

# Respect Life Coordinators Manual

## Archdiocese of Baltimore

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.

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.

This guide is divided into 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

Read and become familiar with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro Life Activities at <http://old.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml>.

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 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.

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## **Public Information & 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 (for full text, see [www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml))*

## *Pro-life Information*

### **Print Pro-Life Information in Sunday bulletin**

Archdiocesan “Respect Life Corner” - a free bulletin insert by e-mail. Please e-mail [lbrenegan@archbalt.org](mailto:lbrenegan@archbalt.org) if you'd like to receive it.

USCCB's “Bulletin Briefs” are available at <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/resources-for-the-eucharist/word-of-life/>



If there is interest in news and political updates or statistics, please let the Respect Life office know and we will produce another alternative.



### **Share Building a Culture of Life for Middle and Highschool Students**

Let your youth ministers, CCD teachers, and Catholic school teachers about this valuable resource, available online at <http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/respect-life/educator-resources>.

### **Respect Life Coloring, Poster & Essay Contest**

Hosting a contest engages youth (in a parish school or religious education classes) in respect life issues. It encourages young people at your parish/school to consider the theme designated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Pro-life Secretariat. Details and suggestions for materials, supplies, action steps, ages, rules, etc, can be found at <http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/respect-life/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=46040>

### **Provide educational leaflets or pamphlets to parishioners.**

Materials can be periodically included in the bulletin, posted on bulletin boards, left in narthex, etc.

The Respect Life Office has created a series of bulletin inserts on various life issues free to download and print. They are available online at <http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/respect-life/bulletin-inserts.cfm>.

Leaflets, pamphlets, and bulletin inserts can be purchased from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2011/upload/catalog-2011.pdf>

Feminists for Life ads (free to download) can be found at [www.feministsforlife.org](http://www.feministsforlife.org)

Bumper stickers or other materials can be purchased and left in narthex for parishioners. A great resource is Heritage House at [www.hh76.com](http://www.hh76.com)



### **Have a Movie Night**

Borrow *Blood Money*, *Bella* (or purchase, [www.bloodmoneyfilm.com](http://www.bloodmoneyfilm.com) or [www.bellamoviesite.com](http://www.bellamoviesite.com)), or another pro-life film (suggestions at [http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/respect-](http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/respect-life/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=3557)

[http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/respect-](http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/respect-life/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=3557)life/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=3557) and order some pizza or pop some popcorn, and settle down for an inspiring and uplifting film or educational and riveting exposé.

## **Promote and Attend Archbishop's Annual Symposium for Catholic Medical Professionals**

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien hosts a biannual symposium for Catholic medical professionals and the general public with distinguished speakers on respect life issues relevant to the medical community. Attend and publicized his event at your parish.

## **Bring Truth Booth, A Window to the Womb, to your parish or school**

The Truth Booth is simple, scientific, educational, non-confrontational, beautiful, and appropriate for all ages. It is available to parishes, schools, and other groups. The Respect Life Office will deliver, set up, and take down. All you need is a safe place, a table, and an electrical outlet. The 3 minute video clip of sonogram images runs continuously (and has a timer to turn off in the evening and back on in the morning). Please contact [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org) to borrow this amazing educational tool for your parish (for a ministry fair, special event, or the parish narthex), school, or event.



## **Organize Spiritual Adoption.**



Inviting parishioners or school children to spiritually adopt an unborn child in danger of abortion and pray for him or her throughout the 9 months of pregnancy is a wonderful way to education parishioners and school children about the humanity and development of the unborn. For detailed information about organizing spiritual adoption, see the section below. The Archdiocese has a wonderful resource for this in its Little One Sweet posters (see below).

## **Set up a Pro-Life Resource Table.**

Set up a table with pro-life literature and precious feet pins. Ask a volunteer to man the table after Masses, answer questions about your parish Respect Life Committee, and recruit new members. For pro-life literature, see USCCB Publishing at [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) (search under Social Justice Issues, Life Issues). Precious feet pins can be purchased at many religious book stores or from Heritage House at [www.hh76.com](http://www.hh76.com).

## **Host a Pro-Life Speaker.**

Ask a pro-life speaker to speak to a CCD class, youth group, seniors group, Knights of Columbus meeting, dinner event, Respect Life Committee meeting, etc. For recommendations, contact the Respect Life Office.

## **Distribute / Sell Respect Life Audio CD's.**

Start an educational program that parishioners can participate in while driving. Purchase CD's on respect life topics and make them available for a donation after Mass.

### ***Natural Family Planning Education***

*"[D]espite their differences of nature and moral gravity, contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree." Gospel of Life n. 13.*

*"The work of educating in the service of life involves the training of married couples in responsible procreation." Gospel of Life n. 97.*

## **Advertise local Natural Family Planning classes.**

For information about NFP and local classes, see the Archdiocese of Baltimore Marriage Preparation at [www.archbalt.org/family-life/marriage-family/family-planning.cfm](http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/marriage-family/family-planning.cfm).

## **Distribute NFP information.**

For brochures, see <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/resources/>

Print in Sunday bulletin.

Distribute information about Natural Family Planning through marriage preparation classes, Engaged Encounter, and Marriage Encounter.

Invite Engaged Encounter and marriage preparation ministries to teach Natural Family Planning and Theology of the Body.

## ***Modesty***



### **Host a Mother-Daughter Tea & Modesty Fashion Show.**

St. John Parish in Westminster hosts an annual Mother-Daughter Tea & Fashion Show - a fun afternoon to celebrate femininity, learn about virtue, and embrace modesty. Sample programs, volunteer notes, planning docs, etc. are available from the Respect Life Office.

## ***Theology of the Body***

**Provide a Theology of the Body video for CCD or Confirmation classes.**

**Schedule a Theology of the Body speaker.**

To address Confirmation candidates, marriage preparation students, and marriage encounter participants.

**Run a Theology of the Body Study Group.**

## ***Archdiocesan Respect Life Library***

The Archdiocese maintains a Media Resource Center. The Respect Life Office also recommends media resources as educational tools to be used in meetings, presentations, etc. The Respect Life Office has copies of these materials for borrowing if you would rather not purchase them.

## Pastoral Care & Service

*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 the Church expresses its love for God's children." - Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities (for full text see [www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml).)*



### *Support for Crisis Pregnancy*

#### **Place a Permanent Sign in the vestibule of your Church.**

Include information about a local pregnancy center and the Gabriel Network, opportunities for pro-life activities in the parish, information about joining the Respect Life Committee, an invitation to Project Rachel for post-abortive women, and other pro-life information.

Sample language: *“In the Name of God the Father, the Creator of all life, (name of parish) pledges to aid any pregnancy woman who asks for help if she will let her child be born.”*

*“I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, so that you and your descendants may live.” —Deuteronomy 30:19-20.*

#### **Promote Pregnancy Services Available.**



The Respect Life Office has a brochure “You Have REAL CHOICES” that lists local pregnancy centers and resources available. You can also find your local pregnancy center(s) and request brochures from them.

Real Choices Maryland at [www.realchoicesmaryland.org](http://www.realchoicesmaryland.org).

Gabriel Network at [www.gabrielnetwork.org](http://www.gabrielnetwork.org).

Post information on bulletin boards, print in Sunday bulletin, leave fliers in literature rack or pamphlets in vestibule, and set up table in vestibule after Masses twice yearly.

#### **Run a Baby Bottle Drive.**

Place baby bottles in narthex for families to pick up and collect loose change/cash/checks. Donate to local or sponsored pregnancy center.

Next to baby bottle, put information about local or sponsored pregnancy center or about abortion.

Many pregnancy centers will facilitate the baby bottle drives themselves.

To find a pregnancy center to support, please contact [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org).



### **Walk or Run for Life**

Each September the Archdiocesan Respect Life Office sponsors the Gabriel Network 5K Walk/Run for Life in partnership with Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Program which supports its maternity homes around Maryland. Consider this alternative to the Race for the Cure, which has ties to Planned Parenthood and embryonic stem cell research, and support local pregnant women facing homelessness. In 2010, over 200 people of all ages joined the race for a fun day on the course. See [www.gabrielnetwork.org](http://www.gabrielnetwork.org).

### **Sell Mother's Day Carnations or Roses.**

Offer carnations or roses outside Masses on Mother's Day for a \$1 donation. Send all proceeds to a local pregnancy center. To adopt a center, contact [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org).

### **Throw a Baby Shower.**

This is a great way to bring the respect for life message to the parish in a constructive and positive way. Display bulletin announcements and a flier in the two weeks prior to the "shower." Include each group in the parish in the preparations, the school, the CCD classes, the Ladies Guild, etc., and give each group specific tasks to do and times to attend at the tables. If you have a parish school, involve the children in your parish baby shower. They can make posters to advertise the shower and contribute small items. Request gently used as well as new items. Place a baby crib or a pack-and-play in a prominent place in the vestibule of the Church for two weekends to collect the items. Provide a bowl or basket for cash donations.

If you need information about a pregnancy center to support, please contact [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org).

### **Wash for Life**

The Wash for Life is an annual pro-life youth event. On the same day, groups of youth all over the country hold a car wash in their own home town and donate the money to a local Pregnancy Care Center. This way, they participate in a national event while at the same time helping their own community. If your youth group or parish group cannot participate on the day, consider a car wash for life any day. See [www.washforlife.org](http://www.washforlife.org).

### **Sell Pro-life Christmas Cards.**

Provide a pro-life resource for your parishioners and raise funds for your Respect Life Committee or a local pregnancy center. Available from Heritage House at [www.hh76.com](http://www.hh76.com).

### **Donate the Poor Box to a Pregnancy Center.**

If you need information about local pregnancy centers to support, please contact [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org).

### **Start Knit for Life.**

Seniors' groups, women's groups, or youth groups can join together and "Knit for Life," making baby blankets, baby bonnets, etc. to donate to local pregnancy centers. Publicize by contacting leaders of established groups. Create a flier inviting parishioners to Knit for Life and asking them to bring their own needles and knitting supplies. Provide a time, a space, comfortable chairs, and yarn.



### **"Adopt" a Pregnancy Center.**

Sponsor a local pregnancy center spiritually and financially as a parish. Pray regularly for the staff and clients at this pregnancy center and respond to its needs for funds, diapers, baby blankets, etc. If you are interested in adopting a pregnancy center, please contact the Respect Life Office at [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org).

### **Start a chapter of the Gabriel Project.**

The Gabriel Network is a grassroots, faith-based nonprofit support network that provides practical, emotional and spiritual assistance to women and families facing crisis pregnancies, in a spirit of Christian solidarity. It is a network of churches, individuals, businesses, agencies, donors, organizations, and professional personnel inspired by Christ to realize a culture of life through loving service to the women and families in our communities challenged with an unexpected pregnancy.

If your parish is interested in starting a chapter of the Gabriel Network, please contact the Gabriel Network at (301) 262-9011, (410) 741-1228, or [info@gabrielnetwork.org](mailto:info@gabrielnetwork.org).

This provides a very public statement of a parish's commitment to the right to life, as a large sign is generally posted on the parish property inviting pregnant women in need to call the hotline.

### ***Ministry for the Chronically Ill, Disabled, or Dying***

*"[W]hen earthly existence draws to a close, it is again charity which finds the most appropriate means for enabling the elderly, especially those who can no longer look after themselves, and the terminally ill to enjoy genuinely humane assistance and to receive an adequate response to their needs, in particular their anxiety and their loneliness."* Gospel of Life n. 88.

### **Promote Advanced Directives that Respect Human Life**

Make available advanced directives that respect life. *Comfort and Consolation: Care of the Sick and Dying*, a pastoral letter from the Bishops of Maryland, is available from the Maryland Catholic Conference. The Patient's Rights Council has a Protective Medical Decisions Document available for a donation on their website, <http://www.patientsrightscouncil.org/site/>



### **Arrange Visits to a Nursing Home.**

Coordinate parishioners (consider the youth group or Confirmation classes) and arrange visits to residents at a local nursing home. Sit with residents to talk, help them with lunch, play cards, etc.

### **Start a Prayer Blanket Ministry.**

Caring volunteers donate fabric, thread, and time to sew lap-size blankets for those who are either sick or going through extremely difficult times in their life. The Prayer Blanket is a symbol of a "faith sharing community" of donors and recipients praying for one another.

## **Organize a Support Network for Families of the Sick or Suffering.**

Suffering is a sharing in Christ's passion, but it is not easy, especially alone. The temptation is to end suffering, even if it means ending the life of the person suffering.

Invite parishioners who are suffering and their family members and friends to communicate. Advertise in the bulletin or through announcements after Masses and ask parishioners to share contact information. Keep a running list of interested parishioners and their contact information, distribute the list to the network, and host a meeting every couple of months for members to meet. Encourage parishioners to meet up, support one another, communicate by phone or e-mail, etc.

## **Start Homebound, Hospital, and Nursing Home, and Hospice Ministry.**

Invite parishioners who are homebound, hospitalized, in nursing homes, or in hospice and their family members to let the parish know their needs (meals, visitors, Eucharistic ministry, etc). Provide a contact name, phone number, and e-mail in the Sunday bulletin. Announce the beginning of this ministry after Masses. Ask youth groups, Confirmation candidates, homemakers, seniors, etc. to visit these parishioners and meet their needs.

### *Support for Post Abortion Healing*

*For more information about how to support this essential ministry, check out the Parish Community Awareness Guide under "Resources" at [www.rachelsvineyardbaltimore.org](http://www.rachelsvineyardbaltimore.org).*



#### **Make resources available.**

Booklets, pamphlets, prayer cards, and mini-posters are available from Rachel's Vineyard Baltimore at [www.rachelsvineyardbaltimore.org](http://www.rachelsvineyardbaltimore.org) or the USCCB at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/abortion/post-abortion-healing/>.

These can be left in your parish vestibules, in women's rooms and at ministry fairs.

#### **Spread the ministry to the community.**

Leave business cards for Rachel's Vineyard Baltimore in public restrooms. Place ads in local papers.

#### **"Like" Rachel's Vineyard Baltimore on Facebook**

Encourage all of your friends to do the same. This will help spread the message of hope and healing!

#### **Advertise Project Rachel retreats.**

Approximately 5 retreats are held annually by the Archdiocese chapter of Rachel's Vineyard Baltimore. For schedule, see [www.rachelsvineyardbaltimore.org](http://www.rachelsvineyardbaltimore.org).

## *Support for Adoption*

### **Make resources available.**

The Little Flowers Foundation (at [www.littleflowers.org](http://www.littleflowers.org)) is Catholic organization that works to provide grants to families who need financial assistance in order to pursue an adoption.

Catholic Charities Adoption Services (at [www.cc-adoptions.org](http://www.cc-adoptions.org)) offers a full range of domestic and international adoption services.

### **Fundraise.**

Support one of the organizations listed above.

### **Hold an Adoption Fair.**

Invite speakers and provide literature about adoption.



## *Ministry for Mothers*

*The Church applauds the choice to be a mother and encourages mothers' "daily heroism" – "the silent but effective and eloquent witness of all those 'brave mothers who devote themselves to their own family without reserve.'"* Gospel of Life n. 86.

### **Create a Mothers Group.**

Form a social group for mothers and their young children to gather and support one another during the day. Advertise in the Sunday bulletin and with fliers at the Sunday nursery, in the cry room in the Church, and at CCD classes. Ask mothers to each bring a snack and a toy or two. Provide a time, a safe space for children to play, name tags for moms, some comfortable chairs, and coffee. If possible, invite a few high school or college students to volunteer to help watch the children while the mothers socialize. If mothers are interested, suggest a weekly topic for discussion or debate (politics, religion, social issues, or mom topics).



### **Start a chapter of the Elizabeth Ministry.**

This is a woman-to-woman, pro-family, parish-based ministry that celebrates each new life and offers support to women through their pregnancies through visits, prayer, and resources. It is based on the example of Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth to help her through her pregnancy.

*"During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, 'Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.'"* Luke 1, 39-42.

Nearly 700 chapters in churches around the world connect women for prayer, affirmation and encouragement. Resources are available to offer assistance in many crisis situations also. Manuals, guidance, and materials are available to help women begin this ministry in their parish. For information, see [www.elizabethministry.org](http://www.elizabethministry.org).

## Coordinate Babysitting for Single Mothers.



Connect homemakers or others willing to provide low-cost or free baby-sitting for single mothers while they finish school. Advertise in bulletin or make an announcement after Mass seeking babysitters and women in need. Check with local or sponsored pregnancy center to see if there are women with this need. Ensure that the ministry is not directly sponsored by or coordinated through the parish (for liability purposes). Simply keep a running list of available sitters and women in need and ask the volunteers to contact the women

### *Support for Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis*

*For excellent information about supporting families confronted with poor prenatal diagnosis, please consider viewing or reading the following webinar: Threats to the Life of People With Disabilities, Part 1: Poor Prenatal Diagnosis of Lethal or Non-lethal Conditions & Disability, National Catholic Partnership on Disability.*

#### **Make resources available.**



"Prenatal Testing: A Closer Look" informs readers about the medical, emotional, spiritual, and moral issues involved.

"Our Unborn Baby Has a Problem" guides couples who receive a prenatal diagnosis showing their unborn baby has a problem.

These sensitively written items are full of information, faith, and comfort. Both 32-page booklets are available from Elizabeth Ministry at [www.elizabethministry.org](http://www.elizabethministry.org).

Be Not Afraid ([www.benotafraid.net](http://www.benotafraid.net)) and Isaiah's Promise ([www.isaiahspromise.net](http://www.isaiahspromise.net)) are helpful web sites for parents.

Prenatal Partners for Life ([www.prenatalpartnersforlife.org](http://www.prenatalpartnersforlife.org)) is a group of concerned parents (most of whom have or had a special needs child), medical professionals, legal professionals and clergy whose aim is to support, inform and encourage expectant or new parents.

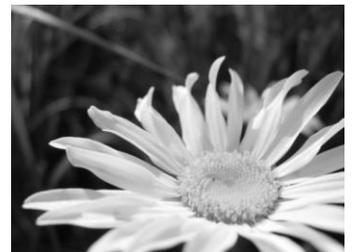
### *Support for Miscarriage, Stillbirth, or Early Infant Death*

#### **Make resources available.**

"Mourning a Miscarriage." An 18-page booklet which helps parents express their sorrow through prayers and written reflections.

"Miscarriage: A Man's Book." A 22-page booklet written by a man who has been there.

"Healing Together." For couples grieving the death of their baby.



These sensitively written items are full of information, faith, and comfort. Available from Elizabeth Ministry at [www.elizabethministry.org](http://www.elizabethministry.org).

## **Set up a Book of the Innocents.**

A Book of the Innocents will be provided to any parish that wishes to minister to peri-natal and child loss. The book is placed in the church, perhaps in front of Our Lady and is a simple way to help those that have suffered losses from an abortion, miscarriage, stillbirth, or death of a child (they write the name of their child in memoriam and, if desired, a brief thought about him or her). Please contact the Respect Life Office if you need a Book of the Innocents for your parish.

## **Plan a Memorial Service for those who have lost children, born or unborn**

This is designed to meet the needs of parents whose child(ren) died because of miscarriage, accident or abortion. The ritual emphasizes the Church's respect for the sacredness of all human life from the moment of conception – regardless of a child's age or stage of development. It acknowledges that all life, even the lives of those who are never born, impacts families and individuals. It also helps bring peaceful closure after a great loss. Besides the candle lighting ceremony, the memorial service can also include music, readings, prayers, a reflection, and a small memento for the guests. A simple reception following the service is also appreciated by the families.



### *Support for Infertility*

#### **Make resources available.**

"Infertility Journey." It's a long, hard, and intensely painful road that you walk trying to conceive or carry a child to live birth. Why walk alone? "Infertility Journey" is a 21-page booklet written by a couple, Jeannie and Bruce Hanneman, who have been where these couples are now. The booklet covers the marital, social, spiritual, and ethical issues surrounding infertility. Available from Elizabeth Ministry at [www.elizabethministry.org](http://www.elizabethministry.org).



#### **Educate parishioners about the moral dangers of artificial reproductive technologies.**

Use bulletin inserts, fliers, leaflets, etc.

#### **Form an Infertility Support Group.**

Infertile couples face a great challenge. There are great temptations to participate in morally illicit treatments like in-vitro fertilization and others. Advertise through marriage preparation, Marriage Encounter, and the Sunday bulletin. Provide a time, a space, comfortable chairs, name tags, coffee, and a facilitator who is familiar with infertility and adoption (perhaps a parishioner who has gone through both).

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## **Public Policy/Advocacy & Activism**

*"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 (to see full text of document, [www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml))*

## ***Evangelization & Public Witness***

### **Pray in or plan a Helpers of God's Precious Infants Rosary Procession**

The Respect Life Office of the Archdiocese of Baltimore has joined numerous other cities in leading peaceful, prayerful processions to abortion facilities. These processions fill the streets with prayer and singing and bring hope to places of great suffering. First, we begin with a Respect Life Mass, followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Next, while those unable to participate in the procession remain in prayer with Christ in the church, we process through the streets (sometimes partially in cars if necessary) praying the Rosary and singing hymns. We carry only our rosaries, a banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and a sign identifying our mission. When we arrive at the abortion facility, we continue in prayer and kneel for a moment of silence. Finally, we return to the Church for Benediction.



For more information or to bring a Helpers Procession to your parish, contact [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org) or (410) 547-5537.

### **Join a Life Chain.**

Groups throughout Maryland host Life Chains. Pro-life people join together in a public witness of their convictions. They hold signs, pray, and show their support for the unborn. For local Life Chains, see [www.lifechain.net](http://www.lifechain.net).



### **March for Life (in Washington DC and Annapolis).**

Each January, thousands of pro-lifers gather on the National Mall and march to the steps of the Supreme Court. Usually the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in March, Marylanders gather in Annapolis for the Maryland March for Life. Send a bus down to the March for Life in Annapolis or Washington or team up with another local parish which sends a bus and advertise in the bulletin and at Mass.

If your parish does not send a bus to the March for Life, have a special Mass, Rosary, or Holy Hour on the day of the March for Life (January 22<sup>nd</sup>) or Maryland March for Life (early March) to pray for those marching, for the unborn, and for their parents.



### **Participate in the 40 Days for Life.**

40 Days for Life is a nationwide campaign that runs twice each year – in late September through October and during Lent. It is a focused pro-life effort consisting of fervent prayer coupled with fasting and peaceful vigil at an abortion facility, in church, school or home. We Pray for:

- Women and their babies who are in danger of abortion
- Healing of men and women who carry the pain of a past abortion
- Workers at abortion clinics, and
- Local, state and national leaders who misguidedly support abortion.

At least one third of prayer vigil volunteers for 40 Days for Life have never prayed outside an abortion facility before. 95% of Vigil participants surveyed report that *they personally grew spiritually* as a result of their involvement: "I didn't think I could pray in front of an abortion facility. Now I feel that I must."

For more information about this transformative campaign and how your parish can get involved, please visit [www.40daysforlife.com/baltimore](http://www.40daysforlife.com/baltimore) or contact [johanna.coughlin@archbalt.org](mailto:johanna.coughlin@archbalt.org) or (410) 707-9842.

### **Plant a Cemetery of the Unborn.**

This is a visible symbol commemorating children and the effort to reverse *Roe v. Wade*. White crosses are planted on the lawn of the parish for a period of time. Invite parishioners to help with this important reminder to people that *Roe v Wade* must be overturned. Ask them to bring an implement to tap the crosses into the ground.

St. Mary's in Pylesville plants a "Field of the Innocents" annually. A member of their Respect Life Committee made the crosses with materials donated from a local business. They plant enough crosses to represent every unborn child lost to abortion every hour of every day in the United States (149 this year). Between 3 and 7 volunteers put the crosses up the Saturday before Palm Sunday and take them down the Sunday after Ascension Thursday (to avoid lawnmowing issues).

### **"make a cupcake-shaped dent in the world"**

Cupcakes for Life encourages groups to bring in a tray of cupcakes (decorated "for life" if you'd like) for any group of people (a CCD or school class, youth group, parishioners after Mass, RCIA class, etc) to begin a discussion. These cupcakes represent the 53 million children who never had a birthday due to abortion. Cupcakes "soften and sweeten up the conversation." The idea behind [www.CupCakesForlife.com](http://www.CupCakesForlife.com) is to spread the terrible truth about the assault on the unborn in a thoughtful, unique, and kind way. For more information, check out <http://cupcakesforlife.org/>.



### **Sidewalk Counsel.**

Begin by inviting parishioners to regular prayer outside an abortion clinic when there is a sidewalk counselor. Learn from that counselor how best to approach and counsel women. For more information about local sidewalk counselors, contact [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org).

### **Set up a Monument to the Unborn.**

Several local parishes have a monument to the unborn. Fundraise in your parish to purchase a monument and set it up on the parish grounds.

### **Host a booth with pro-life information at a fair or festival.**

### **Advertise.**

Purchase an ad in a local paper. Include facts about right to life issues, pregnancy and post-abortion resources available, and compelling quotes.

St. Patrick sponsors an ad during Respect Life Month. St. Patrick (Cumberland) sponsors an ad for Mothers Day.

### ***Faithful Citizenship***

*“In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation.” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, No. 13*

Full Statement at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org).

### **Join the Catholic Advocacy Network**

Sign up for e-mail alerts on important life issues and share with your parish, family, and friends. Sign up at [www.mdcathcon.org](http://www.mdcathcon.org).



### **Facilitate Citizen Lobbying**

Educate parishioners through speakers at youth, men’s, women’s, or seniors’ groups, in the bulletin, through announcements after Mass, etc. about upcoming state and federal legislation and invite them to write to their state and federal legislators.

For information about political activity related to the right to life: Maryland Catholic Conference, Respect Life at [www.mdcathcon.org/respectforlife](http://www.mdcathcon.org/respectforlife) .

### **Announce the dates and subjects of upcoming elections.**

Print in bulletin, make announcement after Mass, or post dates and subjects on a standing poster in the narthex.

### **Advertise and attend “Lobby Night.”**

The Maryland Catholic Conference holds Lobby Night each year. Each February, hundreds of Maryland Catholics join in Annapolis to lobby their legislators. Advertise Lobby Night in your parish and encourage parishioners to attend.

### **Print Sunday bulletin inserts**

*“We strongly urge all parishioners to register, to become informed on key issues, and to vote. The Church does not support or oppose any candidate, but seeks to focus attention on the moral and human dimensions of issues. We do not authorize the distribution of partisan political materials on parish property.”*

Distribute cards after all Masses one Sunday or in the Sunday bulletin summarizing seven key themes of Catholic social teaching that can serve as guidelines for involvement in public life (available from the USCCB at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org/resources/bulletin](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/resources/bulletin)).

### **Invite CCD and adult education programs to teach Faithful Citizenship.**

Lesson Plans for students and adults available at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org/teachers/religious\\_ed](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/teachers/religious_ed).

## **Organize a non-partisan voter registration at your parish**

Tips on how to do this from [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org):

### Ten Easy Steps for Organizing a Non-partisan Voter Registration Drive

1. Meet with your pastor and thoroughly discuss the plans for the non-partisan drive. Solicit ideas from him on how to make it successful. If appropriate, obtain the approval of the parish council. You may want to discuss these options:

Use bulletin inserts on issues or bulletin quotes from the bishops' statement during the weeks preceding the election.

Publicize the voter registration drive in the bulletin and in the announcements at Mass, two weeks, and again one week, prior to the drive. (See sample bulletin announcements below.)

Put fliers or posters at the back of the church, in the hall, and at other appropriate locations.

Put tables in the vestibule or outside church after Mass one weekend to conduct a non-partisan registration drive.

Include a message in the homily about the Church's teaching on civic responsibility on the weekend preceding your registration drive, or the weekend preceding the election. Homily Suggestions

2. Form a committee if you need help conducting the drive. Committee members can help research voter registration laws, recruit volunteers, and carry out publicity. To avoid the appearance of partisanship, be sure to include members of all major political parties.

3. Learn the registration procedures: Requirements vary by state and county. Contact your local election office to determine what methods are permitted in your area. In some areas, only official registrars are allowed to register voters, and your election office will have to send someone to help with your registration. In other areas, volunteers can be deputized as registrars if they attend a training session. Some election offices will even arrange a special training for your group.

4. Choose a weekend to conduct the drive after Masses. In some areas, registration closes as much as two months before the election. Check with your local election office and be sure to plan ahead.

5. Recruit volunteers to help with registration after each Mass on the weekend you have chosen. Be clear about how many volunteers you need (ideally, one for every exit after each Saturday and Sunday liturgy). You may want to ask a men's or women's club, the social concerns committee, or other parish organizations, to help identify volunteers. Have volunteers and forms in all the languages appropriate for your parish. Also, to avoid the appearance of partisanship, make sure your volunteers include members of all major political parties.

6. Meet or telephone each volunteer, and make sure he or she knows the process your parish is using. Tell your volunteers when and where they will be needed, and for how long; what they need to do to be deputized as registrars; where they will find registration materials on the day of the drive; what to do with the registrations when they are finished (some states require the registrar who received the completed registration form to return it to the election office; others allow forms from many registrars to be collected and returned by one person); and what to do if they get a question they can't answer. Be sure to advise them they must keep the drive non-partisan. Absolutely no comments or suggestions can be made about what party affiliation a person should register or how a person should vote in the election.

7. Publicize your registration drive: You can use bulletin announcements, pulpit announcements, fliers, posters, and other materials. Some sample bulletin announcements are shown below.

8. Conduct the drive.

Keep it non-partisan! Absolutely no suggestions can be made about what party affiliation people should register. No materials relating to candidates, political parties, or issues involved in the campaign, or of interest to the parish or sponsoring organization (including voter education materials), should be distributed as part of the voter registration process. Make sure your volunteers include members of all major political parties.

Set up the tables, one at each exit, with plenty of pens, registration forms, and instructions for volunteers.

9. Follow up.

Make sure all completed registration forms are returned to the election office.

Thank your volunteers and your pastor for their cooperation.

10. Get out the vote! On the weekend before the election, use bulletin inserts, pulpit announcements, the homily, fliers, and other materials to encourage parishioners to vote. If you know of someone who may need a ride to the polls, try to arrange one.

### **Run a Project Life Postcard Campaign.**

The National Committee for Human Life Amendment sponsors Project Life postcard campaigns on various issues. The Respect Life Office of the Archdiocese will alert parish coordinators about these campaigns.

A major grassroots effort is imperative to ensure the passage of federal pro-life policies. Members of Congress must receive a visible and frequent stream of information, opinions and support, especially those members who need encouragement to remain steadfast in the pro-life cause.

### **Set up a Letter Writing Campaign.**

During the Maryland legislative sessions, the Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) Respect Life Office organizes letter writing campaigns in conjunction with the Knights of Columbus. A pertinent bill is targeted (i.e. stem cell research funding) and the MCC formats specific letters requesting that legislators support or reject the bill. The participating parishes sign up with the MCC and pick a weekend to do the letter signing drive. Legislators local to the parish's district are targeted. The parish coordinator and Knights of Columbus representative advertise, set up tables with pens, letters, pre-addressed envelopes, and district maps (so parishioners can confirm their district). Then the letters are sent back to the MCC where they are tallied and delivered to legislators.

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## **Prayer & 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.*

We pray for:

- The unborn, the elderly, and the sick.
- Women and men considering abortion.
- Parents of teens with unplanned pregnancies.
- Those suffering after an abortion.
- Physicians and others involved in performing abortions.
- Public figures who influence the law and public opinion.
- Educators.
- Members of the media.



**Place a red rose on the altar every Sunday during Masses.**

**Distribute and Pray along with a Prayer Calendar for Public Officials.**

E-mail, post on bulletin boards, insert in bulletin, place in literature rack in parish.

**Distribute Pro-life Prayer Cards.**

Purchase pro-life prayer cards and leave them in a basket at the back of the Church. To order from USCCB, call (866) 582-0943.

**Invite the Respect Life Committee to attend one weekday Mass and offer that Mass up for an increased devotion to the right to life among parishioners.**

**Pray for the Right to Life in the General Intercessions.**

Pro-life petitions are available from USCCB for Sunday Masses. View current Word of Life at [www.usccb.org/prolife/liturgy/wolarchive.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/liturgy/wolarchive.shtml).

The grief of infertile couples is often a silent, unacknowledged one. Being remembered (anonymously, of course) once in awhile in the General Intercessions or in Mothers' and Fathers' Day homilies is so helpful!



**Encourage Spiritual Adoption.**

Participants in the Spiritual Adoption Program pledge to pray for nine months for a baby in danger of abortion.

Ask Confirmation, RCIA, and CCD students to "adopt" a child (especially if classes last approximately 9 months).

Detailed information and resources available below.

## **"Adopt" an Abortion Clinic.**

The parish “adopts” a local abortion clinic and prays specifically for its conversion and that of the women and men who enter it. Parishioners are encouraged to pray individually and/or as a parish. This not only focuses prayer on the local clinic, but raises awareness of its presence in the community.

For information about local clinics, please visit [www.prochoice.org](http://www.prochoice.org) under “Find a Provider.”

## **Respect Life Mass & Rosary.**

Celebrate a Respect Life Mass annual, quarterly, or monthly on a Saturday morning, followed by a Rosary at a local abortion facility, prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe, and/or a Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Make Adoration available at the parish for those unable to tolerate the weather.



## **Pray a Holy Hour for Life.**

*“If everyone prayed one hour of Adoration a week, there would be no abortion.” –Mother Teresa*

Designate a “Holy Hour for Life” if your parish holds Adoration.

If your parish does not have periodic or perpetual Adoration, begin one hour of Adoration after 1<sup>st</sup> Friday or 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday Mass and designate it as a “Holy Hour for Life.”

## **Remember Life Throughout the Liturgical Year.**

*January 22<sup>nd</sup>: A Day of Penance and Prayer*

In November, 2001, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the following adaptation of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Following confirmation by the Holy See in February, 2002, the following became particular law for the dioceses of the United States of America: "In all the dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when the 22nd falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life. The Mass 'For Peace and Justice' (no. 21 from 'Masses for Various Needs') should be celebrated with violet vestments as an appropriate liturgical observance for this day." The first option for the Opening Prayer from the Mass for Peace and Justice begins by recalling that those who work for peace will be called the children of God. The second sentence of the prayer reminds us of the words of Pope Paul VI in his famous address to the United Nations: "If you want peace, work for justice." The prayer asks God's grace to help us "to work without ceasing for that justice which brings true and lasting peace." The homilist might well reflect today on how we will never find true peace until God's justice prevails. True peace reigns only when every human being, especially the littlest and most defenseless among us, enjoys the blessings of that peace. The work of spreading the Gospel of Life and defending the right to life of the not yet born must be the unceasing agenda of each person who seeks to bring "the peace the world cannot give" to our day. The Prayer after Communion asks that as God has renewed us with the body and blood of his Son, so he might fill us with "the spirit of love." Thus, we might be strengthened for the work ahead: establishing among all "Christ's farewell gift of peace." When related to the opening prayer, it becomes clear that to establish this peace we must work for justice: a justice which recognizes the infinite value of every human life from conception until natural death. (USCCB)

*February: Presentation of the Lord*

Blessing of babies and little children.

*February 11<sup>th</sup>: World Day of the Sick*

The World Day of the Sick, the liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, is an opportunity for the faithful to reflect and to decide upon initiatives of sensitization connected with the reality of suffering.

"In His suffering for love we see a supreme co-participation in the sufferings of sick children and their parents. My venerable predecessor John Paul II, who offered a shining example of the patient acceptance of suffering, especially at the sunset of his life, wrote: 'on this Cross is the 'Redeemer of man,' the Man of Sorrows, who has taken upon himself the physical and moral sufferings of the people of all times, so that in love they may find the salvific meaning of their sorrow and valid answers to all of their questions' (Salvifici doloris, n. 31)." Exerpts from the Vatican, 2 February 2009, Benedictus P.P. XVI.

*February 14<sup>th</sup>: Valentines Day*

Prayer for chastity and a greater understanding of the Theology of the Body.

*March 25<sup>th</sup>: The Annunciation of the Lord*

On this day we recall how the Angel Gabriel came to the Blessed Virgin Mary and told her that she was to be the Mother of God. The significance of this feast for the Gospel of Life was recalled by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letter *Evangelium Vitae* (which was issued on the Solemnity of the Annunciation): "The one who accepted 'Life' in the name of all and for the sake of all was Mary, the Virgin Mother; she is thus most closely and personally associated with the Gospel of Life. Mary's consent at the Annunciation and her motherhood stand at the very beginning of the mystery of life which Christ came to bestow on humanity (cf. Jn 10:10). Through her acceptance and loving care for the life of the Incarnate Word, human life has been rescued from condemnation to final and eternal death." (USCCB)

*April*

April is National Post Abortion Recovery Awareness Month. Pray for all those suffering from a past abortion.

*May: Mother's Day*

Blessing of Mothers

*May 31<sup>st</sup>: Visitation*

Blessing of mothers before childbirth

*June: Father's Day*

Blessing of Fathers

*June: Corpus Christi*

Blessing of the sick and those with handicaps

*July 26<sup>th</sup>: Feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne*

Saints Joachim and Anne were the grandparents of Jesus. Wouldn't this day (and even the preceding weekend at all the Masses) be a great time to bless families? The Book of Blessings provides the rites and prayers for blessing of families in chapter one (Book of Blessings, nos. 62- 66). Joachim married Anne at Nazareth when he was still a young man. After

some years they were ridiculed for remaining childless and legend has it that even Temple priest refused Joachim's offering of a lamb. Joachim withdrew to the desert and fasted for forty days to ask God for the gift of a child, while Anne wept beneath a laurel tree, fearing that she not only was childless, but had now lost her husband. It was then that an angel appeared to Anne and told her that God would answer her prayers and give to her and Joachim a child who would be praised throughout the world. Thus was the Virgin Mary conceived immaculately through the love and faithfulness of Joachim and Anne. (USCCB)

*August 14<sup>th</sup>: Feast of Saint Maximilian Kolbe*

Saint Maximilian Kolbe lived and died for the Gospel of Life. The story is told of how when he was forced to drag a cart filled with bodies to the ovens of Auschwitz he would quietly pray: «Et Verbum caro factum est... Holy Mary, pray for us». Even in this place of evil, the martyr knew the victory of life over death, a victory of faith and love. (USCCB)

*Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>: Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows*

Indeed, the Blessed Virgin Mary's heart was many times pierced with the sword of sorrow. Yet she who had nurtured within her womb the Word incarnate through whom all life came to be, remained faithful to the Gospel of Life at every turn. At the foot of the cross, in the face of death, she clung to the source of life. Is there any image of undefeated love and life as powerful as the Pieta: a mother's faithful love endures as she anoints the murdered body of her son with her tears and her embrace? Mary knew the Gospel of Life and replied, "Let it be done to me according to God's will!" (USCCB)

*October 16: Feast of St. Gerard*

Masses in honor of St. Gerard are usually held near the feast of St. Gerard in mid-October: one for couples hoping to conceive and one to celebrate new life.

*November*

November is National Adoption Month. Pray for those children awaiting adoption, mothers considering adoption, mothers who have given others the gift of an adopted child, couples waiting for children to adopt, and adoptive families.

*December 8: Feast of the Immaculate Conception*

This patronal feast of the United States of America is a perfect time for all who profess the Gospel of Life to beg God to make our laws just and protective of every one of our citizens from conception until natural death. Each year, the Holy Father places a wreath at the foot of the statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception at the Piazza di Spagna in Rome. Last year, as he placed the wreath, he prayed to the Blessed Virgin a prayer that we might make our own: "Watch over all families in a special way: may love sealed by the Sacrament ever reign between spouses, may children walk on the paths of goodness and true freedom, and may the elderly feel surrounded by attention and affection." (USCCB)

**Host a Night of Prayer for Life**

A nationwide prayerful event. Parishes are encouraged to have adoration and invite the faithful to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament in prayer for greater respect for human life on the night of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

*December 12: Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*

She is the patron of all the Americas, through whom the faith was first brought to this land. She is, likewise, the patron of the Gospel of Life, through whom the weak, the poor, the forgotten, and the dispossessed may know love and the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. At the canonization of Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin last year, the Holy Father asked the new Saint, who brought the image of the Blessed Virgin to America, to intercede for this very cause: "Happy

Juan Diego, true and faithful man! We entrust to you our lay brothers and sisters so that, feeling the call to holiness, they may imbue every area of social life with the spirit of the Gospel. Bless families, strengthen spouses in their marriage, and sustain the efforts of parents to give their children a Christian upbringing. Look with favor upon the pain of those who are suffering in body or in spirit, on those afflicted by poverty, loneliness, marginalization or ignorance. May all people, civic leaders and ordinary citizens, always act in accordance with the demands of justice and with respect for the dignity of each person, so that in this way peace may be reinforced." (Pope John Paul II, July 31, 2002) (USCCB)

*December (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas): Holy Family*

Prayer of blessing for the family

*December 28: Holy Innocents*

Holy Innocents procession, Mass of Reparation

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## Spiritual Adoption

More resources available at  
[www.archbalt.org/family-life/respect-life/spiritual-adoption/resources-for-spiritual-adoption.cfm](http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/respect-life/spiritual-adoption/resources-for-spiritual-adoption.cfm)

### What is the Spiritual Adoption Program?



It is very simple. Participants in the Spiritual Adoption Program pledge to pray for nine months for a baby in danger of abortion. While this child will remain unknown to his or her 'spiritual parent', God knows who the child is. Many people have found that naming 'their child' helps to keep them focused on the reality that their prayers are helping to save a particular baby from the harm of abortion.

The Purpose of the Spiritual Adoption Program is threefold:

1. Encourage schools and other communities to pray for babies in danger of abortion.
2. Educate adults and children about the development of the pre-born child.
3. Provide mothers in need with assistance at a 'baby shower' of donated baby gifts, or simply celebrate with a 'birthday party' at the conclusion of the program. In some schools a crib was bought with monetary gifts and the children filled a crib with gifts for expectant Mothers.

### How does the program work and how can my group get started?

At the beginning of the program a brief announcement asking the students to pray is made, preferably by the principal, at school. If desired, prayer cards can be distributed to all involved in the program. It is advisable to have the children give their baby a name. The prayer can be recited each morning before beginning class. For the following nine months (or a period of time that fits into the school year) one poster is displayed per month in a prominent place so everyone can see how 'his or her baby' is developing.

The "Thank-you" file on the resources page contains "thank-you notes" from the baby each month. These can be copied onto colorful paper pre-printed with a baby or children's theme (or brightly colored plain paper) and posted on the bulletin board next to the Little One Sweet poster. At the end of the program a

'baby shower' or 'birthday party' can be held and gifts of baby items donated given to a local pregnancy center. This is a great project for Catholic Confirmation preparation classes as it involves prayer, education and community service.

### **Who can participate?**

Church members, students, prayer groups and anyone who is concerned about abortion, and who is willing to pray for babies in danger of abortion, "that they might have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

### **Who benefits from the Spiritual Adoption Program?**

Everyone! While it is not always possible to see the particular effects of prayer, we know through Scripture that God wants us to pray, and we know by faith that He answers all prayers. The educational aspect of the program is beneficial to people of all ages, including children. Churches and schools are encouraged to display the very gentle and appealing full color posters that both depict and describe in words the baby's development each month. There is no mention of abortion on the posters. Some schools obtain enough sets of posters for each classroom and/or entrance or exit to the school.

### **Where can I get the posters and precious feet pins?**

The posters are available free of charge to parishes and schools of the Archdiocese of Baltimore by calling (410)-547-5537 or email [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org). Precious feet pins (or precious hand pins) can be ordered through the Heritage House Catalog: 919 S. Main Street, Snowflake, AZ 85937. Phone: 1-800-858-3040 Fax: 1-928-536-7785. Heritage House also has an online catalog: [www.heritagehouse76.com](http://www.heritagehouse76.com)

### **Prayer Cards**

Mr. Bob Paige of Novi, Michigan has three types of prayer cards, each with a different image on the front and, on the back, a brief description of Spiritual Adoption and a short prayer. You can phone Mr. Paige at: (248) 474-8064 or email: [rjpaige@msn.com](mailto:rjpaige@msn.com)

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## **Little One Sweet Poster Series**

This beautifully illustrated collection of ten 16" x 20" individual-month posters chronicles the growth stages of a baby beginning at conception and continuing for the nine months of development in the womb. The same fetal development illustrations and descriptions are also available in one large 24" x 36" all-in-one poster. The posters can be used in any educational setting and are appropriate for all ages. The posters were originally designed to be used one at a time with the Spiritual Adoption Program. They are currently available in English, Spanish, French, Italian, Latvian and Polish. There is also a brochure with all of the images and information available.

The posters are available free of charge to parishes and schools of the Archdiocese of Baltimore by calling (410) 547-5537 or emailing [life@archbalt.org](mailto:life@archbalt.org).