

# Respect for Life – are we (you) doing enough?

## Objective:

Governments and international institutions promote abortion and euthanasia as marks of progress and freedom. But this is a false and perverse understanding in which freedom is equated with absolute individualism. True freedom is inherently relational, recognizing that God has entrusted us to one another. As cultures and societies fail to recognize these objective truths, everything becomes relative and all principles are called into question—even the fundamental right to life.

Catholics, and all people by their common humanity, are called to be concerned about abortion and euthanasia, education and health care, capital punishment and crime, war and hunger, and a much lengthier list of issues impacting the dignity of human life. In fact, we are called to see the person before we see the issue. With this view, we are not so much concerned about homelessness as we are about the homeless person; we do not simply look at capital punishment, but at the person on death row.

The Catholic Church has established 4 pillars of Pro-Life Activities

- Public Information & Education: Educate parishes, staff members, and volunteers on Respect Life Issues.
- Pastoral Care: Direct care for those in need such as women in crisis pregnancies or who have suffered the effects of abortion, families with children with special needs, or those who are dying.
- Public Policy: Work to effect change in laws to protect the unborn, the disabled, and the dying.
- Prayer & Worship: Programs of communal and individual prayer, and in celebrations that direct us all towards continued participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

What can be done to support these pillars?

**Song Suggestion:** You are Mine (Blue 552, Red 627)

## Bible and Catechism Readings:

### Jer 1:5

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.

### Jer 31:15-17

Thus says the LORD: In Ramah is heard the sound of sobbing, bitter weeping! Rachel mourns for her children, she refuses to be consoled for her children—they are no more! Thus says the LORD: Cease your cries of weeping, hold back your tears! There is compensation for your labor— oracle of the LORD— they shall return from the enemy's land. There is hope for your future—oracle of the LORD— your children shall return to their own territory.

### PS 139:13-16

You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works! My very self you know. My bones are not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, fashioned in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me unformed; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be.

### Gal 1:15

But when [God], who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, ...

**Catechism 2270**

Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.

**Catechism 2277**

Whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick, or dying persons. It is morally unacceptable.

**Saint:** Saint Gianna

Gianna Beretta Molla was born in Italy in 1922. She became a medical doctor, specializing in pediatrics. She married in 1955, and she and her husband, Pietro, had three children and lost two more to miscarriage. During her sixth pregnancy, it was discovered that Gianna had a tumor. She could have the tumor removed, but it would end the life of the baby she was carrying. She opted against the surgery, and gave birth in 1962 to a daughter. Gianna passed away a week after her baby, also named Gianna, was born.

Gianna's brave actions to save her unborn baby over her own life make her a hero in the pro-life movement. She was beatified in 1994 and canonized in 2004. St. Gianna is the patron saint of mothers, physicians, and unborn children. Her commitment to life and care for unborn children inspires the work we do with expectant and new mothers.

**Vignette:** – Susan became pregnant at a very difficult time in her life. She already had 3 young boys and her “boyfriend” was unpredictable and not working. She was also nervous, scared and concerned about what her family would think about her. She immediately considered terminating her pregnancy.

Ironically, Susan was working at an abortion facility in the recovery room making a substantial amount of money that she needed to take care of her boys. It was only by the grace of God that she walked through our clinic doors several months ago. Embarrassed to have an abortion with her employer, she came in assuming we were also an abortion clinic.

We offered her a free pregnancy test, free ultrasound and OPTIONS- options like adoption referrals, prenatal referrals, assistance with Medicaid applications, free parenting classes, men's groups, mom's groups, one-on-one mentoring, earn as you learn programs for gear and supplies like car seats, clothing and diapers. Susan quickly came to understand that we were what she needed most- a place where someone cared to listen without any judgment and unconditional love.

Susan not only chose life, but she quit her job at the abortion clinic and took a much lesser paying job at a child care facility so that she could bring her newborn with her to work. She is currently continuing to pursue a career as a patient care technician in a healthy environment.

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:**

How can we look at pro-life being more than life of the unborn?

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What ways are you instilling a “Respect for Life” mentality with your children?

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In our secular and humanistic culture, how can I explain life in the womb in terms of science and human-to-human approach without mentioning God or religion?

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According to the PEW research under the Resources below, it says: 56% of all Catholics believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Further, 68% believe that Roe v. Wade should not be overturned. What is this saying to you?

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Have you participated in any Respect For Life activities? Can you describe what it was and how you felt?

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### **Resources:**

- Respect for Life - <https://www.respectlife.org/>
- PEW Research on Catholics and abortion - <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/20/8-key-findings-about-catholics-and-abortion/>
- USCCB Respect for Life - <https://www.usccb.org/respectlife>
- Cincinnati Archdiocesan Respect for Life - <https://catholicaoc.org/offices/respect-life-ministries>
- IHM Respect for Life – [https://www.church.ihom.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=537629&type=d&pREC\\_ID=1253078](https://www.church.ihom.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=537629&type=d&pREC_ID=1253078), or contact Jane Elfers at [elfersj@yahoo.com](mailto:elfersj@yahoo.com)
- A related reference that is interesting, regarding reconciling abortion law with fetal homicide law. It is essentially about the definition of “person” - <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1334&context=caselrev>

### **Action Plan:**

- Sign up to receive the Archdiocesan newsletter here: <https://resources.catholicaoc.org/offices/respect-life-ministries/newsletter#drop>
- Look at the various Right to Life activities and prayerfully considering doing something with your family.

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