

Respect Life Leader Handbook

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Important Websites

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/>

<http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/>

An initiative of the United states Conference of Catholic Bishops.

<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/>
<http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/>

National Committee for a Human Life Amendment (NCHLA)
<http://www.nchla.org>

An educational website where messages can be sent to U.S. Senators, encouraging them to end the *Roe* litmus test for judicial nominees. This link is sponsored by the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment (NCHLA) which is the legislative arm of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops
<http://www.EndRoe.org>

Priests for Life, a member of the Gospel of family life ministries
<http://priestsforlife.org/>

One more soul, fostering God's plan for love, chastity, marriage and children
<http://onemoresoul.com/>

A Respect Life Program

National Night of Prayer For Life

- Host the National Night of Prayer For Life on December 8-9th, bridging the feasts of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8th) and St. Juan Diego (Dec. 9th).
- The National Night of Prayer for Life is a prayer service consisting of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the holy Rosary, prayer to St. Michael, silent prayer and hymns. Contact the Office for a full description of the event, for a sample announcement for your Church bulletin, for promotional flyer, and or a sample Prayer Service Booklet.

Prayer and Fasting

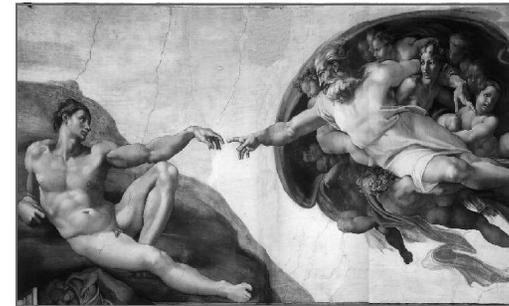
- You can also pray for God's guidance for those involved in prayer vigils and respect life action around the country.
- Consider fasting. If unable to fast from food for health reasons, consider renouncing an activity that can put a barrier between you and God (television, the internet, chocolate, coffee, etc.). Take the time you usually spend in those activities and give it back to God.
- Distribute pro-life prayer cards.
- Pray the Rosary every day for the good of family and for respect life efforts.
- Help your pastor host a Holy Hour for life once a month.
- Consider participating in 40 Days for Life vigil



The primary goal of the Respect Life Program is to build a culture of life and to create and sustain respect for life at every stage of human existence, in every situation. The Office of Family and Sanctity of Life of the Eparchy of Saint Maron is working toward the establishment of a Respect Life Committee in every parish. We want to offer support, resources, and networking opportunities for the coordinators and their committees.

In turn, parish Respect Life coordinators and their committees provide resources to their parish on life issues, actively evangelize their fellow parishioners on life issues and support their pastor and priests in building a culture of life.

In consultation with the pastor, the parish Respect Life coordinator organizes and implements the efforts of the *Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities* through four areas: public information and education, public policy advocacy, outreach and pastoral care, prayer and worship.



"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." - **Genesis 1:27**

Responsibilities of the Respect Life Coordinator

- Become informed on the life issues (abortion, infanticide, stem cell research, cloning, assisted suicide, and euthanasia) by:
 - subscribing to key publications
 - attending conferences held by the local Roman Catholic Diocesan Respect Life Office.
- Organize volunteers into various groups to:
 - Pray individually and with others for the restoration of respect for all human life.
 - Educate within the parish on the life issues.
 - Respond to action alerts distributed by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) and the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment (NCHLA) at state and national levels.
 - Express support for respect life legislation to legislators at the local, state, and national level.
 - Raise funds for local and state respect life activities and for local pregnancy help centers.
 - Focus attention on the life issues at key times during the year, namely on the January 22nd Anniversary of the Supreme Court abortion decisions, and on Respect Life Sunday, which is the first Sunday of October.
 - Support service projects to aid the elderly, the handicapped, the homeless, the dying, the poor, distressed pregnant women, and women and men suffering the after-effects of abortion...

Prayer and Worship

“... a great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world . . . 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.”

- Gospel of Life, n. 100

" Participation in the sacramental life of the Church sustains each of us. We encourage dioceses and parishes to sponsor programs of prayer and fasting as well as paraliturgical programs and to encourage Catholics to adopt programs of private prayer. "

- Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities, USCCB

Family Cenacles & Cenacles of Life

- Start a Cenacle of Life Group in your home or your parish. The Cenacle of Life is a prayer group that prays two rosaries, the Divine Mercy chaplet and fasts once a week.
- Respond to Our Lady's message given July 23, 1987 ("The Families Consecrated to Me") about consecrating all Christian families themselves to her Immaculate Heart and, if possible, start cenacles in your homes.
- To find out more about the Cenacles, check:
<http://www.cenaclesoflife.org/>
http://www.mmp-usa.net/cenacle_family.html

Post-Abortion Healing. As a parish respect life representative it is important to familiarize yourself and your parish with Post Abortion Syndrome and the Entering Canaan Post-Abortion Healing Program. Promote these healing retreats by using bulletin inserts and promotional flyers.

Project Rachel. A post-abortion reconciliation program to help women through the healing process. Through the Project, priests have received special training to minister the Sacrament of Reconciliation to people who have been involved in an abortion.

Rachel's Vineyard. A weekend retreat for post-abortive men and women, created by Dr. Teresa Karminski-Burke, Ph.D. A psychological and spiritual journey of post-abortion healing, it is a beautiful opportunity for healing and reconciliation for any man or woman who has struggled with the emotional or spiritual pain of an abortion.

Support for Pregnancy Centers

- Host a baby shower — At any time, you may wrap presents for unborn babies and donate these gifts to a crisis pregnancy center or other agency.
- Recruit volunteers for a local crisis pregnancy center.
- Host a flea market, breakfast, or spaghetti dinner to benefit a respect life cause.
- Co-host a walk/run for life to support a local crisis pregnancy center or assisted living home.
- Sponsor a local pregnancy center spiritually and financially as a parish.

- Recruit volunteers, through personal contact and other means, from among members of the parish who are interested in becoming involved in efforts to restore respect and secure legal protection for all human life.
- Inform others within the parish community, with the assistance of the pastor, of the sanctity of human life, of the radical nature of the Supreme Court abortion decisions, and of the consequent need to restore legal protection for all human life through protective legislation both at the state and national level.
- Use social media as a tool for daily updates, news stories and trending articles.

Contact the Office of Family and Sanctity of Life for suggestions or questions or more details about activities and events.

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Dedicated to the honor and
glory of God in Whom is found
the dignity of every person

Organize a Respect Life Committee in Your Parish

- Talk to your pastor and ask permission. Let him know that your committee will handle the details always with his consent. You may want to work with him on developing a mission statement for your ministry so that your role and scope are clearly defined.
- Set a date for your initial meeting to form your committee. Announce the date at least three weeks in advance in your parish bulletin and personally invite people who are interested in Respect Life issues.
- Invite the following to be representatives on your committee: Parish or Pastoral Council representative, Stewardship Council representative, Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) representative, Maronite Young Adult (MYA) representative, National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) representative, and others as appropriate.
- Plan to have a speaker and/or film presentation on Respect Life issues.
- When you hold the meeting, have a sign-in sheet with name, address, phone number, email and area of interest.
- Establish a date on the parish calendar for your regular meetings.
- Your committee should meet at least quarterly so that your long and short range goals are being accomplished

Outreach and Pastoral Care

“Every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God was made flesh, is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church.”

- Gospel of Life, n. 3

Pastoral care encompasses a broad range of services provided with competence, compassion, and dignity. It includes spiritual assistance and essential material help, and may include supplementary services beyond those available in the community. Providing pastoral care to those in need is a primary way that the Church expresses its love for all God's children.”

- Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities, USCCB

Care for the less fortunate, and the lonely

- Volunteer at a soup kitchen or a shelter or nursing home
- Hold food collections for food pantry.
- Host an awareness day for persons with disabilities.
- Coordinate parishioners (possibly with MYA or MYO groups) and arrange visits to residents at a local nursing home. Sit with residents and talk, help them with lunch, play cards, etc. If priest is available, Divine Liturgy can be celebrated.
- Organize a “Jesus Run,” aka a “Midnight Run” to reach out to the homeless and the lonely on the streets.
- Organize home visits to the elderly and homebound people, spend time with them and offer support to them and their families. Pray with them and for them. Bring them the Eucharist if priest or deacon is available.

Bus Trip to the March for Life in Washington, DC.

- The Annual March For Life held on or around January 22nd of every year can be an energizing source of encouragement for people involved in building a culture of life.
- Joining hundreds of thousands of people at the March For Life in DC can lead towards deeper commitment to the cause of life and can be an eye opening experience for teenagers & other young adults.
- You can consider organizing a bus trip from your area and ask riders to pay a fee to help defray the cost. You can also consider joining other groups from parishes nearby.
- The group should attempt to stay together. Sometimes wearing all the same color hat or scarf can help identify group members. Make sure everyone knows the bus company and bus number before leaving RFK Stadium. Make sure everyone stays with a buddy at all times so no one gets lost.
- When you get to the National Mall, look for the banner “Maronite Catholics For Life” so we can all march together.



Ways to Build your Parish Respect Life Committee

- Pray first, last and always.
- Feed them physically and spiritually.
- Personally recruit; invite your friends and families.
- Introduce yourself to others in the parish that you don't know and invite them.
- Educate. There's so much to learn about these issues.
- Serve. Inspire your committee with tangible practical help for others.
- Give them a list of names and phone numbers to call for materials and pamphlets (after abortion counseling, 40 days for life, etc..)
- Advocate. Energize the group with action on current issues.
- Keep the time. Make sure your meetings end when promised.
- Advertise your meetings and events.
- Coordinate with other local groups (meetup.com)
- Build a culture of life from womb to tomb; address all life issues in your service and ministry.
- If possible, make Facebook page, meetup page and email (respectlife(parishname)@gmail.com) for your parish Respect Life Committee.



Possible bulletin insert to invite people to the committee:

Do you have a passion for those who are dying, for those who are disabled, for prisoners on death row and those they have harmed, for mothers and their unborn children, and for all who are in need? The culture of death that surrounds us may be replaced by a culture of life. God may be calling you! Please consider joining the Parish Respect Life committee. We need you – both youth and adults. Contact NAME (email/phone) for more information!

O God, from generation to generation, you have called your people to be the very aroma of life amidst a culture of death. Now it is our turn. Prepare me. Send me. Use me. I am eager to do my part. Stir your people everywhere to take up this great work.

Possible mission statement for your committee:

Option #1. The Respect Life committee fosters and affirms the protection of human life from its inception in the womb to its natural end. Our collective efforts are to explain and to uphold God's plan for life and love and to support those who follow His teachings.

Option #2. We, in response to the Gospel of Life, commit ourselves to prayer, education, and action in defense of life. It is our mission to foster in our parish community an awareness of the dignity and sanctity of all human life, from conception to natural death. We are dedicated to observing and promoting the teaching of the Catholic Church on all life issues, including abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, assisted suicide, and stem cell research.

Public Policy Advocacy

“There can be no true democracy without a recognition of every person’s dignity and without respect for his or her rights. Nor can there be true peace unless life is defended and promoted.”

- Gospel of Life, n. 101

Protecting and promoting the inviolable rights of persons is the most solemn responsibility of civil authority. As Americans and as religious leaders we are committed to governance by a system of law that protects human rights and maintains the common good.”

- Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities, USCCB

USCCB Action Network

- Promote and join the USCCB Action Network to receive important updates regarding Pro-life issues and how you can speak out on important issues.
- The USCCB Action Network uses the internet and email to mobilize the faithful on crucial issues.

Evangelization and Public Witness

- Pray in front of an abortion clinic
- Participate in a Helpers of God's Precious Infants Vigil or 40 Days For Life Campaign
- Become a side-walk counselor

Parish Respect Life Activities

Marriage Enrichment evening. Plan a marriage enrichment event for married couples to re-energize their marriage and deepen their faith, such as with a marriage renewal and candle-light dinner.

- Make a program for the event, to include a renewal of marriage vows (and maybe a questionnaire).
- Invite a married couple or a speaker to give a reflection on marriage.
- Give the couples private time after the talk to reflect on the talk and complete the questionnaire.
- Encourage your pastor to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, to use specific readings for marriage and to give a homily that focuses on the importance of family life and married love.
- Have the married couples renew their vows in their Church.
- Celebrate married life with food and music!



Below you can find some ideas you can use for parish-based pro-life activities, to raise people's awareness of the dignity of human life and to proclaim the Gospel of Life through prayer, education, outreach, and public policy in order to defend and inspire a culture of life as set forth in the Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities.

Public Information and Education

"The revelation of the Gospel of life is given to us as a good to be shared with all people."

- Gospel of Life, n. 101

To deepen respect for human life and heighten public opposition to abortion and euthanasia, a twofold educational effort is necessary: one directed specifically to the Catholic community, the other directed to the general public."

- Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, USCCB

Bulletin Inserts. Bulletin Inserts in the weekly bulletin can be an extremely effective way to educate the people in the pews. Bulletin inserts can be obtained from The Office of Family and Sanctity of Life or from your local Roman Catholic diocesan Respect Life Office or from the USCCB Word of Life series, <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/resources-for-the-eucharist/word-of-life/>. All bulletin inserts must be submitted to the parish office in a timely manner and need to be ap-

"The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty! "

Pope Francis

proved by the pastor. Here are two examples:

“God’s love does not distinguish between the infant in the mother’s womb or the child or the youth or the adult or the older person. In each one God sees His image and likeness. Human life is a manifestation of God and His glory.”

Pope Benedict XVI

Respect Life Speaker. As you know, there is a wide spectrum of life issues such as: chastity, infertility, abortion, stem cell research, cloning, contraception, reproductive technologies, end-of-life issues. You may wish to host a respect life speaker to address one of these areas. It is important to help educate our parishioners, as well as the general public, about these issues.

- Speak to your pastor about bringing in a speaker and schedule a date for an event.
- You may wish to bring a speaker to a parish group which already meets regularly to ensure a good turnout (e.g., MYO, MYA, Ladies' Group, Men’s Club). If so, contact the person in charge and discuss your idea.
- Contact The Office of Family and Sanctity of Life for the Eparchy of Saint Maron or your local Roman Catholic Diocesan Respect Life Office for ideas for speakers and topics suggestions. It is important to make sure you check that the speaker you invite will adhere to the Catholic Church’s teaching on the topic being addressed.
- Publicize your event in the parish bulletin and with pulpit announcements.
- Purchase handouts which you can distribute at the event.
- Make sure to sign up volunteers from your committee to help with refreshments and set-up for the event.
- Prepare a sign-in sheet and an evaluation form so that you can discuss how effective the event was when it is over.

Respect Life Educational Materials. Set up resource tables to provide educational leaflets and pamphlets throughout the year, especially during the Respect Life Month of October and in January before the March for Life, and post the Respect Life Program Poster in your Parish.

- Materials can be periodically included in the bulletin, posted on bulletin boards, left in narthex, placed in literature racks in social areas or back of church, etc.
- Bumper stickers or other materials can be purchased and left in narthex for parishioners. A great resource is Heritage House. <http://www.heritagehouse76.com/>
- Leaflets, pamphlets, and bulletin inserts can be purchased from the USCCB, from American Life League (ALL.org), and from the One More Soul website.
- Plan to order the Respect Life Program Flyers so that they can be used during Respect Life month.
- Educate the community by reserving a table at your parish festival and give respect life brochures and “give-aways” like bookmarks, booklets, bumper stickers, etc. available from a variety of respect life companies. <http://www.lifecyclebooks.com>.

Respect Life Family Night Movie

- Organize a family night movie and show a good family movie (e.g., Fireproof, Courageous or a respect life movie e.g., Bella, October Baby, Gimme Shelter..)
- Provide pizza or popcorn, and settle down for an inspiring and uplifting film or educational night. (Ask local businesses to donate.)
- Lead a short discussion after watching the movie.