

Parish Activities & Manual

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Respect Life Parish Coordinator Manual

This guide is intended to provide ideas and suggestions for parish respect life activities. It provides multiple suggestions so that you can cater ideas to the needs and interests of your parish.

Sample Respect Life Group Planning Calendar (from St. Charles Borromeo)



When possible, action items are listed from simplest to most involved in each category. Consider starting small and challenging yourself and your parish over time.

Please note, any activity should be cleared with your pastor first.

Select one of the following for suggested parish activities:

- Public Information & Education
- Pastoral Care
- Public Policy/Advocacy & Activism
- Prayer & Worship

Responsibilities

You, the Parish Respect Life Coordinators, are essential in building a culture of life!

Parish Respect Life Coordinators and their Committees provide resources to their parish on life issues, actively evangelize their fellow parishioners on the life issues,

and support their pastor and priests in making pro-life prayer and activity visible and viable at the parish level.

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: prayer and worship, education, pastoral care, and public policy.

Duties

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 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 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

Remember, each parish/church is unique in its make-up. You will know after reviewing the list of things you can do what will most activate your parish.

How to Organize a Parish Pro-life Committee

1. Talk to your pastor and ask permission. Let him know that your committee will handle the details always with his consent.
2. Clear a date on the parish calendar. Pick a night when both the school and parish calendars are clear.
3. Invite a speaker or select and purchase or borrow a film.
4. Publish three weeks in advance in your parish bulletin, and through the

school notes sent home with the children, that there will be a speaker and/or film presentation on the pro-life issue. Suggested bulletin blurb: Do you have a passion 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 for all who are in need, that 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.

5. Hold the meeting; have a sign-in sheet with name, address, phone number and area of interest.
6. Invite the following to be representatives on your committee: PTA President (or Spiritual Director of PTA), K of C Representative, Parish Council Representative, Liturgy Committee Representative, Rosary Guild, Altar Society, etc.
7. Meet as a parish committee as necessary – often this will only be as often as an event needs to be publicized. Your committee should meet at least quarterly so that your long and short range goals are being accomplished so that your long term goals are addressed.

Top Ten Ways to Build your Parish Respect Life Committee

1. Pray. First, last and always.
2. Feed them (physically & spiritually).
3. Personally recruit; Invite your friends and families.
4. Educate. There's so much to learn about these issues ourselves.
5. Serve. Inspire your committee with tangible practical help for others.
6. Advocate. Energize the group with action on current issues.
7. Keep the time. Make sure your meetings end when promised.
8. Advertise your meetings and events liberally.
9. Coordinate with other local groups.
10. Build a culture of life from womb to tomb; address all life issues in your

service and ministry.