.org/action-guides](http://respectlife.org/action-guides).**

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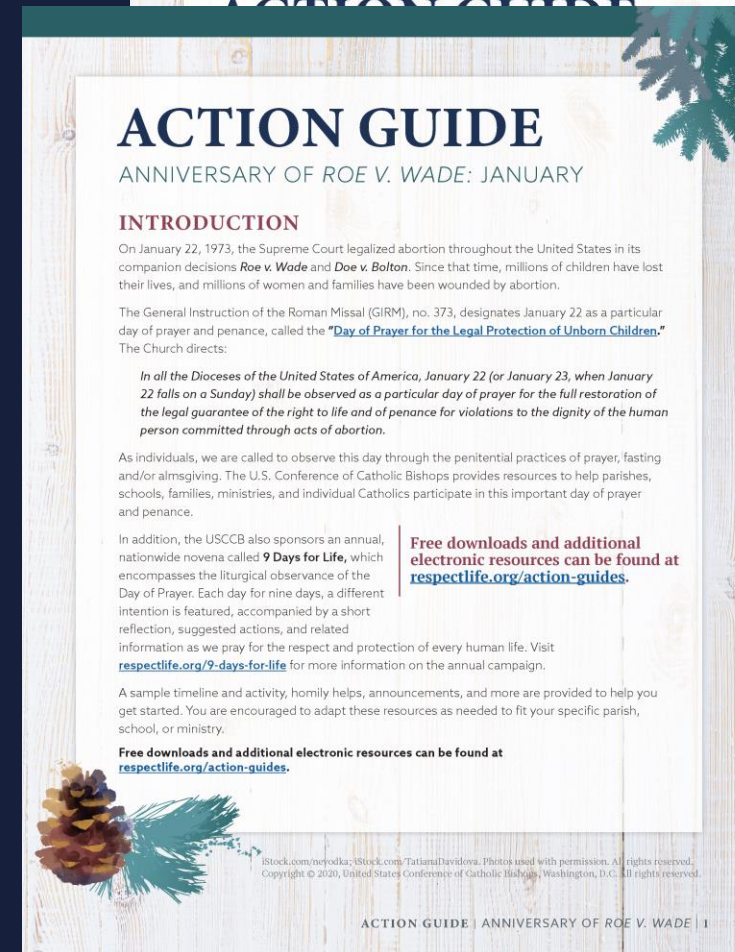
ACTION GUIDE | ANNIVERSARY OF ROE V. WADE | 1



# Parish Action Guide: Components

1. Introduction
2. Simple Steps
3. Sample Timeline
4. Bulletin & Pulpit Announcements
5. Intercessions
6. Homily Helps
7. Sample Activity

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## ACTION GUIDE

### ANNIVERSARY OF ROE V. WADE: JANUARY

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ACTION GUIDE | ANNIVERSARY OF ROE V. WADE | 1

# Parish Action Guide: Introduction

1. What is this occasion?
2. How is it connected to the gift of human life?
3. What's provided?

## ACTION GUIDE

RESPECT LIFE MONTH: OCTOBER

### INTRODUCTION

Every October the Catholic Church in the United States celebrates *Respect Life Month*, and the first Sunday of October is observed as *Respect Life Sunday*. As Catholics, we are called to cherish, defend, and protect those who are most vulnerable, from the beginning to the end of their lives, and at every point in between. During the month of October, the Church asks us to reflect more deeply on the dignity of every human life.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops provides resources to help parishes, schools, families, ministries, and individual Catholics share the Gospel of life during Respect Life

**Additional materials can be found at [respectlife.org/respect-life-month](https://respectlife.org/respect-life-month).**

Month and throughout the year. In the following pages, you will find a number of resources to help you celebrate Respect Life Month. Action ideas and activities, a sample timeline, homily helps, announcements, and intercessions are provided to help you get started. Adapt these resources as needed to fit your specific circumstances. Additional materials can be found at [respectlife.org/respect-life-month](https://respectlife.org/respect-life-month).

# Parish Action Guide: Simple Steps

1. Display poster.
2. Reflect.
3. Preach on Respect Life Sunday.
4. Pray for for the protection of human life.
5. Educate.

## SIMPLE STEPS

Here are some ways you can use the materials in your parish, school, ministry, or home to celebrate Respect Life Month. Not every step may apply to your circumstances, but most can be adapted to suit your needs. Unless otherwise noted, all materials referenced in this section can be found at [respectlife.org/respect-life-month](https://respectlife.org/respect-life-month).

### 1. Display the Respect Life poster.

Think about a prominent place in your parish, school, diocesan office, or home. Hang the poster in the vestibule, on a door or window, on a bulletin board, or near the restrooms and water fountains. Choose a place where people will be most likely to see it. Parents could hang the poster on the refrigerator, a bedroom door, or a place you gather regularly as a family. *(Remember to seek appropriate permissions and follow any rules and guidelines if displaying the poster outside your home.)*

### 2. Feature the Respect Life reflection in your bulletin or newsletter or on your website.

The Respect Life reflection unpacks the meaning of the poster. If space prevents inclusion of the full reflection, consider using the short announcements that are available in this action guide along with one of our Respect Life Month graphics. The Respect Life reflection can also be printed in your diocesan paper, offered at the beginning of a parish meeting, or used to inspire discussion during a family meal.



### 3. Preach about respect for human life on Respect Life Sunday.

Sample homily notes are provided for priests and deacons to help them highlight the gift of human life on Respect Life Sunday or another weekend in October. The Respect Life reflection can also be a source of inspiration. Let your pastor know these resources are available for him.

### 4. Pray for the protection of human life during the Prayer of the Faithful.

This is a great way for an entire parish or school to pray for the protection of life together! Sample intercessions are provided for use during the Prayer of the Faithful. The set of intercessions in this action guide could be used during one specific Mass or incorporated throughout the Sundays in October. Schools can use these to pray for the protection of human life at the beginning of the day or class period, or perhaps at a school Respect Life Mass. Families can include these intercessions in their regular prayers in the morning or evening, or before or after a family meal.

### 5. Feature a different Respect Life topic in each week's bulletin.

Short, quarter-page summaries are available for many of Respect Life articles covering a wide range of topics. Using the predesigned, downloadable "bulletin boxes," highlight a different topic each weekend of October. For those who would like to learn more, each bulletin box also includes the web address of the full article. Or, if you have the space, use one of the corresponding, full-length bulletin insert versions of the highlighted summaries. These can be found at the same web address listed in each bulletin box. These bulletin boxes can be found under the Respect Life Month action guide section of [respectlife.org/action-guides](https://respectlife.org/action-guides).

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# Parish Action Guide: Sample Timeline

- Connect with your pastor and parish staff.
- Research and gather materials.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Submit bulletin & pulpit announcements.
- Tie up any loose ends and make sure everyone has what they need.
- Set up.

## Second Week of September

This is the time to tie up any loose ends, verify that all content has been received, and determine whether

## End of October

Take some pictures of the interactive Respect Life bulletin board. Consider taking some with those who have their unique contributions shared in a page to highlight Respect Life Month. It's a great way to remember the ways you've celebrated if you'd like to

### SAMPLE TIMELINE

Fall is a busy season! Families have returned from vacation, a new school year is beginning, ministries that may take breaks for the summer are back in full swing, and people are trying to return to regular routines. In the flurry of fall activities, October can easily sneak up on us! This sample timeline is provided to help you prepare for Respect Life Month. While these steps apply most directly to a parish coordinator, they can be adapted to help you think about key steps you can take to plan ahead in whatever capacity you serve the Church.



AUGUST						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

### August 1

Visit [respectlife.org/respect-life-month](https://respectlife.org/respect-life-month) to review and familiarize yourself with the new materials. Compile any resources you hope to use during Respect Life Month. This would include bulletin announcements, intercessions, the Respect Life reflection, graphics, homily notes, article summaries, instructions for ordering printed materials, etc.

### Early August

- ◆ Meet with your pastor to discuss possibilities for observing Respect Life Month. Let him know what resources are available, such as homily notes and prayer intercessions. Share your ideas with him, and ask permission for whatever you have in mind. Most importantly, *ask what you can do to help* and whether there's any other information he'd like you to provide. For example, perhaps emailing him the homily notes directly will save him time. Or he may ask you to send the prayer intercessions to parish staff.
- ◆ Following your conversation with your pastor, contact your parish office to open the lines of communication. Many parishes need content well in advance to include it in the weekly bulletin. Inquire about deadlines, and share what content you hope to have featured. This will help your parish plan ahead to allot the necessary space in the bulletin. If you plan to include materials such as bulletin boxes each weekend in October, you may need to make separate submissions. If you plan to do the interactive Respect Life bulletin board or another activity, you'll also need to plan for those announcements to be printed in the bulletin in advance. Sample announcements and instructions for the interactive Respect Life bulletin board are provided later in this action guide.

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### First Week of September

Begin gathering the materials you will need for the interactive Respect Life bulletin board. Enlist volunteers who might like to help you with the activity. This is a great way to get youth involved and invite parishioners to use their creative gifts.

RESPECT LIFE MONTH



RESPECT LIFE MONTH

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# Parish Action Guide: Sample Timeline

- Facilitate the activity.
- Monitor the activity.
- Take pictures.
- Clean up.
- Follow up (express thanks, take notes, share with the community).

## Second Week of September

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# Parish Action Guide: Announcements

- Suggested dates provided
- Simple ideas for observing Respect Life Month

## Second Week of September

This is the time to tie up any loose ends, verify that all content has been received, and determine whether there are any follow-up tasks to be completed in the weeks ahead of Respect Life Month. Reconnect with the appropriate parish staff regarding your bulletin submissions. Touch base with your pastor to offer any further assistance that is needed and to confirm any plans you may have made.

## End of September

Gather with your volunteers and bring the bulletin board materials. Put together the interactive Respect Life bulletin board using the instructions included later in this action guide. Improvise as needed, and make it your own!

## October

Respect Life Month is here, and it's finally time to hang the poster in a place people will see it! Now is also a great time to begin sharing announcements about Respect Life Month on social media or in monthly newsletters. You may want to pre-schedule some social media posts throughout the month with graphics, prayer intercessions, or the reflection on this year's theme. (You could use or adapt the pre-written pulpit or bulletin announcements. And be sure to follow and share from the Facebook and Twitter accounts of the USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities! Facebook: [www.fb.com/usccbrespectlife](http://www.fb.com/usccbrespectlife) / Twitter: [@usccbprolife](https://twitter.com/usccbprolife))

## First Sunday of October (Respect Life Sunday)

On Respect Life Sunday (or another Sunday in October), have volunteers staff a table near the interactive Respect Life bulletin board after each Mass. Provide examples of items to pin, as well as printed, take-home reminders to bring in and add their own items throughout the month. Volunteers can help explain the activity and answer any questions. Include Respect Life resources on various topics on the table as well. If your parish has the space, consider leaving the table up for the duration of Respect Life Month.

## Mid-October

Monitor the content being added to the Respect Life bulletin board, and ensure that all materials are appropriate. Take special note of prayer requests, and consider how your parish community might pray for these specific intentions. Perhaps they can be included during a regularly scheduled Holy Hour or lifted up during a ministry gathering. You may also want to remember these intentions in your own daily prayers.

## End of October

Take some pictures of the interactive Respect Life bulletin board. Consider taking some with those who helped and/or participated, including their unique contributions. These pictures\* could be shared in a newsletter or on a parish social media page to highlight how your community celebrated Respect Life Month. These visual memories are also a great way to remember the final product and serve as examples if you'd like to do this activity in future years.

\*Make sure to follow all parish and diocesan policies for taking and sharing photos, especially any policies pertaining to minors.

## BULLETIN & PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ◆ Bulletin Announcements

#### Today is Respect Life Sunday!

Join Catholics nationwide in celebrating Respect Life Month! [respectlife.org/celebrate](http://respectlife.org/celebrate).

### ◆ Pulpit Announcements

#### Option 1: Respect Life Sunday (First Sunday of October)

Today is Respect Life Sunday, which kicks off Respect Life Month. We consider more deeply why every human life is valuable and reflect on how to build a culture that protects it. See the bulletin for more information.

#### Option 2: Respect Life Month (Any Weekend in October)

Every October, we celebrate Respect Life Month. We consider more deeply why every human life is valuable and reflect on how to build a culture that protects life from conception to natural death. See the bulletin for more information.

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# Parish Action Guide: Intercessions

- Prayer of the Faithful
- Bulletin
- Parish communications
- Family prayer
- Religion class

## ▶ INTERCESSIONS

These sample intercessions were written for use during Respect Life Month, but can be used (or adapted for use) at any time. Consider including one or more in the Prayer of the Faithful during Mass each weekend in October.

The intercessions can also be printed in the weekly bulletin, included during prayer at parish gatherings, featured in newsletters, shared on social media, or prayed during personal or family prayer times.

For all Catholics:  
That on this Respect Life Sunday our resolve may be strengthened to uphold the dignity of every human life;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

That during this Respect Life Month our resolve will be strengthened to cherish and protect the gift of every human life;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

That the life of every human person, from conception to natural death, might be protected in our laws and cherished in our hearts;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

May the Church's abortion healing ministry, Project Rachel, help them find peace and healing through Christ's endless mercy;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For those nearing the end of life: May they receive care that respects their dignity and protects their lives as they place their hope in the promise of eternal life;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

May God grant us the wisdom and courage to lovingly protect His gift of human life at every stage, in sickness and in health;  
*We pray to the Lord:*



## ▶ HOMILY HELPS

On the first Sunday of October the Church in the United States celebrates Respect Life Sunday, and priests and deacons are encouraged to preach on the Church's teachings on human life. As Catholics, we believe that every human person is made in the image and likeness of God. Every human life is therefore sacred and inviolable and should be protected and cherished from conception until natural death. Practices such as abortion, assisted suicide, and capital punishment violate the dignity of the human person and must be rejected.

Each year, homily helps are provided to help priests and deacons preach on the sanctity of human life. Other ministry leaders can also use these notes during Bible studies, small groups, ministry gatherings, or other faith formation settings.

The Respect Life Month homily helps are available at [respectlife.org/respect-life-month](https://respectlife.org/respect-life-month).

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# Parish Action Guide: Homily Helps

- Making connections to readings
- Brief stories
- Application to parishioners' lives
- Use in entirety or piecemeal
- Other settings (Bible studies, small groups, talks)

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That during this Respect Life Month our resolve will be strengthened to cherish and protect the gift of every human life;

*We pray to the Lord:*

That the life of every human person, from conception to natural death, might be protected in our laws and cherished in our hearts;

*We pray to the Lord:*

May the Church's abortion healing ministry, Project Rachel, help them find peace and healing through Christ's endless mercy;

*We pray to the Lord:*

For those nearing the end of life: May they receive care that respects their dignity and protects their lives as they place their hope in the promise of eternal life;

*We pray to the Lord:*

May God grant us the wisdom and courage to lovingly protect His gift of human life at every stage, in sickness and in health;

*We pray to the Lord:*



## ▶ HOMILY HELPS

On the first Sunday of October the Church in the United States celebrates Respect Life Sunday, and priests and deacons are encouraged to preach on the Church's teachings on human life. As Catholics, we believe that every human person is made in the image and likeness of God. Every human life is therefore sacred and inviolable and should be protected and cherished from conception until natural death. Practices such as abortion, assisted suicide, and capital punishment violate the dignity of the human person and must be rejected.

Each year, homily helps are provided to help priests and deacons preach on the sanctity of human life. Other ministry leaders can also use these notes during Bible studies, small groups, ministry gatherings, or other faith formation settings.

The Respect Life Month homily helps are available at [respectlife.org/respect-life-month](https://respectlife.org/respect-life-month).

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# Next Steps...

1. REVIEW the available resources.
2. DECIDE what you would like to ask permission to implement.
3. CONNECT with your pastor and parish staff.



...And remember, progress, not perfection.