

# **Respect Life program brings attention to words of Pope Benedict XVI**

WASHINGTON - "Hope and Respect for Life" is the theme for the 2008-09 Respect Life program, centered around Pope Benedict XVI's message during his celebrated visit to the United States in April.

A new packet of materials distributed by the U.S. bishops' Office of Pro-Life Activities includes pamphlets, a flier containing important points made by Pope Benedict during his April 15-20 U.S. visit and a CD with full-length versions of articles on a variety of life-related topics, with recommended resources. All are linked to the pope's message of hope and trust as an antidote to what he called "America's brand of secularism."

The Respect Life program packet mirrors the range of pro-life issues that are necessary for Catholics to comprehend regarding their church's beliefs. The topics include:

- The false hope of embryonic stem-cell research and the real hope offered by research using adult stem cells, outlined by Maureen L. Condit, a researcher and associate professor in the department of neurobiology and anatomy at the University of Utah School of Medicine.
- The dangers of advance directives that presume in favor of withdrawal of medical treatment, written by Stephen L. Mikochik, a professor at Temple University Law School and chairman-elect of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability.
- Conscience and the Catholic voter, by Bishop William E. Lori of Bridgeport, Conn., chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine.
- "Pornography: What's the Problem?" by Mark Houck, co-founder and president of a lay apostolate called The King's Men.

- A reflection on the African-American family and the culture of life, by Auxiliary Bishop Martin D. Holley of Washington, chairman of the USCCB Subcommittee on African-American Affairs and a member of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

- Male grief and trauma following abortion, by Vincent M. Rue, a psychotherapist who is co-director of the Institute for Pregnancy Loss in Jacksonville, Fla.

The packet also contains a liturgy guide, program models and notable pro-life quotes, in both English and Spanish. The Committee on Pro-Life Activities creates this package annually to encourage schools, religious education programs and Catholic institutions and organizations to use these materials to help spread the Catholic Church's pro-life message.

Although the Respect Life program is year-round, October is observed as Respect Life Month and the first Sunday in October, Oct. 5 this year, is designated as Respect Life Sunday by the Catholic Church in the U.S.