

**Archdiocese
of Regina
Liturgical
Commission**



Reverence for Life Month

(October)

***Liturgical & Prayer
Resources***

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Prayer for Life

**O Mary,
bright dawn of the new world,
Mother of the living,
to you do we entrust the cause of life.
Look down, O Mother,
upon the vast numbers
of babies not allowed to be born,
of the poor whose lives are made difficult,
of men and women
who are victims of brutal violence,
of the elderly and the sick killed
by indifference or out of misguided mercy.**

**Grant that all who believe in your Son
may proclaim the Gospel of life
with honesty and love
to the people of our time.**

**Obtain for them the grace
to accept that Gospel
as a gift ever new,
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude
throughout their lives
and the courage to bear witness to it
resolutely, in order to build,
together with all people of good will,
the civilization of truth and love,
to the praise and glory of God,
the Creator and lover of life.**

—John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 105

MASS FOR GIVING THANKS TO GOD FOR THE GIFT OF HUMAN LIFE (A)

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

For the sake of your name, O Lord, give me life. Cf. Psalm 143:11

COLLECT

God our Creator,
we give thanks to you,
who alone have the power to impart the breath of life
as you form each of us in our mother's womb;
grant, we pray,
that we, whom you have made stewards of creation,
may remain faithful to this sacred trust
and constant in safeguarding the dignity
of every human life.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept our humble offerings,
O Lord of the living,
and unite us to the perfect sacrifice of your Son,
through whom you have made all creation new.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

With you, O Lord, is the fountain of life, and in your light, we see light. Cf. Psalm 36:10

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Increase your love within us, Lord God,
by the saving mysteries we have celebrated,
and bring people everywhere
to respect your gift of human life.

Through Christ our Lord.

(*Roman Missal*, American 3rd Edition, 2011)

MASS FOR GIVING THANKS TO GOD FOR THE GIFT OF HUMAN LIFE

(B)

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

I trust in you, O Lord; I say, you are my God. My life is in your hands. Cf. Psalm 31:15-16

COLLECT

O God, who adorn creation with splendor and beauty
and fashion human lives in your image and likeness,
awaken in every heart
reverence for the work of your hands,
and renew among your people
a readiness to nurture and sustain
your precious gift of human life.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who bring forth bread from the earth
to sustain our lives
and wine to gladden the heart,
be pleased to accept these gifts
and make them the sacrament of our salvation.

Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

With you, O Lord, is the fountain of life, and in your light, we see light. Cf. Psalm 36:10

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Confirm our resolve, O God,
by the life-giving Body and Blood of your Son,
that we may live always for others
and cherish your sacred gift of human life.

Through Christ our Lord.

(*Roman Missal*, American 3rd Edition, 2011)

Intercessions for Life

Response: Giver of Life, hear us!

1. For Pope Francis, Archbishop Bohan, and for all priests of our diocese: that Christ will defend them from all evil as they boldly witness to the Gospel of Life, we pray to the Lord: R.
2. That we work together to build a culture of life which transforms each of us to respect all human life from conception to natural death, and healing for those affected by abortion. We pray to the Lord: R.
3. That our Prime Minister, Members of Parliament and all political leaders recognize the sacredness of human life and defend the lives of all who are vulnerable from conception to natural death, we pray to the Lord: R.
4. That all who have been involved in abortion may come to true repentance and seek God's merciful and healing love, we pray to the Lord: R.
5. That the elderly may cherish each moment of their lives and experience the love and attention they need, we pray to the Lord: R.
6. For every young child: that we will guard their innocence and cherish them as a sign of God's infinite love for us, we pray to the Lord: R.
7. For those who are homeless, addicted, imprisoned or in the grip of sin: that following Christ's example, we might seek them out and who them the love God has for them, we pray to the Lord: R.
8. For those struggling with an incurable disease: that each day might bring a new revelation of God's love for them, we pray to the Lord: R.
9. For medical researchers and scientists: that the work they do may always be guided by God, we pray to the Lord: R.
10. For those who long for children of their own: that through the intercession of Abraham and Sarah God might hear their cry, we pray to the Lord: R.
11. For all expectant mothers and fathers: for the gifts of patience, courage and joyful hope, we pray to the Lord: R.

Prolife Intercessions

(These Intercessions may be used throughout the year)

Children: Born and Unborn

For orphaned children throughout the world,
and especially those
who are abused or neglected,
that we might work to save them;
We pray to the Lord

For children who are unwanted by their parents,
that God's grace might send others to love
and care for them;
We pray to the Lord

For the children of our country,
especially those who are forgotten or neglected,
that their presence might remind us
of the infinite value of human life;
We pray to the Lord

For every little child:
that we might accept and preserve each one
as a sign of the infinite love of God for us;
We pray to the Lord

For all unborn children:
that our love for them may keep them safe
until the joyous day of their birth;
We pray to the Lord

That the Lord,
who rescues the life of the poor
from the power of the wicked,
might send an angel to guard and protect
all unborn children;
We pray to the Lord

For every little child
and especially for those who
live in their mother's womb,
that they might grow
in the image and likeness of
the God who made them;
We pray to the Lord

For all children who have died from abortion,
that God might cradle them in his arms
and grant them eternal peace with him;
We pray to the Lord

For all unborn children,
and especially for the babies of unmarried mothers,
that God might send an angel to protect them;
We pray to the Lord

**For the children who have died
from abortion in our nation,**
and for their mothers and fathers,
for mercy, peace and the loving embrace of Christ;
We pray to the Lord

For little children
who await the birth of a brother or sister:
that they may learn to cherish
the child in their mother's womb;
We pray to the Lord

Conception to Natural Death

For a growing love of each human person
from conception to natural death;
We pray to the Lord

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

For a growing love of God's little ones
in the womb, in nursing homes or at death's door:
that we might love them with the love of Jesus;
We pray to the Lord

End of Life

For those who have grown old,
especially elderly parents and grandparents:
that the love and respect of their children
might sustain them and bring them joy;
We pray to the Lord

For all who live in nursing homes,
and especially for those who are alone or in pain:
that we might cherish the gift of their wisdom,
and the enduring example of their faith;
We pray to the Lord

For those who have grown old,
and especially for those tempted to die,
that God might grant them patient endurance
to do his will and serve his Gospel;
We pray to the Lord

For all who are about to die:
that through our love, care, and devotion,
they might know the beauty of life
to the moment of their final breath;
We pray to the Lord

For all who are about to die,
and for their families:
that God might gently lead them home;
We pray to the Lord

For those who are dying,
that they may await your call
with calm and dignity;
We pray to the Lord

Families

Mothers

For all mothers,
particularly those who are with child,
that they may be supported by loved ones
and warm friends, and that they may
be understood and blessed;
We pray to the Lord

For young mothers everywhere,
and especially those who are tempted to despair,
that through the child they carry deep within,
they might know hope and joy;
We pray to the Lord

For all mothers,
especially those who are young or alone,
abused or addicted;
that God might heal their broken hearts
and seal them with his love;
We pray to the Lord

For mothers,
especially those wracked with fear,
depression or despair,
that the new life of their child
may touch them with the eternal love of God;
We pray to the Lord

For young mothers tempted to abort their child,
that God's grace might give them
the wisdom and fortitude
to preserve the gift they carry within them;
We pray to the Lord

For mothers tempted to abortion,
that God might teach us how to love them;
We pray to the Lord

Fathers

For fathers,
especially those who are very young,
that through the intercession of Saint Joseph,
they might assume the great responsibility
which God has given to them;
We pray to the Lord

Parents

For all parents who struggle alone to raise their children, that God will give them the strength of the children of God and the support of his holy Church;
We pray to the Lord

For expectant mothers and fathers of unborn children: that they might rejoice in the noble vocation which God has given them;
We pray to the Lord

For every unwed father and mother,
and for their child:
that, with God's grace,
their love might bind them together
and truth might preserve and protect them;
We pray to the Lord

For all homeless parents,
that God will teach us
how to love and support them;
We pray to the Lord

For mothers and fathers
who await the birth of their child,
that God might fill their hearts
with an ever-deepening love each day;
We pray to the Lord

For parents of all teen mothers,
that God might grant them
a full portion of his merciful love;
We pray to the Lord

Grandparents

For Grandparents and uncles and aunts:
that their expectant love,
might nurture and preserve the life
of every unborn child;
We pray to the Lord

For parents who have grown very old
that through their prayers and example
they might teach their grandchildren
the wonders of the Gospel of Life;
We pray to the Lord

The Marginalized

For those deprived of their human needs
and their human rights,
that they may be given the dignity
which God confers on all his people;
We pray to the Lord

For all who are forgotten or thrown away,
and especially for the poor, the sick and the aged,
that God might change our hearts
and move us to love them as the image of Christ
We pray to the Lord

For all who are lonely or afraid,
for teenagers on the street,
old people in nursing homes,
prisoners with no one to visit them,
and all whom the world has forgotten:
that Christ might lead us to them;
We pray to the Lord

For all who are forgotten or cast off,
that we might value each human life,
as a priceless gift from God;
We pray to the Lord

Medical Profession

For medical researchers:
that they may be inspired and strengthened
by a love for every human person,
from the first moment of conception;
We pray to the Lord

For medical researchers,
that inspired by the beauty of human life
they might seek to be co-workers with God
in fulfillment of his divine plan;
We pray to the Lord

For doctors,
who in their practice abort unborn children:
that God might give them the grace
to turn from sin and remember the Gospel;
We pray to the Lord

For those who study medicine:
that they may be driven by a desire
to heal and protect every human person;
We pray to the Lord

For doctors, nurses and other medical personnel,
especially those tempted by abortion,
that God might change their hearts
and give them the conviction
of the Gospel of Life;
We pray to the Lord

For doctors who perform abortions
and for those who assist them,
that by our love, patience,
and unswerving dedication to the truth,
they might be drawn closer to the Lord of life;
We pray to the Lord

Post Abortion Healing

For all whose hearts ache from the sin of abortion,
that God will soothe and heal us with the balm of his
mercy; We pray to the Lord

For mothers broken by the memory of a child lost to abortion, that through the intercession of the Mother of God the gentle and merciful love of God may heal their innermost being;
We pray to the Lord

For everyone who is haunted by the memory of abortion,
that they might know repentance, mercy, and peace;
We pray to the Lord

Priests and Bishops

For the leaders of the Church,
that they may be given wisdom
and a sense of justice to speak the words of life
to a world overshadowed by a culture of death;
We pray to the Lord

For the bishops and priests of our Church,
that by their commitment to the innocent child,
the Gospel of Life might be preached
in each of our churches;
We pray to the Lord

For bishops
who seek to guide Catholic politicians in the ways of truth,
that by their example and their words
they might witness the Gospel of Life;
We pray to the Lord

Pro-Life Advocates

For all who work for an end to abortion:
that they might be strengthened by prayer,
and that God might reward them for their goodness;
We pray to the Lord

For all who teach the Gospel of Life:
that they might be driven by love alone;
We pray to the Lord

For all who work to defend life:
that God might reward them for their faithfulness;
We pray to the Lord

For those who work to defend the lives of the unborn,
the sick, the infirm, the aged, and for all who defend
humanity's inalienable right to life;
We pray to the Lord

For all who work for an end to the culture of death,
and especially for our brothers and sisters
from other churches, ecclesial communions, and
religions, that love for the Gospel of Life might draw us
closer in Christ; We pray to the Lord

Public Servants and Legal System

For an end to all laws

which legalize the taking of a human life,
that our nation might embrace truth and justice;
We pray to the Lord

That justice, truth, and a love for the gift of life

might inspire all legislators, Premiers, and our
Prime Minister; We pray to the Lord

For Those Who Govern Us

that they may have the courage and wisdom
to establish and promote laws
which protect the dignity of human life
from conception until natural death;
We pray to the Lord

For those who work to change our laws

to reflect the Gospel of Life,
that God might inspire and shepherd them;
We pray to the Lord

For all young professionals, especially doctors,

lawyers and those in public service:
that they might come to know and cherish
the truth of the Gospel of Life;
We pray to the Lord

Others

For our nation:

that the values of life and religious freedom
may truly be our watchwords;
We pray to the Lord

That the good seed of the Gospel of Life

may take root in our land
and grow to the glory of God;
We pray to the Lord

For those who are mentally disabled,

that we might cherish the gifts God has given them,
and in their lives hear the voice of our loving God;
We pray to the Lord

For every person who suffers from violence,

and especially for women whose pain breaks their
hearts, that through the intercession of Mary whose own
heart was pierced with a sword of sorrow they might know
peace and strength; We pray to the Lord

For those who mourn the death of a child,

that they may be given the strength
and courage to face the future,
and that they may be understood and blessed;
We pray to the Lord

For all who work in abortion clinics:

that through the intercession of the Mother of God,
they might come to love the unborn child;
We pray to the Lord

For all who do not embrace the rights of the unborn

that, in love, they may come to know and treasure
the infinite value of every human person;
We pray to the Lord

For those who provide or cooperate in abortions,

that by our love for the truth and for them,
they might turn from darkness and death;
We pray to the Lord

For all who are tempted to sin against life,

that they might turn from darkness
and embrace the infinite love and light of God;
We pray to the Lord

For all who are very sick,

and especially those afflicted by HIV/AIDS,
that we might care for them
with the compassion and love of Christ;
We pray to the Lord

Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

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Prolife Bulletin Briefs

“Our human dignity is inseparable from the sacredness of life as the gift of the Creator. In God’s plan, each person is unique and irreplaceable. A person comes into this world in a family, which is the first locus of humanization, and above all the first school of peace. To build peace, we need to look to the family, supporting it and facilitating its task, and in this way promoting an overall culture of life. The effectiveness of our commitment to peace depends on our understanding of human life. If we want peace, let us defend life!”
~ *Pope Benedict XVI*

Address at Meeting with Members of the Government in Lebanon, September 15, 2012

Post-abortion Healing

When the people brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus, he said, let the one who has not sinned be the first to throw a stone. After they departed, he spoke to the woman: “Did none of them condemn you? Then neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” See what this story is showing us. Christ’s mercy is manifested only AFTER the community, mindful of its own sinfulness, has withheld condemnation. In other words, by *not* condemning the sinner, we are making it possible, and even easier, for the sinner to be reconciled with Christ; by refusing to condemn others, we free the sinner to seek the mercy of God.

Post-abortion Healing

We are saved not by our merits, but by the wondrous mercy of God. Our salvation is not to our credit, but glorifies God, who can save “a wretch like me”. Do not resist His forgiveness. Do not persist in your belief that you are unforgivable. You owe it to yourself, to your child, and to God, to allow Christ’s glory to be manifested through His forgiveness of you, through His reform of your life.

Post-abortion Healing

The sin of abortion is the sin of refusing the miracle of God’s gift of life. Don’t commit the sin of refusing God’s offer of a second miracle. It is the gift of God’s forgiveness, the rebirth of your spirit in Christ.

John Paul II on abortion

Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life), an encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II, March 25, 1995, n. 99.

I would now like to say a special word to *women who have had an abortion*. The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To the same Father and his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child. With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life.

John Paul II on abortion

...we are witnessing true human tragedies. Often *the woman is the victim of male selfishness*, in the sense that the man, who has contributed to the conception of the new life, does not want to be burdened with it and leaves the responsibility to the woman, as if it were "her fault" alone. So, precisely when the woman most needs the man's support, he proves to be a cynical egotist, capable of exploiting her affection or weakness, yet stubbornly resistant to any sense of responsibility for his own action.... *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (206).

John Paul II on abortion

...[I]n firmly rejecting "pro-choice" it is necessary to become courageously "pro-woman," promoting a choice that is truly in favor of women. It is precisely the woman, in fact, who pays the highest price, not only for her motherhood, but even more for its destruction, for the suppression of the life of the child who has been conceived. The only honest stance, in these cases, *is that of radical solidarity with the woman*. It is not right to leave her alone. The experiences of many counseling centers show that the woman does not want to suppress the life of the child she carries within her. If she is supported in this attitude, and if at the same time she is freed from the intimidation of those around her, then she is even capable of heroism. As I have said, numerous counseling centers are witness to this.... *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (207).

Abortion and Teens

Abortion deeply affects who we are and what we believe. Abortion does not simply turn back the clock of time. It is a profound experience that touches every aspect of a person's emotional and spiritual being. For a young teenage girl who is pregnant, the choice is not simply between having a baby and not having a baby. It is a choice between having a baby and having an abortion—a trauma. It will affect how she sees herself as a person, her sexuality, her maternity, and her familial relations. It will shape her self-image and determine if she views herself as good or bad, generous or selfish, courageous or cowardly. Parents who urge their daughters to choose abortion are doing so with the sincere hope that they are saving their child's future. But what is really happening is that they are *shaping* their child's future, replacing burdens (and joys) of parenthood with the lasting trauma and pain of abortion. They do not realize the tremendous barrier the abortion will become between their daughter and themselves. They do not realize that the impact of abortion on their daughter's self-esteem is very likely to aggravate hostility and rebellion against them and to drive her to seek escape in alcohol, drugs, promiscuity, replacement pregnancies, or even suicide.

Abortion and Teens

Abortion is especially traumatic and life-altering for teenagers because their lives are in a critical stage of emotional and spiritual formation. When a father who has expressed his love and support for his daughter for her lifetime offers to pay for an abortion, or even insists on an abortion, what does this do to her concept of love? When a mother who is the model of maternity for her daughter encourages thoughts of abortion, what does this do for her concept of motherhood? When those who say they love her, including her boyfriend, say they cannot love her unborn child, or even that *she should not love* her unborn child, what are they doing to her view of what love, family, and marriage mean?

To Those Who Assisted Others in Abortion

If any of you have ever been involved in encouraging someone else to have an abortion, pray that that person has been touched by God's healing. Pray for forgiveness because you, too, were ignorant, afraid, and perhaps selfish. And then, if it is at all possible, even if it makes you very uncomfortable, go to that person and let her know that if she has ever regretted her abortion, if it has ever caused her any pain, you are sorry that you didn't offer her the encouragement and hope she needed. Offer to be there for her now, or in the future, if ever she needs to talk through what she has experienced. In doing so, you may well open up to her the possibility of being freed from the pain and despair which she has felt it impossible to share with anyone else. Because you know of her abortion, because you have broken the silence with words of apology and hope, the opportunity for sharing and healing will be restored. Do this for love of the person you encouraged to abort. It can make a whole world's full of difference.

Letting go of post-abortion guilt

In describing her process of recovery following her abortion, Holly Trimble writes, “When I was struggling with trying to forgive myself, I realized I was afraid to stop chastising myself. It was as if I thought that was how I could let God know how really sorry I was. I think I was afraid that if I didn’t keep punishing myself, God would punish me. But as I learned more about the nature of God’s forgiveness, I realized this was irrational thinking—that actually God wanted me to accept his forgiveness and be at peace...’for the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces repentance without regrets, leading to salvation.’ 2 Cor. 7:10.”

Trimble, Holly. *Healing Post-Abortion Trauma: Help for Women Hurt by Abortion* (Stafford, VA: American Life League, 1989), 23-24.

Post-abortion Grief

“Grief is a necessary part of coming to terms with a death. Although seemingly unbearable at times, it causes us to grow and gain insights in ways that might not be possible otherwise. No one who has experienced an intense period of grieving will ever be the same again. If a person turns to God in his or her grief, God can use that pain and sorrow to draw that person close to Him and to teach that person His ways. The Bible tells us that God is near to those that grieve. ‘The Lord is near to the broken- hearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit.’ Psalm 34:19.”

Trimble, Holly. *Healing Post-Abortion Trauma: Help for Women Hurt by Abortion* (Stafford, VA: American Life League, 1989), 25.

Entrusting Your Child to God

“While it can be very difficult to release your child to God, it is crucial. You can pray for God’s help to do so. I came to realize that I didn’t want to totally release my child to God because my grief was all of my child I felt I had left. A pastor helped me to see how badly I needed to trust God completely for my baby and had me relinquish him to God verbally in prayer. A few months after this I...[heard] a woman representing an adoption agency [who] spoke about how pregnant girls who come to them can choose an adoptive family for their baby.... While driving home, I began to fantasize about how I could have done the same thing.... I told myself I could have trusted the family with my baby and been at peace about it. But then God spoke to me in my heart, “So, you could trust human parents with your child, but you won’t trust Me?” That really showed me how I had to stop fantasizing about the ‘what might have beens’ and truly trust God. A scripture came to mind: ‘Trust the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.’ Proverbs 3:5. After that, a peace began to grow and I have become more and more able to fully release my child to God.”

Trimble, Holly. *Healing Post-Abortion Trauma: Help for Women Hurt by Abortion* (Stafford, VA: American Life League, 1989), 29-30.

“Let’s Face Our Fears” about abortion—Am I just too busy to get more involved?

Much of what we are called to do for pro-life does not take more *time*. Rather, it takes more *spirit*. It doesn’t take any extra time to preach on abortion than to preach on any other topic.

“Let’s Face Our Fears” about abortion—Am I afraid of being confrontational?

Being confrontational is not the same as being uncharitable. Our Lord, who ate with sinners, also confronted them. Love demands confrontation because it cannot rest if the beloved is entangled in evil. Many think of the price of confrontation, but forget that there is also a price to be paid for NOT confronting. That price is that evil continues to flourish, relationships become shallow and superficial, and true leadership vanishes because the leader is no longer able to point out the right path, and will eventually lose the respect of those who look to him for guidance.

“Let’s Face Our Fears” about abortion—Am I afraid preaching on abortion will drive away women who have had abortions?

We preach on abortion to SAVE such women, and to protect other women from making the same mistake. A letter we received from a woman who had an abortion urges us NOT to fear speaking out. “I can’t help but think that if I heard in church that abortion was wrong...I might have chosen to keep my baby instead of killing my baby.” [Some women reporting similar feelings say that they ended up leaving or resenting the Church because their ministers had been silent. Some blame their mistakes, and their grief, on the failure of their clergy to give them solid moral guidance.] ...We can help [women] on the path to healing by proclaiming the truth about abortion and the reality of forgiveness. When we address abortion, it tells her, “We care.” Our silence tells her, “We don’t care.”

“Let’s Face Our Fears” about abortion—Am I afraid of “dividing my parish?”

The fact is, every parish is already “divided” in the sense that you will find people on different sides of the abortion issue. If we never speak of the issue, we may cover over the division for a while, but that is not the same thing as unity. Unity is founded on truth and is fostered by a clear exposition of truth.... The Word itself causes [division]. “I have come for division” (Luke 12:51). It is the division between truth and error, grace and sin, life and death. [Unity can best be fostered by preaching a message of community support for those who need post-abortion healing.]

“Let’s Face Our Fears” about abortion—Am I afraid of political issues?

Does the fact that politicians talk about abortion require us to be silent?... Some will be silent, saying it is a “political issue.” Then, some politicians will be silent, saying it is a “religious issue.” If abortion is immoral, where do we go to say so?... If being afraid of political issues is the problem, how much more should we fear spiritual ones, in which the powers at war are much more awesome and the stakes much higher! We do not undertake the task on human strength, but in the power and authority of Christ. Hence, we should not let fear deter us.

“Let’s Face Our Fears” about abortion—Am I afraid that I lack the skill to adequately address the topic of abortion?

If there is a lack of self-confidence we need to strengthen our confidence by becoming more informed about the issue.... There is sometimes a fear that we will give the issue the wrong emphasis (“coming down too hard,” “fostering guilt,” “sounding uncaring”). To help counteract this, we can resolve that our speaking on abortion will always include reference to the help available to women in need, as well as the peace and forgiveness Christ offers through His Church.

“Let’s Face Our Fears” about abortion—Do I feel the people already hear and know enough about abortion?

Most people still do not know the extent of abortion...or the harmful physical and psychological after-effects of the procedure on the mother. Many know abortion is evil, but they do not realize HOW evil it is. Moreover, knowledge is not virtue. We must be especially fervent in exposing the lie that most women are not "affected" by their abortions. This widespread lie leads people to encourage or tolerate abortion. It also compels women to hide their grief over a past abortion because it is now considered to be socially "abnormal" to grieve over an aborted child.

Evangelium Vitae: 1

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE IS A SOURCE OF JOY

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



"The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message" (#1). With these words Pope John Paul II signed his eleventh encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, on March 25, 1995, the feast celebrating the Son of God's taking flesh in Mary's womb. It promises to be the *magna carta* which will guide church teaching on the promotion of life well into the third millennium.

Preparations for the encyclical began in 1991 in Rome. At a special meeting there the college of cardinals discussed current threats to human life. After their deliberations, they asked the pope "to reaffirm with the authority of the successor of Peter the value of human life and its inviolability" (#5). As a first response to their request, John Paul wrote a personal letter to every bishop in the world, seeking their input on the planned document. They replied with valuable information, suggestions, and proposals.

This encyclical, then, is not just the work of the pope. It is the fruit of genuine episcopal collegiality. By taking an active part in its preparation, the bishops, he writes, "bore witness to their unanimous desire to share in the doctrinal and pastoral mission of the church with regard to the Gospel of life" (#5).

Unlike some papal teachings meant primarily for Catholics, the Holy Father wrote the encyclical for believer and non-believer alike, all men and women of goodwill. He is addressing the whole world.

According to Catholic teaching, creation itself "tells" us what is true about life. The pope therefore insists that everyone who is sincerely open to truth and goodness can discover "the sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end" (#2). Both the light of reason and the interior action of divine grace lead people to affirm "the incomparable value of every human person" (#2).

Thus he calls upon everyone to "respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life" (#5). All those concerned with the welfare of individuals and the future of society owe it to themselves to read this encyclical.

Why is the church so passionately concerned with questions about life? Entrusted with preaching the Gospel to every creature, she realizes that every assault on human life has repercussions on her teaching. These attacks, writes the Holy Father, touch upon "the core of her faith in the redemptive incarnation of the Son of God" (#3).

The good news, which is Jesus himself, contains the message of the sacred value of human life. For the pope, "the Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person, and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel" (#2). It is a source of joy, strength, and hope for all people.

But, you might ask, why an encyclical now? The Holy Father draws a comparison to help us

answer this question. At the end of the last century, Leo XIII addressed the injustices of the working class in his ground-breaking social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891). Likewise, as the twentieth century draws to a close, John Paul II wants the church to tackle today's most pressing injustices. This entails, he believes, the defense of the "great multitude of weak and defenseless human beings" (#5). Many unborn children and terminally ill men and women are being denied their right to life.

The urgency of the present situation with regard to life questions springs from what the Holy Father calls the "new threats to human life" which are increasingly darkening the horizon. Science and technology have given rise to innovative ways of attacking life. This state of affairs cannot be ignored or go unchallenged.

At the same time, a new cultural climate is gaining ground. Some currents of public opinion are now ready to justify crimes against life "in the name of the rights of individual freedom" (#4). Governments and the medical profession can no longer be relied on to defend life's sacred value. Not only are lives being directly attacked, but the moral fabric of society is being undermined.

To meet this crisis head-on, John Paul invites us to join him in meditating and proclaiming the

Gospel of life. This good news is, he says, "the splendor of truth which enlightens consciences, the clear light which corrects the darkened gaze, and the unfailing source of faithfulness and steadfastness in facing the ever new challenges which we meet along our path" (#6).

After the introduction, the encyclical unfolds in four chapters. Each of these will be analyzed in later articles. In chapter one, the pope analyzes the contemporary threats to human life which are signs of a "culture of death." In more reflective fashion, he then takes up the biblical message about life in chapter two. Besides authoritatively confirming church teaching on innocent human life, abortion, and euthanasia, chapter three, the most doctrinal section, also examines the relation between moral and civil law. In chapter four, the Holy Father closes with an appeal for building a new culture of life, an enormous effort which will involve all sectors of the church and society.

Is the time not ripe for each of us to make a sincere examination of conscience as to how we think about and treat human life? Do we truly believe that life is "a sacred reality entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters" (#2)?

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Evangelium Vitae: 2

CAIN AND THE CULTURE OF DEATH

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



Evangelium Vitae is not an encyclical for the faint-hearted. In alarming detail chapter one bluntly describes the dark shadows cast over the world by the slaughter of the innocent.

As he does so often, the pope uses Scripture as his point of departure. The biblical account of Abel's murder by Cain (Gen 4:2-16) is the backdrop for his reflections. It is a story, he says, that involves everyone: "a page rewritten daily, with inexorable and degrading frequency, in the book of human history" (#7).

According to John Paul II, "we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the 'culture of death' and the 'culture of life'" (#28). Today's attacks on life are both more serious and more numerous than in the past. When looking out on the world, God asks us the same question that He addressed to Cain: "What have you done" (Gen 4:10)?

The pope believes that humanity has done, and is doing, plenty to endanger life. We force untold millions into dire poverty by unjustly distributing wealth between peoples and social classes. We shed blood in war and scandalously trade arms. We spread drugs, recklessly tamper with the world's ecological balance, and encourage immoral sexual activity involving grave risks to life.

Even this list, however, does not tell the whole story. Science and technology have come up with "systematically programmed threats" against life (#17). It is these *new* perils that ignite the Holy

Father's ire. Among the symptoms of death infecting society, he notes especially the following:

•**ABORTION** Enormous sums of money are now being spent to fund research and promote drugs which make it possible to kill an unborn child without recourse to medical assistance. Furthermore, while prenatal diagnoses are licit if carried out for the good of the fetus, all too often they provide an excuse for ending human life. If the child in the womb does not measure up to the parents' desires, eugenic abortion is then practiced.

•**INFANTICIDE** Equally worrisome is the increase in infanticide. Children born with serious handicaps or diseases are denied the most basic care, so as to hasten their deaths. The justification for this practice, the pope observes, follows "the same arguments used to justify the right to abortion" (#14). When society accepts abortion, infanticide is waiting in the wings.

•**ARTIFICIAL REPRODUCTION** Techniques of artificial procreation also lead to new assaults on life. Because the number of embryos produced is often greater than what is needed for implantation in the womb, such practices expose many embryos to grave risks. These so-called "spare embryos" are either destroyed or used for research. In the latter case, under the pretext of scientific or medical progress, life is reduced "to the level of simple 'biological material' to be freely disposed of" (#14).

•**ANTI-BIRTH CAMPAIGNS** Faced with a high rate of population increase, some nations are enacting anti-birth programs which deny parental rights to procreation, enforcing immoral methods of birth control.

The rich and powerful countries are alarmed lest the rapid increase in the population of the developing nations upset their peace and prosperity. To protect their interests, the developed world is encouraging, and sometimes imposing, programs of contraception, sterilization, and abortion on poorer nations. In addition, wealthy governments and international institutions frequently tie their offers of economic aid to the implementation of anti-birth policies.

•**EUTHANASIA** Today the incurably ill and the dying are also exposed to serious risks. The pope believes that people are more and more succumbing to the temptation "to resolve the problem of suffering by eliminating it at the root, by hastening death so that it occurs at the moment considered most suitable" (#15). In some nations, causing the death of the severely handicapped, terminally ill, or elderly is, if not legalized, at least tolerated.

This "truly alarming spectacle" of assaults on life is lent support by broad strata of public opinion which now justify violence against life. Human beings are attacked at the dawn and dusk of life. Often such actions are no longer held to be "crimes," but are claimed as "rights." Many demand not only exemption from punishment for these offenses but also state authorization and financing.

The "conspiracy against life" unleashed after man's banishment from Eden continues unabated. Cain's murderous act is repeated daily. The ill, handicapped, or "burdensome" pose a threat to a comfortable way of life. These unwanted individuals, born and unborn, are regarded as "enemies" to be defended against, and even destroyed.

The pope's account of contemporary violations of life is sobering. Signs of a culture of death are rampant. The sacred value of human life is under siege. More than ever, he says, Moses' invitation rings out loud and clear: "Choose life, that you and your descendants may live" (Dt 30:19).

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Evangelium Vitae: 3

MAN AGAINST GOD: ROOTS OF THE MORAL CRISIS

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



Besides pointing out the tragic signs of the conspiracy against life, Pope John Paul II is anxious to expose the roots of this culture of death. His description of Cain's murder recalls the origin of all acts of violence against one's neighbor. Every time human life is taken, he says, one gives in "to the 'thinking' of the evil one" (#8), to the devil who "was a murderer from the beginning" (Jn 8:44).

In novel and ingenious ways the forces of evil continue to sabotage reverence for life. Why, the pope asks, are we so willing to attack life, ratifying Cain's sin over and over again? The encyclical gives an answer: the culture of death is rooted in our "Promethean attitude." Man sets himself up against God. Human beings dare to assume that they "can control life and death by taking the decisions about them into their own hands" (#15).

According to John Paul, three main factors feed this tragic arrogance: a false understanding of freedom, a loss of the sense of God, and an eclipse of moral conscience.

•**FALSE FREEDOM** An individualistic idea of freedom feeds a culture of death. A person who is captive to this spirit lets his choices be determined by "subjective and changeable opinion or, indeed, his selfish interest and whim" (#19). Freedom becomes the right to make arbitrary decisions. Worse yet, this so-called freedom is closed to the objective truth about what is truly good and evil.

When individualism takes hold, social life is built on "the shifting sands of complete relativism" (#20). The result? Convention, not truth, controls how we make moral decisions and civil laws. "Everything is negotiable, everything is open to bargaining," the pope laments, "even the first of the fundamental rights, the right to life" (#20).

But, according to John Paul, inalienable rights belong to everyone precisely because of their humanity. In today's world, however, these rights are the object of legislative debate. Rather than being accepted as "given" by creation, they are now viewed as "granted" by the state. Consequently, writes the pope, a nation "arrogates to itself the right to dispose of the life of the weakest and most defenseless members" (#20).

"To claim the right to abortion, infanticide and euthanasia, and to recognize that right in law," writes the Holy Father, "means to attribute to human freedom a perverse and evil significance: that of an absolute power over others and against others." This sinister caricature of democracy, he affirms, leads to the "breakdown of a genuinely human coexistence and the disintegration of the state itself has already begun" (#20).

A society founded on a twisted idea of freedom is an agglomeration of individuals without mutual bonds. When freedom is understood as absolute autonomy — the right to do as you please — conflict with others inevitably results.

They are enemies to be defended against. To the extent that solidarity with other people is denied, the authentic meaning of freedom is undermined.

•LOSS OF SENSE OF GOD The pope asserts that “when the sense of God is lost, the sense of man is also threatened and poisoned” (#22). A decline in religious faith seriously impacts how human life is treated.

Indifference to religion leads people to deny man’s uniqueness compared to other earthly creatures. They view the individual as a “thing” instead of a “person.” Life is no longer recognized as a gift of God, a sacred reality entrusted to human veneration and responsibility. Rather, it becomes man’s “exclusive property, completely subject to his control and manipulation” (#22).

For the pope, a waning sense of God inevitably paves the way for the frenzied pursuit of material well-being. The “quality of life” is then restricted to consumption, beauty, and physical pleasure. The more profound aspects of existence, such as the interpersonal, spiritual, and religious, are

ignored. Without God, contempt for life inevitably results.

•ECLIPSE OF MORAL CONSCIENCE Contemporary women and men, the Holy Father thinks, are finding it ever more difficult to distinguish good from evil, even in matters touching the fundamental value of human life. Moral conscience, whether of an individual or of society as a whole, is becoming obscured. Not surprisingly, when people are confused about what is truly good with regard to life, they very often make choices which violate its dignity.

Despite the gravity of the present situation, John Paul closes the first chapter of his encyclical on a note of hope. The blood of Christ, he writes, is “the foundation of the absolute certitude that in God’s plan life will be victorious” (#25). Signs of his victory over death are even now evident in the world. Faith in the risen Christ allows us to work with unflagging hope to build “an authentic civilization of truth and love” (#6).

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Evangelium Vitae: 4

HUMAN LIFE IS A DIVINE GIFT

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



After describing present-day attacks on life, Pope John Paul II admits that “one could feel overwhelmed by sheer powerlessness” (#29). Will good ever be powerful enough to triumph over evil?

To reply to this question, the Holy Father offers a meditation on the biblical message concerning life. The encyclical’s second chapter bridges the somber opening portrait of the culture of death and the more doctrinal chapter that follows.

While the pope bases his reflections chiefly on Scripture, he holds that the essential truths of the Gospel of life echo in every human conscience. Divine revelation, however, enables us to know “*the complete truth* concerning the value of human life” (#29, emphasis mine).

The Old Testament prepares for the Gospel’s message of life. In the events of the Exodus, Israel discovered how much God prized its existence as a nation. He saved his people from the despotic whims of the Pharaoh who tried to suppress their very life. Through their experience of God’s gentle and intense love, Israel gradually came to appreciate that “life is always a good” (#34).

In the Covenant, God revealed the truth about the sacred nature of life. At the center of the Decalogue is the commandment, “You shall not kill” (Ex 20:13). Besides prohibiting murder, this precept forbids, as Israel’s later legislation makes clear, any personal injury inflicted on another person. The Law requires respect for physical life.

This high regard reaches its summit in the commandment: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18).

Israel’s history also shows how difficult it is to remain faithful to the law of life, inscribed in the human heart at creation, and chiseled on the tablets at Sinai. The prophets pointed an accusing finger at those who violated human life and dignity. In addition, these indignant preachers expressed the hope for a new age, when God would infuse a “new heart” and “new spirit” in his people (Ez 36:26). Then they would be able to carry out fully his commandment to respect and promote human life.

With the coming of Jesus, the divine message of life takes on flesh. He is the “Word of life” (1 Jn 1:1), who receives life from the Father. The Savior in turn shares this life with his followers, giving their existence meaning and value. This is the good news for them. Now they know for sure that their lives are “a gift carefully guarded in the hands of the Father” (#32).

Jesus’ mission, with the many healings He performs, shows God’s concern for bodily life. When sending out his disciples, Christ tells them to heal the sick (Mt 10:7-8). Love for human life marks the Lord’s entire ministry. He is the physician of man’s body and spirit.

In his teaching, Christ vigorously reaffirms the commandment, “You shall not kill.” But He also expands its scope. In the Sermon on the Mount,

Jesus demands from his disciples a respect for life more exacting than that previously known (Mt 5:21-22). It now extends even to the love of one's enemy. According to the pope, at the heart of the commandment to protect life is "the requirement to show reverence and love for every person and the life of every person" (#41).

Christ proclaims this love by making a gift of his life for others. It is by his death that "Jesus reveals all the splendor and value of life" (#33). Through offering himself on the cross, He becomes the source of new life for everyone. In Jesus of Nazareth, "the Gospel of life is definitively proclaimed and fully given" (#29).

Why is human life always a supreme good?

From the opening verses of Genesis, the Bible describes human beings as unique among creatures. As the summit of God's creative activity, they are manifestations and signs of God's glory in the world.

By a "special decision" God establishes a special bond with men and women: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26). Only human beings can discover truth, distinguish between good from evil, and exercise freedom.

Sin's entry into the world obscures this divine likeness in man. With the Incarnation, however, the image of God in man is fully restored. The Holy Father cites Vatican II to explain what this entails for human dignity: "By his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every man" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). According to the pope, the incomparable value of every person's life is reaffirmed by the Son's stupendous intervention in history. Furthermore, the redemption won on the cross confirms "how precious man is to God's eyes and how priceless the value of his life" (#25).

Our vocation is to share God's own "eternal life." This is the "real object of Jesus' mission" (#37): to give life to the world. For those reborn in Christ, "the divine image is restored, renewed and brought to perfection" (#36). This sharing in the fullness of God's love reveals the most sublime truth about life.

All stages of life — from conception to the vision of God — are of inestimable value. Man's life, writes John Paul, is "something which does not belong to him, because it is the property and gift of God the Creator and Father" (#40).

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Evangelium Vitae: 5

RESPONSIBILITIES TO LIFE

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



John Paul II continues his meditation on the biblical message concerning life by recalling a central truth: God's gift of life imposes a responsibility. The commandment not to kill requires us to love, respect, and care for life: "the gift thus becomes a commandment, and the commandment is itself a gift" (#52).

In *Evangelium Vitae*, the pope often reminds us that God is the only Lord of life: "It is his gift, his image and imprint, a sharing in his breath of life" (#39). Human life and death are in God's loving hands.

John Paul discusses four tasks which the Bible describes in its treatment of life: the stewardship of creation, respect for human procreation, esteem for unborn life, and reverence for old age.

•**STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION** Ecological concerns are not foreign to Scripture. Called to keep the garden of the world, we have a divinely given charge to safeguard the environment. God has put creation at our service and in our care, both for the present and future generations.

The pope cites an earlier encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, On Social Concerns (1987), to tell us that "when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity" (#34). Human dominion over creation entails stewardship. This ministerial service is, he writes, "a real reflection of the unique and infinite lordship of God" (#52).

•**PROCREATION** We express our guardianship for all living creatures, however, chiefly by caring for human life. This responsibility includes a profound respect for procreation by means of natural sexual relations. "Having a child," writes the pope, "is an event which is deeply human and full of religious meaning" (#43). Parents enjoy the privilege of being co-workers with God in transmitting his image to a new creature. Through the gift of self to each other, husband and wife receive, in return, the gift of a child.

The Holy Father quotes what he wrote in his Letter to Families (1994): "God himself is present in human fatherhood and motherhood quite differently than he is present in all instances of begetting 'on earth'. . . . Begetting is the continuation of creation" (#9). Consequently, conjugal love must always show respect for welcoming and serving life according to the wisdom of the divine plan.

•**UNBORN LIFE** Scripture, the pope recognizes, contains "no direct or explicit calls to protect human life at its very beginning, specifically life not yet born" (#44). Nonetheless, biblical revelation was not indifferent to the question. Rather, he observes, even the possibility of threatening unborn life was "completely foreign to the religious and cultural way of thinking of the people of God" (#44).

The Bible affirms that the life transmitted by parents to their children comes from God: "the

life of every individual, from its very beginning, is part of God's plan" (#44). Many biblical passages refer with awe and love to the conception, growth, and birth of a child. In particular, the scriptural authors portray the initial moment of human existence as due to God's creative action. "How can anyone think that even a single moment of this marvelous process of the unfolding of life could be separated from the wise and loving work of the Creator, and left prey to human caprice?" asks the pope (#44).

•OLD AGE The Old Testament does not explicitly condemn attempts to end the life of the sick or the aged. There was no need for it to do so. The whole of Jewish tradition recognized the elderly as "a unique source of enrichment for the family and for society" (#46). Old age was accorded prestige and treated with reverence.

When faced with sickness and death, men and women entrusted themselves completely to God's loving plan. They knew that their life was in his hands, not their own.

While life is always a good, the pope also points

out that, for believers, bodily life is not an absolute good. God can ask us to give up our lives for an even greater good. Leaving us an example, Jesus freely surrendered his own life as an offering to the Father.

Moreover, John the Baptist and countless martyrs through the ages have followed in Christ's footsteps. Fidelity to the divine law is, therefore, even more important than saving one's earthly life. Jesus' teaching is clear: "Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mk 8:35).

Chapter two closes with a reflection of the Holy Father on Christ, "him whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37). He turns to Calvary as the revelation of Jesus' glory and the manifestation of life in its fullness. The blood and water flowing from the wounded side of "the Author of life" (Acts 3:15) open the gates of life-giving grace to humanity.

On the cross good triumphs over evil. The life which Jesus receives from the Father, He bestows on us, so that we, too, "may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

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Evangelium Vitae: 6

YOU SHALL NOT KILL INNOCENT HUMAN LIFE

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



The third chapter of *Evangelium Vitae* presents the doctrinal core of the encyclical. Here Pope John Paul II authoritatively confirms Catholic teaching on the value and inviolability of human life. He begins by reaffirming a traditional principle: "The commandment 'You shall not kill' has absolute value when it refers to the innocent person" (#57). By "innocent" the pope means an individual who has committed no crime; he or she is weak and defenseless.

From the beginning, the church's living tradition has consistently taught that in no case whatsoever can one deliberately kill innocent human life. Church teaching in this regard — expressed by the popes, the Second Vatican Council, national episcopal conferences, and individual bishops — is unanimous.

Why then does the pope again take up this question? It is not because official Catholic teaching is either unclear or doubtful. Rather, he sees the "progressive weakening in individual consciences and in society of the sense of the absolute and grave moral illicitness of the direct taking of all innocent human life, especially at its beginning and at its end" (#57). Such a view, the Holy Father thinks, cannot go unchallenged.

This pastoral concern leads John Paul to use his special teaching ministry to reassert Catholic doctrine: "Therefore, by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his successors, and in communion with the bishops of the

Catholic Church, I confirm that the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral. This doctrine, based upon that unwritten law which man, in the light of reason, finds in his own heart (cf. Rom 2:14-15), is reaffirmed by Sacred Scripture, transmitted by the tradition of the church and taught by the ordinary and universal magisterium" (#57).

There is nothing new in this declaration. The pope repeats what the bishops, in union with him, have always held to be true: "The deliberate decision to deprive an innocent human being of his life is always morally evil and can never be licit either as an end in itself or as a means to a good end." Such an action, he then adds, is "a grave act of disobedience to the moral law, and indeed to God himself, the author and guarantor of that law" (#57).

In the Holy Father's statement the adjective "innocent" raises several questions. Is it ever morally permitted to take human life? What about self-defense and capital punishment?

•**SELF-DEFENSE** Christian reflection has long meditated on the problem of self-defense. Here the pope says that we face "a genuine paradox." Two goods are in conflict: the right and responsibility to protect one's own life or that of others, and the duty not to harm the life of one's neighbor.

John Paul recognizes that in "the spirit of the

Gospel Beatitudes" (#55), individuals may renounce the right to defend their *own* lives. Such acts of radical self-offering imitate Christ's sublime example on the cross.

The Holy Father also hastens to add, however, that the moral principle outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* remains valid: "Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for someone responsible for another's life, the common good of the family or of the state" (#2265). True charity can entail attacking an assailant to deter him from his crime.

An unjust aggressor is, by definition, not innocent. The church therefore allows one to render such a person incapable of causing serious injury, even if, as a very last resort, this means taking the attacker's life. In this case, the aggressor is the one morally responsible for the fatal outcome, not the person acting in self-defense.

•DEATH PENALTY The encyclical also takes up the question of capital punishment. The pope notes with approval that "there is a growing tendency, both in the church and in civil society, to demand that it be applied in a very limited way or even that it be abolished completely" (#56). On this score, it seems, the United States is out of step with a global trend.

The church's official teaching, however, still permits capital punishment. An individual judged to be guilty of a very serious crime does not enjoy the absolute protection of his life that belongs to the innocent.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* favors,

but does not insist on, abolishing the death penalty: "If bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority must ["should" in the currently published translation] limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person" (#2267).

John Paul foresees few instances when capital punishment would be justified. "Today however, as a result of steady improvements in the organization of the penal system, such cases are very rare if not practically non-existent" (#56). The pope is even more restrictive than the *Catechism*. He limits capital punishment to "cases of absolute necessity; in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society" (#56).

The *only* reason the pope gives for the death penalty is legitimate self-defense. By his silence, he excludes using it for other reasons, such as its deterrent value or as punishment. Addressing this issue at the press conference which released the encyclical to the public, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, observed that the *Catechism's* section on the death penalty will be rewritten in the light of *Evangelium Vitae*.

The fundamental principle remains intact: No one may licitly kill an innocent human being. God alone is the Lord of life.

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Evangelium Vitae: 7

THE 'UNSPEAKABLE CRIME' OF ABORTION

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



Among the many crimes against life, the Holy Father refers to procured abortion as “particularly serious and deplorable” (#58). He quotes Vatican II: it is truly an “unspeakable crime” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 51; Flannery edition, Costello Publishing).

Procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing of a human being, by whatever means it is carried out, at any time between conception and birth. It includes the killing of human embryos “produced” for medical experiments or for tissue used to treat certain diseases.

Who is guilty of this crime? John Paul declares that, besides the mother, moral responsibility lies with all those who directly or indirectly influence her to kill the unborn child.

The child’s father may be to blame. This would be the case if he either exerts pressure on the mother to have an abortion or leaves her to face the pregnancy alone. Guilt for the sin can also extend to parents, other family members, and friends. Furthermore, complicity in abortion involves legislators and those who have encouraged “the spread of an attitude of sexual permissiveness and a lack of esteem for motherhood” (#59). Doctors and medical personnel are likewise responsible, “when they place at the service of death skills which were acquired for promoting life” (#59).

The logic of biblical doctrine, as well as the clear and unanimous witness of the church’s tradition

and teaching, hold abortion to be “a particularly grave moral disorder” (#61).

To illustrate this point, the pope points out that, from the fourth century onward, church law has penalized abortion as a crime. In fact, the canon law now in force decrees that “a person who actually procures an abortion incurs automatic excommunication” (canon 1398). This exclusion from full church communion affects all those who have an abortion, and “includes those accomplices without whose help the crime would not have been committed” (#62). To incur the penalty, those involved must be aware of the law.

Why such a severe penalty? Excommunication is primarily meant to inspire the conversion and repentance of those guilty of this grave injustice. It also reminds Catholics that full participation in church life cannot be reconciled with having, taking part in, or in any way promoting abortion.

Unfortunately, many people today fail to see the gravity of abortion. Their moral vision has been dimmed. When individuals are confused about the difference between good and evil, they easily yield to convenient compromises and self-deception.

To combat this way of thinking, the pope invites us “to have the courage to look the truth in the eye and to call things by their proper name” (#58). The encyclical notes that ambiguous terms, such as the “interruption of pregnancy,” camouflage

the truth. Abortion entails death, and this fact must never be concealed.

The pope believes that the church's crystal-clear teaching needs to be vigorously restated. Using the charism belonging to the papal office, John Paul II states: "Therefore by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his successors, in communion with the bishops — who on various occasions have condemned abortion and who in the aforementioned consultation, albeit dispersed throughout the world, have shown unanimous agreement concerning this doctrine — *I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder*, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written word of God, is transmitted by the church's tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal magisterium" (#62).

As the supreme guardian of our faith, the Holy Father reassures us that the church, guided by the Holy Spirit, teaches that procured abortion is always an intrinsically evil act. This teaching belongs to Catholic doctrine infallibly proposed by the church.

Since the pope also wants to convince those who might not share his views, he answers two arguments which are put forward to justify abortion in certain situations.

First, those who justify abortion in cases such as rape often argue that the fetus can be con-

sidered an "unjust aggressor." Because the unborn child was conceived by an act of violence, it is not innocent. Therefore the fetus is not protected by the ban against taking innocent human life. Abortion could then be allowed, they claim, as a form of legitimate self-defense.

But John Paul writes that "no one more absolutely innocent could be imagined" (#58). Despite the tragedy of the circumstances, a child in its mother's womb is never an aggressor, much less an unjust aggressor!

Second, some have defended abortion on the grounds that the embryo, at least for the first few weeks, is not yet a "human person," that is, an individual with a soul. Hence, at this early stage, they allege, terminating the pregnancy is morally permissible.

The pope, however, teaches that human life must be protected from the time of conception. Although observable data cannot determine when God creates the individual soul, the fetus is to be treated as a human person from the moment of conception.

The Holy Father further states that even "the mere probability that a human person is involved would suffice to justify an absolutely clear prohibition of any intervention aimed at killing a human embryo" (#60).

Abortion not only destroys the life of unborn children, it also inflicts a wound on society. Every direct abortion is an "unspeakable crime," the killing of an innocent human person.

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Evangelium Vitae: 8

THE TRAGEDY OF EUTHANASIA

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



When life is manipulated as a “thing” which individuals claim as their exclusive possession, it passes completely under human control. Death, like birth, is then programmed. Neither the design of creation nor the plan of God for human life is respected. The stage is set for the tragedy of euthanasia.

After his teaching on abortion, the Holy Father turns his attention to life in its final stages. He defines euthanasia as “an action or omission which of itself and by intention causes death, with the purpose of eliminating all suffering” (#65).

Euthanasia is, of course, different from a sick person’s decision to forego extraordinary medical treatment. When death is clearly imminent and inevitable, there is no moral obligation to resort to aggressive medical treatment.

The pope cites with approval the Vatican’s *Declaration on Euthanasia* (1980). In such situations, it says, one can “refuse forms of treatment that would only secure a precarious and burdensome prolongation of life, so long as the normal care due to the sick person in similar cases is not interrupted” (#2).

John Paul is clear. “To forego extraordinary or disproportionate means is not,” he writes, “the equivalent of suicide or euthanasia; it rather expresses acceptance of the human condition in the face of death” (#65).

When individuals will and cause their own

death, however, this choice entails the malice of suicide. Like abortion, euthanasia can have accomplices. Anyone who shares the intention of a person wishing to end his life and aids him in bringing it about is guilty of euthanasia. Even if this help is requested, as in the case of assisted suicide, such an act is never morally justified.

Although it may be motivated by a concern to alleviate a sick person’s suffering, John Paul refers to this complicity as a “false mercy and indeed a disturbing ‘perversion’ of mercy” (#66). True compassion leads to sharing pain, not killing a person whose suffering appears to be unbearable.

Euthanasia is even more perverse when it takes the form of murder. This occurs when family members, medical personnel, or state authorities cause the death of a person who has neither requested nor consented to it.

In this case, the pope sees the temptation of Eden re-enacted in modern dress: the desire to become like God. Individuals or institutions claim the right to decide who should live and who should die. This arrogance, says John Paul, is “the height of arbitrariness and injustice” (#66).

Sadly, today’s culture increasingly favors euthanasia. Insofar as people believe that suffering is meaningless and value life only to the extent that it can bring pleasure, the door is open for the culture of death.

Social pressures are brainwashing individuals

about the desirability of choosing this “easy death.” To the degree that society is organized around efficient production and consumption, then “a hopelessly impaired life no longer has any value” (#64). Especially in prosperous societies, the elderly, the incurably ill, and the mentally and physically challenged are all too often viewed — and are made to feel — as if they were burdens on themselves or others.

The result? Many “choose” to take control of their lives, bringing about death before its time. Under the guise of self-affirmation or being humane, individuals claim the right to cause their own deaths or the deaths of others.

Euthanasia, like abortion, not only kills innocent life but also weakens society’s moral fiber. The pope observes that whenever euthanasia is practiced, “the sense of justice is lost, and mutual trust, the basis of every authentic interpersonal relationship, is undermined at its root” (#66).

Obedient to the church’s tradition and repeating her constant teaching, John Paul makes his third authoritative statement: “*I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person. This doctrine is*

based upon the natural law and upon the written word of God, is transmitted by the church’s tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal magisterium” (#65).

The church’s rejection of euthanasia is unequivocal. Catholics must accept this teaching as a truth taught infallibly by the bishops in union with the pope. Others ought to accept it as conforming to the natural law written in creation and accessible to all people of goodwill.

To combat the inroads of the culture of death, the pope reminds us of the victory of the risen Christ. By his redemptive death, he has set us free from eternal death. “The certainty of future immortality and hope in the promised resurrection cast new light on the mystery of suffering and death” (#67).

The purpose of *Evangelium Vitae* is to proclaim the beauty of the good news about life. As the primary custodian of the deposit of faith, the pope is entrusted by Christ with preaching the Gospel of life which the church has received from the Apostles. This full proclamation includes the truths about innocent life, abortion, and euthanasia.

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Evangelium Vitae: 9

LIFE AND THE LAW: OBEY GOD, NOT MAN

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



Contemporary attacks on life differ from those of earlier generations. Today many people demand their legal recognition. What should citizens and politicians do when faced with laws against life? In *Evangelium Vitae*, John Paul II explains the relation between moral and civil law which guides the church's response to the current challenges.

Those favoring abortion, euthanasia, and other anti-life practices defend their position in several ways. On the one hand, some argue that in these matters individuals have the right to make whatever "private" choices they want. The only limitation they recognize is that of infringing on the freedom and rights of others. The state, they maintain, should neither adopt nor approve any specific ethical position on life issues.

On the other hand, some do recognize the need for legislation. But they believe that any such laws should express only what "the majority itself considers moral and actually practices" (#69).

The pope, however, dissents from both views. The protection of life is not a matter of personal choice. All institutions, including the state, must defend it. Furthermore, writes the Holy Father, true values cannot rest on majority opinion. Their basis lies in the objective moral law. The natural law written in the human heart tells us what is truly right and good. Majorities can't decide this.

Civil law then must acknowledge, respect, and promote the authentic moral values known from

creation. Good law ensures that everyone enjoys "respect for certain fundamental rights which innately belong to the person" (#71). Foremost among these rights is the inviolable right to life of every innocent human being. Because the state is not the source of human rights, it may neither modify nor abolish them.

"The doctrine on the necessary conformity of civil law with the moral law," observes the Holy Father, "is in continuity with the whole tradition of the church" (#72). It is also the precious heritage of all civilization.

But what are Catholics to do when the law oversteps its bounds? What if — as in the United States — it legalizes the direct killing of innocent human beings? The pope restates a firm principle of Catholic teaching: "A civil law authorizing abortion or euthanasia ceases by that very fact to be a true, morally binding civil law" (#72).

Anti-life legislation denies the equality of everyone before the law and contradicts the common good. Abortion and euthanasia are, therefore, "crimes which no human law can claim to legitimize" (#73).

Regrettably, many people, especially those in the health and allied professions, have to work in situations where unjust laws are in force. To what extent can they cooperate in practices which, though legal, are contrary to the natural and revealed law?

Here the encyclical leaves no room for am-

biguity. "There is no obligation in conscience to obey such laws; instead there is a grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection" (#73). Neither invoking respect for the rights of others, nor appealing to the fact that civil law permits crimes against life, makes it morally licit to obey such a law. The refusal to take part in attacks on innocent human life is an absolute moral duty.

Individuals may never kill innocent human life or share in anyone's intention to do so. Nor can they campaign or vote for an anti-life law. "This cooperation," writes John Paul, "can never be justified" (#74).

The Holy Father then makes a plea aimed at countries which have legalized anti-life practices. In these cases, he says, civil law should guarantee the right of conscientious objection to those in positions where unjust laws impinge upon their profession. According to the pope, everyone has the basic human right to refuse to take part in any consultation, preparation, or carrying out of an act against life. Furthermore, the law should protect conscientious objectors from punitive disciplinary and financial measures.

Today some countries are starting to rethink

their permissive abortion laws. This raises delicate questions for Catholic voters and politicians. How should they respond to a proposed law whose purpose is to replace an existing law with one aimed at reducing the number of legal abortions?

In carefully chosen words, the pope answers: "When it is not possible to overturn or completely abrogate a pro-abortion law, an elected official whose absolute personal opposition to procured abortion was well known, could licitly support proposals aimed at *limiting the harm* done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality" (#73, emphasis mine).

If a politician's opposition to abortion is publicly known — and hence the possibility of scandal is removed — he or she could vote for a *more restrictive* law, even if it does not fully protect all innocent life. To vote for such a law can be a legitimate way of striving to reduce the evil effects of more liberal legislation.

John Paul ends chapter three with an appeal: "that our time, marked by all too many signs of death, may at last witness the establishment of a new culture of life" (#77).

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Evangelium Vitae: 10

PEOPLE OF LIFE AND FOR LIFE

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



In chapter four of *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II issues a challenge. As a way of putting the encyclical's message into practice, he asks us to carry out a mission: to be a "people of life and for life" (#78).

We are people of life because God has saved us through Christ. Interiorly renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are to act according to this gift of "eternal life."

Our task, therefore, is to become a people for life. Sustained by Christ's love, we are to take part in his prophetic, priestly, and royal mission of bringing salvation to the world. Both as individuals and as a church community, the Lord entrusts us with proclaiming, celebrating, and serving the Gospel of life.

•**PROCLAMATION** To preach the good news of Jesus is to proclaim life. "We need to bring the Gospel of life to the heart of every man and woman," writes the pope, "and to make it penetrate every part of society" (#80).

What is the core of this Gospel? It is the "affirmation of the inseparable connection between the person, his life and his bodiliness" (#81). In other words, the Gospel of life heralds that human life, as God's gift, is sacred and inviolable.

Everyone in the church is called to preach this good news about life. Bishops, priests, parents, catechists, teachers —indeed, all Christians — play a role in proclaiming "how the Christian

message fully reveals what man is and the meaning of his being and existence" (#82).

In carrying out this "prophetic" mission, we are to guard against "proposing personal ideas contrary to the Gospel of life faithfully presented and interpreted by the magisterium" (#82). Even if faced with hostility and unpopularity, the people for life must reject any compromise with an anti-life mentality.

•**CELEBRATION** "To celebrate the Gospel of life means to celebrate the God of life, the God who gives life" (#84). He alone is the wellspring of existence. With gratitude for the beauty and grandeur of this gift, the people for life fulfill their "priestly" mission by their contemplation, prayer, liturgical celebrations, and day-to-day activity.

In the first place, John Paul encourages us to adopt "a contemplative outlook." This entails the appreciation of every human life as a "wonder" created by God (Ps 139:14). "It is the outlook," he says, "of those who do not presume to take possession of reality, but instead accept it as a gift" (#83). When individuals cultivate an attitude of religious awe before the mystery of life, they are drawn to honor the face of Christ in everyone.

Daily prayer inspires us to praise God for the greatness of his works, especially for human beings who are the image of his glory. The celebration of the sacraments intensifies divine life in us. They nourish us with "the spiritual

strength necessary to experience life, suffering and death in their fullest meaning" (#84).

But we celebrate the Gospel of life "above all in daily living, which should be filled with self-giving love for others" (#86). Sometimes in truly remarkable ways, though most often in gestures of "everyday heroism," the people for life express their praise and thanksgiving for the gift of life. Such actions belong to the "spiritual worship" owed to God (Rom 12:1).

•SERVICE As sharers in Christ's "royal" mission, we promote human life through works of charity. Individual acts of mercy, volunteer work, social activity, and political commitment all manifest the "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6) of the people for life.

By their acts of charity Christians take care of life. Jesus' disciples are called, says the Holy Father, "to become neighbors to everyone." Moreover, they are "to show special favor to those who are poorest, most alone and most in need" (#87).

Committed Christians serve life without bias or discrimination. At every stage and in every situation, human life is precious. They care for "all life

and for the life of everyone" (#87). Whether paid workers or volunteers, the people for life carry out their ministry through various institutions and agencies: in counseling centers, special homes and communities, clinics, and hospitals.

Because of the inroads made by the culture of death, the pope believes that the service to life should be realistic and effective. Individuals, families, movements, and associations share the task of forming a culture of life. He appeals to everyone for help in building "a society in which the dignity of each person is recognized and protected and the lives of all are defended and enhanced" (#90).

John Paul begs public officials not to pass anti-life laws which undermine society's moral roots. But he also recognizes that life cannot be defended merely by legislation. The underlying causes of today's attacks on life must be unmasked, so that the people for life can take steps to eliminate them.

Only a common effort of *all* people for life — believers and non-believers alike — will lead to a "civilization of truth and love, to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life" (#106).

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Evangelium Vitae: 11

ARTISANS OF THE NEW CULTURE OF LIFE

J. Michael Miller, C.S.B.



Pope John Paul II ends his encyclical with a pressing appeal for “a great campaign in support of life. All together, we must build a new culture of life” (#95).

The Gospel of life is to imbue the whole of society. “To be actively pro-life,” writes the pope, “is to contribute to the renewal of society” (#101). Various social forces have a role to play in this task. He singles out five groups as the principal artisans of this new culture: the family, women, educators, intellectuals, and the media.

•**FAMILY** Among the builders of a pro-life society, the family has a unique and decisive responsibility. Founded on marriage, this community of love has the mission to manifest, protect, and convey love to others. Citing his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (1991), the Holy Father says that the family is “the sanctuary of life: the place in which life — the gift of God — can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed” (#39).

Nourished by daily prayer together, families are fortified to serve life by acts of solidarity. The pope notes adoption, foster-parenting, and “adoption-at-a-distance” as apt ways for a family to show its love for life.

The family also shows social solidarity by participating in the wider life of the community. Through associations and other bodies, families should champion legislation in which the defense

and promotion of the family is “the basis and driving force of all social policies” (#90).

The pope especially recalls the role of the elderly in the family. Saddened because they are often regarded as a burden or left to fend for themselves, the Holy Father calls for “a sort of ‘covenant’ between generations” (#94). He envisions this family pact as bilateral. Parents, in their later years, would receive from their children the same “acceptance and solidarity” which they showed in raising them (#94). And elderly parents would contribute their wisdom and witness of hope and love to the families of their children.

•**WOMEN** According to John Paul, the creation of a pro-life culture largely depends on the contribution of women. He asks them to “promote a ‘new feminism’ which rejects the temptation of imitating models of ‘male domination’.” Thus, they can “affirm the true genius of women” in every sphere of social life (#99).

Women, the pope states, are the first teachers of genuine love. They are especially gifted to disclose the meaning of authentic human relations: “open to accepting the other person: a person who is recognized and loved because of the dignity which comes from being a person and not from other considerations such as usefulness, strength, intelligence, beauty or health” (#99).

In a poignant paragraph, John Paul speaks from his heart to women who have had an abortion. Recognizing that it was often “a painful and even shattering decision” for them, he asks those who have not yet been reconciled to God and the church to trust in divine mercy. The Holy Father goes on to say that the experience of having an abortion can lead women to be “among the most eloquent defenders of everyone’s right to life” and “promoters of a new way of looking at human life” (#99).

•**EDUCATORS** For cultural change to come about, a vast educational effort is required. Above all, consciences need to be formed in light of the truth that every human life has inviolable value. This formation entails “the recovery of the necessary link between freedom and truth” (#96).

John Paul mentions three areas where instruction is especially vital for the renewal of society. First, adolescents require “an authentic education in sexuality and in love, an education which involves training in chastity” (#97).

Second, education in the service of life entails teaching married couples about methods of responsible procreation which respect God’s plan. On the one hand, they must reject all forms of contraception, since it “contradicts the full truth of the sexual act” (#13). On the other hand, natural family planning enables spouses “to

make choices in harmony with moral values” (#97). The effectiveness of this method, the pope continues, should convince couples, as well as social and health-care workers, of “the importance of proper training in this area” (#97).

Third, the Holy Father pleads for a serious discussion of suffering and death in all educational programs. Sound catechesis and schooling must deal with both topics. In particular, educators should emphasize that suffering has meaning as an integral dimension of every human life.

•**INTELLECTUALS** In the various centers of culture and learning, Catholics “ought to place themselves at the service of a new culture of life” (#98). Their scholarly and scientific work can contribute to preparing for a society which will adopt the pro-life ethic of “the primacy of being over having, of the person over things” (#98).

•**MEDIA** The mass media can also positively influence building a culture of life. To help in this effort, media personnel should show the lofty meaning of sexuality and love, avoiding whatever degrades human life and dignity. Furthermore, they should present “noble models of life” which portray heroic love for others (#98).

As always, the pope concludes his encyclical with a prayer to Mary: “Mother of the living, to you do we entrust the cause of life” (#105).

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VIGIL FOR ALL PREBORN HUMAN LIFE

Marian Procession, Rosary & Benediction



Marian Procession

The procession consists of: incense, cross, candles, those leading the scriptural rosary carrying vigil candles, bearers of an image of the Blessed Virgin, finally the presider. The procession should move from the entrance of the church to the sanctuary. It should have a solemn character, executed only with musical accompaniment and not singing, in expiation for all the attacks on life from conception to natural death.

Having arrived at the sanctuary, the image of Our Lady is enthroned at the Gospel side of the Altar, with the vigil candles placed at the foot of the image. The image may be incensed at this point. The liturgical ministers upon reaching the foot of the sanctuary make a reverential bow and then immediately assume their appropriate places, while the priest goes to the altar and venerates it with a kiss before going to the chair.

Presider: Opening Admonition

Hymn: The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came, #316 CBW III

Reading (Genesis 3:9-15)

When Adam had eaten from the tree, the Lord God called to him, and said, "Where are you?" The man said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

EXPOSITION OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

The priest/deacon receives the humeral veil and brings the sacrament from the place of reservation; he is accompanied by servers with lighted candles. Having placed the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance, he genuflects and then goes and kneels at the foot of the sanctuary from which place he incenses the Blessed Sacrament.

Exposition Hymn

An appropriate hymn is begun as soon as the priest/deacon moves to receive the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle for exposition and continues through to the end of the incensation.

Period of Adoration

A period of silent adoration may be observed.

RECITATION OF THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

At the announcement of the mystery the reader of the scriptural meditation approaches the ambo from where the proclamation is made. All are seated during the recitation of the rosary.

First Reading

The Annunciation - Luke 1:26-35, 38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory Be...

A period of adoration, meditation and silent personal prayer.

Second Reading

The Visitation - Luke 1:39-45

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. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory Be...

A period of adoration, meditation and silent personal prayer.

Third Reading

The Nativity of Our Lord - Luke 2:4-7

Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory Be...

A period of adoration, meditation and silent personal prayer.

Fourth Reading

The Presentation - Luke 2:22, 24-25, 27-35, 27-35

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord . . . to offer the sacrifice of "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying:

"Now, Master, you may let your servant go
in peace, according to your word,
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you prepared in sight of all the peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and glory for your people Israel."

The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory Be...

A period of adoration, meditation and silent personal prayer.

Fifth Reading

The Finding of the Child Jesus - Luke 2:41-51

Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory Be...

A period of adoration, meditation and silent personal prayer.

Supplications for Life

Following the recitation on the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the solemn supplication for life takes place. Everyone kneels.

Presider: Let us pray to God, the Father of Life and Font of all Mercy:

All: *Lord, have mercy on all who have sinned against life.*

Presider: You knit us in our mother's womb,

All: *Preserve all children from bodily harm from the moment of conception.*

Presider: Your Son ennobled all human life when he became flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary,

All: *Enlighten our minds to see the dignity of every human life from its earliest embryonic beginnings.*

Presider: You are author of science and knowledge,

All: Bring an end to the destruction of human embryos in research facilities and IVF clinics.

Presider: You are the law-giver and ruler of the world,

All: Help us to overturn unjust laws that permit the destruction of innocent lives, and guide our public officials to defend the littlest among us.

Presider: You love those who are afflicted,

All: Help parents of unborn children with disabilities to cherish the baby you have entrusted to their care.

Presider: Your Son, Jesus, healed the sick,

All: Guide all doctors to be guardians of life, especially the lives of unborn children with serious health conditions.

Presider: Lord, you are love and mercy itself,

All: Draw all who have acted against innocent human life to repentance and forgiveness, and heal them through an outpouring of grace.

Prayer of Pope John Paul II

*Following a period of silence all recite the prayer for life of Venerable John Paul II contained in *Evangelium Vitae*.*

Presider

We entreat the Blessed Virgin Mary to present our prayers to her Son, the Life of the world.

All

O Mary,
bright dawn of the new world,
Mother of the living,
to you do we entrust the cause of life
Look down, O Mother,
upon the vast numbers
of babies not allowed to be born,
of the poor whose lives are made difficult,
of men and women
who are victims of brutal violence,

of the elderly and the sick killed
by indifference or out of misguided mercy.

Grant that all who believe in your Son
may proclaim the Gospel of life
with honesty and love
to the people of our time.

Obtain for them the grace
to accept that Gospel
as a gift ever new,
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude
throughout their lives
and the courage to bear witness to it
resolutely, in order to build,
together with all people of good will,
the civilization of truth and love,
to the praise and glory of God,
the Creator and lover of life.

—*Evangelium Vitae*, 105

Homily (Optional)

During the homily the meaning and significance of the celebration of this vigil are explained.

BENEDICTION OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

The priest goes to the altar, genuflects, and kneels. During this time the *Tantum Ergo* is sung. The incense bearer approaches; after placing incense into the censer and blessing it, the priest, kneeling, incenses the Blessed Sacrament.

<i>Tantum ergo Sacramentum</i>	<i>Genitori, Genitoque</i>
<i>Veneremur cernui:</i>	<i>Laus et jubilatio,</i>
<i>Et antiquum documentum</i>	<i>Salus, honor, virtus quoque</i>
<i>Novo cedat ritui:</i>	<i>Sit et benedictio:</i>
<i>Praestet fides supplementum</i>	<i>Procedenti ab utroque</i>
<i>Sensuum defectui.</i>	<i>Compar sit laudatio. Amen.</i>

The following is sung or recited in the vernacular.

Priest: You have given them bread from heaven.

All: Having within it all sweetness and delight.

Priest: Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, you gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of your suffering and death. May our worship of this sacrament of your body and blood help us to

experience the salvation won for us and the peace of the kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

R. Amen.

After the prayer the priest puts on the humeral veil, goes up to the altar, and genuflects. He then makes a sign of the cross with the monstrance over the people in silence. After the blessing, the priest genuflects and returns to the front of the altar where he gives up the humeral veil and kneels. The ***Divine Praises*** follow.

The Divine Praises

Blessed be God.

Blessed be his holy name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

Blessed be the name of Jesus.

Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be his most precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse.

Blessed be God in his angels and in his Saints.

Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

The priest reverently transfers the Blessed Sacrament to the place of reservation, genuflects, and closes the tabernacle. Meanwhile the closing hymn is sung.

Closing Hymn

Acknowledgements

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PROLIFE MEDITATIONS ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

By Fr. Frank Pavone



Joyful Mysteries

The Annunciation

Mary is troubled by the angel's greeting, yet rejoices to do God's will. Let us pray that those who are troubled by their pregnancy may have the grace to trust in God's will.

The Visitation

John the Baptist leapt for joy in his mother's womb. We pray that people may realize that abortion is not about children who "might" come into the world, but is about children who are already in the world, living and growing in the womb, and are scheduled to be killed.

The Nativity

God Himself was born as a child. The greatness of a person does not depend on size, for the newborn King is very small. Let us pray for an end to prejudice against the tiny babies threatened by abortion.

The Presentation

The Child is presented in the Temple because the Child belongs to God. Children are not the property of their parents, nor of the government. They - and we - belong to God Himself.

The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

The boy Jesus was filled with wisdom, because He is God. Let us pray that all people may see the wisdom of His teachings about the dignity of life, and may understand that this teaching is not an opinion, but the truth.

Luminous Mysteries

First Luminous Mystery: Christ is Baptized in the Jordan

When Jesus is baptized, the Father's voice is heard: "This is my beloved Son." All are called to become adopted sons and daughters of God through baptism. We pray that children in the womb may be protected, so that they may be born and welcomed into the Christian community by baptism.

Second Luminous Mystery: Christ is made known at the Wedding of Cana

Jesus revealed His glory by the miracle at Cana. The new couple was blessed not only with wine, but with faith in Christ. Let us pray for strong marriages, rooted in the Lord, and open to the gift of new life.

Third Luminous Mystery: Christ proclaims the Kingdom and Calls All to Conversion

"Repent and believe the Good News." Let us pray that these first words of Jesus' public ministry may be heard by all who have committed abortion. May they know that the Lord calls them to conversion, and may they experience life-giving repentance.

Fourth Luminous Mystery: The Transfiguration

Christ is transformed on the mountain, and the disciples see His glory. May the eyes of all people be transformed, that they may see each and every human life as a reflection of the glory of God Himself.

Fifth Luminous Mystery: Jesus gives us the Eucharist

"This is My Body, given up for you." The Eucharist teaches us how to live and how to love. Let us pray that parents who sacrifice the babies for the sake of themselves may learn instead to put themselves aside for the sake of their babies.

Sorrowful Mysteries

The Agony in the Garden

Let us pray for mothers and fathers who are in agony because they are tempted to abort a child. May they be given the good news that there are alternatives, and may they make use of the help that is available.

The Scourging

As Christ's flesh was torn by the instruments of those who scourged Him, so the bodies of babies in the womb are torn by the instruments of the abortionists. Let us pray that abortionists may repent of these acts of child-killing.

The Crowning With Thorns

Jesus suffered the pain of thorns in His head, and did so silently. We pray for the mothers and fathers of aborted children. So many of them suffer deep grief and regret over a choice they can never reverse. So many suffer in silence, because others tell them it's no big deal.

The Carrying of the Cross

Jesus was not condemned by the power of wicked people. He was condemned because of the silence of good people. Silence always helps the oppressor, never the victim. Let us pray that we may never be silent about abortion, but rather will clearly speak up to save babies from death.

The Crucifixion

As we ponder the death of Christ, let us remember the many women who have died from so-called "safe, legal" abortions. Let us ask forgiveness and mercy for them. May their memory save other women from making this tragic mistake.

Glorious Mysteries

The Resurrection

Christ is Risen! By his Resurrection, He has destroyed the power of death, and therefore the power of abortion. The outcome of the battle for Life has already been decided: Life is victorious! Let us pray that all pro-lifers will spread this victory to every segment of our society.

The Ascension

By ascending to the Father's throne, Christ takes our human nature, given to us in the womb, to the heights of heaven. He shows us that human beings are made to be raised to heaven, not thrown in the garbage. Let us pray that the world may learn this truth and reject abortion.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Advocate: He pleads our cause, for we cannot save ourselves. We pray that He will make us advocates for the babies, who cannot speak or write or vote or protest or even pray.

The Assumption

The Blessed Virgin Mary was taken body and soul into heaven because she is the Mother of God. Mother and child are united. The Assumption reminds us that they belong together. We pray that society will see that it cannot love women while killing their children, and cannot save children without helping their mothers. We pray that people will be touched by the pro-life question, "Why can't we love them both?"

The Coronation

Mary is the Queen of the Universe. The Church teaches that she is the greatest creature, second only to God Himself. The Church defends the dignity of women. We pray that people will understand that to be pro-life means to be pro-woman, and that to be pro-woman demands that we be pro-life.

LITANY TO MARY, MOTHER OF LIFE

The Response is: Mary, pray for us.

Mary, Mother of all Life,
help us to respect human life from the moment of conception
to the moment of natural death. *R.*

Mary, Mother of Compassion,
you showed us how valuable a single life can be;
help us to guard and protect the lives of all people entrusted to our care. *R.*

Mary, Mother of the Child Jesus,
with St. Joseph you formed the Holy Family.
Guard and protect all families in this earthly life; *R.*

Mary, Mother Most Holy,
you sanctified the vocation of motherhood;
pour out your heavenly aid on all mothers and help them to be holy. *R.*

Mary, Mother of Sorrows,
Simeon's prophecy foretold that a sword of suffering would pierce your heart;
bring comfort and hope to all mothers who suffer over their children. *R.*

Mary, Full of Grace,
you had a choice in responding to God's call;
help us always to say "Yes" to the will of God in our lives,
and strive always to do whatever he tells us. *R.*

Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted,
pour forth your heavenly grace on all who are in need of God's healing,
especially those involved in abortion;
help them to experience the love and mercy of Christ, your Son. *R.*

Mary, Intercessor and Advocate,
we lift up the poor, the displaced, the marginalized and vulnerable members of society;
help them to never abandon hope, but to place their trust in the God who gave them life. *R.*

Mary, Mother of the Word Incarnate,
you bore in your womb him whom the heavens cannot contain;
help us to bear witness to Christ by the example of our lives
and show the world the extravagant love of God. *R.*

All:
Remember, o most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, we fly unto you,
O Virgin of virgins, our Mother. To you we come, before you we stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the
Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer them. Amen.

Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

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Website: www.usccb.org/prolife

A LITANY FOR LIFE

Based on I Corinthians 12:31–13:8a

Lord, love is patient.

Give to the mother who is tempted to abort her child the patience to endure the suffering that will bring forth new life.

Lord, love is kind.

Give to the new father whose friends tell him to abort his child the gentleness, compassion and courage to support his wife and child, protect them from all that could harm them, and sustain them against selfishness and hate.

Lord, love is not jealous.

Remove from all human hearts the temptation to trade human life for advantage, convenience or personal benefit. Deliver us from the expediency that values personal gain and pleasure over the dignity of human life.

Lord, love is not pompous.

Deliver us from the arrogance that sees our needs or wants as superior to the rights of others. Help us to see all our brothers and sisters as worthy of all of our love.

Lord, love is not inflated.

Grant us a share in the humility of your Son, who sought not to be served, but to serve. Help us to see in every human life, rich or poor, young or old, guilty or innocent, a reflection of your image and likeness.

Lord, love is not rude.

Implant a spirit of gentle compassion in the hearts of each of your sons and daughters, Lord, that no person may ever be treated as less than the child of God which you have made them, through the Paschal Death and Resurrection of your only-begotten Son.

Lord, love does not seek its own interests.

Give to all who govern us, Lord, a generous spirit, that our country may not so much seek to be great as to be good, to be rich in possessions as to be rich in mercy, or to be renowned as to be renowned for justice and truth for all.

Lord, love is not quick-tempered.

Grant that by our prudence and patience we might learn to live that sacrificial love by which your Son died for us on the Cross, that all men and women might know our kindness and willingness to love them unto death after the model of our Lord and Savior.

Lord, love does not brood over injury.

Give us the grace of mercy, Lord, that like your Son we might forgive those who sin against us, seeking only their redemption and eternal happiness. Forgive the abortionist who takes the life of an unborn child. Move his heart, grant him the grace of repentance, and give us a full share in your mercy.

Lord, love does not rejoice over wrongdoing.

Help us to seek only the redemption of wrongdoers, Lord, and remove from our hearts all desire for vengeance and hate. Help us to desire not revenge, even for the horrors of abortion, but the repentance and happiness of all your children.

Lord, love rejoices with the truth.

Implant deep within our hearts a sense of the joy of the Gospel of Life, and make us joy-filled evangelists of your great gift of life.

Lord, love bears all things.

When we are insulted or reviled for the sake of the Gospel of Life, give us the courage and the innocence of the children of God. Help us, Lord, to suffer for the sake of your truth, and never to seek our own good, even in the good work we do.

Lord, love believes all things.

Deliver us from every temptation to despair, Lord. When we are discouraged, give us the grace to trust in your mercy and to know that your love is ever victorious, even in the face of darkness, death, and hate.

Lord, love hopes all things.

As we trust in your infinite love, O Lord, give us the trust that comes from the Gospel, and help us to cling to that sure and certain hope that for those who love God all things come to good.

Lord, love endures all things.

In the face of death, destruction, and a culture of death, never let us lose sight of the beauty of the face of your only-begotten Son, Our Lord, who suffered the torments of his Passion and Death for the sake of our sins. Let us trust that through his Passion we will have the strength to do your will and to carry each cross that comes our way for the glory of God and the love of his little ones.

Lord, love never fails.

When the crusade for life seems unending and our latest initiatives have failed, when our hearts are filled with sadness or anger or fear, come to our aid, O Lord, and give us the assurance that you are ever with us, that your mercies will not end, and that you, our Creator and our God, will bring victory to all who seek to love as you have commanded them.

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Prayers for Life Throughout the Year

PRAYER FOR A BABY IN HER MOTHER'S WOMB

O God of all creation, nurture and protect this tiny child and keep her safe in the sanctuary of her mother's womb. As you so wondrously form her heart and mind and lungs and soul, so strengthen our will to lovingly nurture and protect her. Give us the eyes to see her as our sister, the minds to welcome her as our own, and the faith to defend her as your child. We ask this through the intercession of Mary, our Blessed Mother, and the mother of all the little ones, through Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER FOR A BABY ABOUT TO BE BORN

Heavenly Father, from the moment this child was conceived, you knew his name. In the silent first hours of his life, as cells divided and his living flesh quickened, your love breathed deep within and he began to grow in your image and likeness. Hear our prayers for this tiny child and give us the wisdom and endurance to keep him safe. May our prayers be accompanied by choirs of angels as we await his birth. We ask this through your child who was formed in the Virgin's womb and who lived and died for us, Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING OF PARENTS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THEIR CHILD

Gracious Father, your Word, spoken in love, created the human family and, in the fullness of time, your Son, conceived in love, restored it to your friendship. Hear the prayers of N. and N., who await the birth of their child. Calm their fears when they are anxious. Watch over and support these parents and bring their child into this world safely and in good health, so that as members of your family they may praise you and glorify you through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THOSE WITH PROFOUND DISABILITIES

Lord Jesus Christ, you know the pain of brokenness, you took our weaknesses upon your shoulders and bore it to the wood of the cross. Hear our prayers for our brothers and sisters whose bodies fail them and whose minds are crippled by the ravages of disease. Implant a love for them deep within our hearts, that we, disfigured and disabled by our sin, may treasure and nurture the gift of their lives. May we find you in their weakness, and console you in our care for them. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO HAVE GROWN VERY OLD

Lord, our God,
you have given these your faithful the grace to maintain their hope in you through all life's changes and to taste and see your goodness. We bless you for the gifts you have showered on them for so many years. We ask that they may find joy in a renewed strength of spirit, that they may have good health, and that they may inspire us by the example of their serene way of life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER FOR ALL ABOUT TO DIE

Lord Jesus Christ,
as you stood by the bed of good Saint Joseph and gently led him home to heaven, so shepherd every soul about to die to a paradise of perfect peace. Let the tears we shed upon their passing stand witness to our love for them and the depth of our thanksgiving for the gift of their lives and the grace of a good death.
For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Stations of the Cross for Life

The following Respect for Life meditations on the Stations of the Cross are based on those celebrated by Pope John Paul II on Good Friday 1991.

First Station: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me.” He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.” When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Matthew 25:36-41

PRAYER

In your agony, Lord,
your must have felt alone and afraid.
Even your most beloved—Peter, James, and John—could not keep watch with you.
Each day, Lord Jesus, thousands of babies are killed, participants in your passion.
Each day, Lord Jesus, those who have grown very old, alone and abandoned,
participate in your passion. Keep us awake, O Lord, that we might watch with you and accept the cup God gives to us in every moment of our lives. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Second Station: Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Then, while [Jesus] was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. His betrayer had arranged a signal with them, saying, “The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him and lead him away securely.” He came and immediately went over to him and said, “Rabbi.” And he kissed him. At this they laid hands on him and arrested him.

Mark 14: 43-46

PRAYER

Hear our prayer, heavenly Father, for all who cooperate in the evil of abortion. For nurses and clerks, for doctors and aides, for relatives and friends, for spouses and parents: Give them clear vision, Lord, to see the evil before them. Give them the grace of repentance and true contrition, that they may turn from their sin and vow to never cooperate with this evil again. We ask this through him who is our Truth, Christ the Lord. Amen.

Third Station: Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: When day came the council of elders of the people met, both chief priests and scribes, and they brought him before their Sanhedrin. They said, “If you are the Messiah, tell us,” but he replied to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I question, you will not respond. But from this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?” He replied to them, “You say that I am.” Then they said, “What further need have we for testimony? We have heard it from his own mouth.”

Luke 22: 66-71

PRAYER

They so desired your death, Lord Jesus, that they bent the truth to kill you. Banish from our hearts the hate that wishes to kill, and all desire to be seduced by violent revenge. To the killer give the grace of repentance, and to the victim the desire for justice and mercy. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Fourth Station: Jesus is Denied by Peter

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied it in front of everyone, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about!” As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus the Nazorean.” Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man!” A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, “Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away.” At that he began to curse and to swear, “I do not know the man.” And immediately a cock crowed.

Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken: “Before the cock crows you will deny me three times.” He went out and began to weep bitterly.

Matthew 26: 69-75

PRAYER

Hear our prayer, O merciful Lord, for every child betrayed by those who should be first to love them. Grant eternal peace to the innocent victims of abortion, and gently soften the hearts of the parents who took their lives. Grant them repentance, healing and peace. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

***Fifth Station:
Jesus is Judged by Pilate***

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: The chief priests with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole Sanhedrin, held a council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate questioned him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He said to him in reply, “You say so.” The chief priests accused him of many things. Again Pilate questioned him, “Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of.” Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed. ... Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barrabas... [and] handed [Jesus] over to be crucified.

Mark 15: 1-5, 15

PRAYER

Hear our prayer for all judges, Lord, and especially for those who sit upon the highest court in our land. Unlike Pilate, may they see whom their decisions may kill and put aside all earthly pride, embracing only the wisdom that comes from you. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

***Sixth Station:
Jesus is Scourged and Crowned
with Thorns***

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they struck him repeatedly.

John 19: 1-3

PRAYER

Hear our prayers for all we crown with thorns, O Lord: especially for the elderly, whom we scourge with our neglect. Fill our hearts with a love for them. In their weakness, may we see your suffering, in their pain may we find your cross. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Seventh Station: Jesus Bears the Cross

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: When the chief priests and the guards saw [Jesus] they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no guilt in him.” ... They cried out, “Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your king?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.

John 19: 6, 15-17

PRAYER

As you carried the cross, Lord, you fell again and again. Hear our prayer for all who bear the weight of fatal diseases. May their love for life give them hope, and their confidence in the creator of life bring them joy. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Eighth Station: Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: They pressed into service a passerby, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

Mark 15: 21

PRAYER

We share in your way of sorrows, Lord, whenever we are ridiculed for our defense of those little ones whom everyone else has forgotten. Be with those who seek to carry your cross wherever life is threatened, and when they are tempted by despair, send an angel to assist them with their burden.

For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

***Ninth Station:
Jesus Meets the Women of
Jerusalem***

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children, for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.’ At that time, people will say to the mountains, ‘Fall upon us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?”

Luke 23: 27-31

PRAYER

You loved the women of Jerusalem, Lord, as you loved their children. Yet you warned them of the dire evil which threatened to destroy their lives and their very souls. Open the ears of all women to your plea for life, O Lord. Grant them the grace to turn away from the sin of abortion and to walk with you this way of the cross. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

***Tenth Station:
Jesus is Crucified***

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. [Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”]

Luke 23: 33-34

PRAYER

Could there be any greater sin, O Lord, than nailing the innocent Son of God to the cross? Yet still today, we slaughter innocent children in their mother’s wombs. Deliver us from this madness, O Lord, and teach us how we might preach the Gospel of Life through the merits of your Passion and Glorious Cross. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

**Eleventh Station:
Jesus Promises His Kingdom to
the Good Thief**

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we
bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.

Reader: Now one of the criminals hanging
there reviled Jesus, saying, “Are you not the
Messiah? Save yourself and us.” The other,
however, rebuking him, said in reply, “Have
you no fear of God, for you are subject to
the same condemnation? And indeed, we
have been condemned justly, for the sentence we
received corresponds to our crimes, but this man
has done nothing criminal.” Then he said, “Jesus,
remember me when you come into your kingdom.”
He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you
will be with me in Paradise.”

Luke 23: 39-43

PRAYER

Grant repentance, O Lord, to all who have sinned
against the Gospel of Life: to doctors who abort,
mothers who abandon their children, those who
would execute prisoners, or euthanize the old. To
researchers who refuse to follow your will, or those
who would profit on the sufferings
of others: give a full portion of your grace and your
mercy, that they too might turn from their sin and
find you, who are Lord forever and ever. Amen.

**Twelfth Station:
Jesus Speaks to His Mother
and the Disciple**

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we
bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.

Reader: Standing by the cross of Jesus were his
mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of
Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his
mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he
said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.”
Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.”
And from that hour the disciple took her into his
home.

John 19: 25-27

PRAYER

A mother’s love, O Lord, is like no other. So you
entrusted the youngest apostle to the care of the
Blessed Virgin Mary. Entrust the child in its
mother’s womb to the Blessed Mother, Lord.
Entrust the prisoner who sits on death row to her
care. Entrust the work of the scientist who seeks a
cure, and the life of the old man in a hospital bed as
well. May we all live under the protection of
Mary, our mother, from our conception to
natural death. For you are Lord, forever and ever.
Amen.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”; and when he had said this he breathed his last.

Luke 23: 44-46

PRAYER

Be with all who die today Lord, and bring the merits of your Passion to their aid. To those who die alone, send an angel of peace.

To those who die of violence, cradle them in your arms. To all who die, grant the mercy and peace of the Gospel of Life that they may rest in you, through whom they were born, and with whom, we pray, they might live forever. Amen.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

V. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it [in] clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed.

Matthew 27: 57-60

PRAYER

Your tomb, Lord Jesus, was not an end. In the glory of the paschal morning your empty tomb stood testament to your glorious destruction of sin and death. Destroy the culture of death, O Lord: Obliterate it in the light of your risen glory, that all who live and breathe might give you glory and celebrate the miracle of the life they have received from you. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Websites/Resources

The Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF)

Website: www.colf.ca

COLF was co-founded by the **Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB)** and the Supreme Council of the **Knights of Columbus**. COLF's mission is to build a culture of life and a civilization of love by promoting respect for human life and dignity and the essential role of the family.

Priests For Life

Website: www.priestsforlife.org/liturgy

This site provides a wealth of articles on the Catholic Church's role in the pro-life movement. Resources for laypeople and priests, liturgical aids, intercessions, scriptural reflections and homily helps for each Sunday of the Liturgical Year.

Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Website: www.usccb.org/prolife