OUR LADY OF THE
BLESSED SACRAMENT
PARISH



9 DAYS FOR LIFE

PRAY TO PROTECT HUMAN LIFE

January 16-24, 2024

Respect Life Ministry & Rosary Group

Dear Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish,

The Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ended the nearly fifty-year nationwide reign of abortion on-demand that was ushered in by *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. In this monumental legal victory, the Supreme Court rightly concluded that there is nothing in the Constitution's text, history, American legal tradition, or the Court's precedents that prevents the government from protecting preborn children in the womb from the violence of abortion. Dobbs returned the issue of abortion to the people's elected representatives at the federal and state levels. And as we have seen, continuing work is needed to protect children, women, and families from the tragedy of abortion.

We must continue advocating for pro-life laws and policies, especially at the state and local levels. Abortion is legal in more states than not, with many working to expand and enshrine abortion protections. In addition to our efforts to protect human life in law, we must also help women facing unexpected or difficult pregnancies, offering them the compassionate support they need to lovingly welcome the gift of their children. We must do whatever we can in every sphere to ensure the flourishing of both mothers and their children throughout life's journey.

In solidarity with the countless lives lost to abortion, we symbolize our commitment to protecting the most vulnerable among us by lighting **112 candles**. Each flame represents the tragic number of children aborted in Illinois ***daily***—a stark reminder of the urgency of our mission.

Prayer is the foundation of everything we do in defense of human life. In the spirit of unity and advocacy, let us continue to work tirelessly for the protection and respect of the unborn. May our prayers be heard, whether spoken in the quiet of our hearts or said aloud in the public square, and may our actions reflect the profound love and compassion that our faith calls us to demonstrate for mothers, children and families. Together, as a community devoted to protecting life, we can make a difference!

In this pamphlet you will find prayers from a USCCB Holy Hour for Life and the 9-Day Novena for Life which may be prayed during Adoration, during the 9-Days for Life Novena or any time.

Yours In Life, the Respect Life Ministry

PRAYERS BEFORE THE BLESSED SACRAMENT FOR THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

PERIOD OF SILENT REFLECTION AND ADORATION

Gospel

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 6:35-40

Jesus said to the crowds:
"I am the bread of life;
whoever comes to me will never hunger,
and whoever believes in me will never thirst.

But I told you that although you have seen me,
you do not believe.
Everything that the Father gives me will come to me,
and I will not reject anyone who comes to me,
because I came down from heaven not to do my own will
but the will of the one who sent me.

And this is the will of the one who sent me,
that I should not lose anything of what he gave me,
but that I should raise it on the last day.

For this is the will of my Father,
that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him
may have eternal life,
and I shall raise him on the last day."

The Gospel of the Lord.
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PERIOD OF SILENT REFLECTION AND ADORATION

Litany of the Sacred Heart

Kyrie Eleison. **Kyrie Eleison.**
Christe Eleison. **Christe Eleison**
Kyrie Eleison. **Kyrie Eleison**

Christ, hear us. **Christ, hear us.**
Christ, graciously hear us. **Christ, graciously hear us.**

God, our Father in heaven, **have mercy on us.**
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, **have mercy on us.**
God, the Holy Spirit, **have mercy on us.**
Holy Trinity, One God, **have mercy on us.**

Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, united in substance to the Word of God, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, of infinite majesty, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, sacred temple of God, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, tabernacle of the Most High One, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of heaven, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, abode of justice and love, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, wellspring of all virtues, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, most worthy of all praise, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, king and center of all hearts, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, in whom dwells the fullness of divinity, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, in whom the Father was well pleased, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, desire of the everlasting hills, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, patient and most merciful, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, enriching all who invoke you, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, fountain of life and holiness, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, atonement for our sins, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, overwhelmed with insults, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, bruised for our offenses, **have mercy on us.**

Heart of Jesus, obedient unto death, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, victim of sins, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who trust in you, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, hope of those who die in you, **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, delight of all the saints, **have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, **spare us, Lord.**
graciously hear us, **Lord have mercy on us.**

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, **Make our hearts like to yours.**

Let us pray,
God our loving Father,
grant wisdom to those who govern us,
compassion and courage
to those who work to defend human life,
and safety and care to every human being.
For you alone who formed us in our mothers' wombs,
and who call us home to heaven,
are God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PERIOD OF SILENT REFLECTION AND ADORATION

Gospel

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 6:53-58

Jesus said to the Jews:
"Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,
you do not have life within you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
has eternal life,
and I will raise him on the last day.

For my flesh is true food,
and my blood is true drink.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
remains in me and I in him.

Just as the living Father sent me
and I have life because of the Father,
so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven.
Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died,
whoever eats this bread will live forever."

The Gospel of the Lord.
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PERIOD OF SILENT REFLECTION AND ADORATION

Litany for Life

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

God of all creation, **Lord, have mercy.**
Christ, through whom all things were made, **Lord, have mercy.**
Spirit of life and truth, **Lord, have mercy.**
On each child just conceived, **Lord, have mercy.**
For their safety and health, **Lord, have mercy.**
For nine months of growth, **Lord, have mercy.**
That an angel may protect them, **Lord, have mercy.**
For peace and for hope, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all new fathers, **Lord, have mercy.**
On fathers who are alone, **Lord, have mercy.**
On fathers unemployed, **Lord, have mercy.**
On fathers addicted, **Lord, have mercy.**
On fathers who are abusive, **Lord, have mercy.**
On young fathers who are afraid, **Lord, have mercy.**
On fathers who've run away, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all new mothers, **Lord, have mercy.**
On mothers who are alone, **Lord, have mercy.**
On mothers unemployed, **Lord, have mercy.**
On mothers addicted, **Lord, have mercy.**
On mothers who are abusive, **Lord, have mercy.**
On young mothers who are afraid, **Lord, have mercy.**
On mothers who are in pain, **Lord, have mercy.**
On those who defend life, **Lord, have mercy.**
On those who love the child in the womb, **Lord, have mercy.**
On those who pray for the unborn child, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all who work to change unjust laws, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all who live the Gospel of Life, **Lord, have mercy.**
On Congressmen who work for life, **Lord, have mercy.**
On our President, **Lord, have mercy.**
On the members of the House, **Lord, have mercy.**
On the members of the Senate, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all to little to vote or persuade, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all who work for life, **Lord, have mercy.**

On doctors of life and of truth, **Lord, have mercy.**
On residents who love the little child, **Lord, have mercy.**
On doctors who gaze on life's mysteries, **Lord, have mercy.**
On physicians who see into the womb, **Lord, have mercy.**
On surgeons who heal the unborn child, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all who defend the child in the womb, **Lord, have mercy.**
On nurses who love little babies, **Lord, have mercy.**
On nursing students, **Lord, have mercy.**
On those who first hear the heartbeat, **Lord, have mercy.**
On those who first feel a kick, **Lord, have mercy.**
On nurses who cradle the newborn, **Lord, have mercy.**
On nurses who foster the unborn, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all who protect defenseless life, **Lord, have mercy.**
On judges who struggle with justice, **Lord, have mercy.**
On lawyers who seek to speak truth, **Lord, have mercy.**
On judges who love life, **Lord, have mercy.**
On the judges of our Supreme Court, **Lord, have mercy.**
On those who argues before them, **Lord, have mercy.**
On the unborn child who rests in their hands, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all victims of abortion, **Lord, have mercy.**
On the woman whose memories cause her to cry, **Lord, have mercy.**
On those whose pain nags and holds on, **Lord, have mercy.**
On the unborn who rest with God, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all who seek mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all who seek peace, **Lord, have mercy.**
On all who seek healing, and mercy, and perfect peace, **Lord, have mercy.**

God our loving Father,
grant wisdom to those who govern us,
compassion and courage
to those who work to defend human life,
and safety and care to every human being.
For you alone who formed us in our mother's wombs,
and who call us home to heaven,
are God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PERIOD OF SILENT REFLECTION AND ADORATION

9 DAYS FOR LIFE

Day One

Intercession: May the tragic practice of abortion end.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: At every stage and in every circumstance, we are held in existence by God's love. The presence of an illness, disability, or other challenging situation never diminishes the value of a human life. God does not call us to perfection of appearance or abilities, but to perfection in *love*. Christ invites us to embrace our own lives and the lives of others as true *gifts*.

Abortion tragically rejects the truth that every life is a good and perfect gift, deserving protection. This violent practice ends the life of a human being at its very beginning and horribly wounds all those involved. But Christ came that we "might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10), taking on human flesh for the sake of our redemption. May our culture experience the power of God's transforming love, that all eyes may be opened to the incredible beauty of every human life.

Acts of Reparation (Choose one.)

- Take a break from television and movies today. Consider spending some of that time praying with today's reflection.
- Pray the short prayer "Every Life is Worth Living," reflecting on the gift of human life.

Heavenly Father, thank you
for the precious gift of life.
Help us to cherish and protect
this gift, even in the midst of fear,
pain, and suffering.
Give us love for all people,
especially the most vulnerable,
and help us bear witness to the
Grant us the humility to accept
help when we are in need,
and teach us to be merciful to all.
Through our words and actions,
may others encounter the
outstretched hands
of Your mercy.
We ask this through

- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

One Step Further: Abortion is frequently a topic in the news, political debates, and everyday conversations with family or friends. Because abortion can be a controversial and emotional issue in any arena, many of us may feel intimidated when the topic arises, not knowing what to say. "Another Look at Abortion" provides a basic overview and summarizes key points. This article will help you be better prepared to witness to the sanctity of human life: respectlife.org/another-look-at-abortion.

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Day Two

If you or someone you know is suffering from participation in abortion, confidential, compassionate help is available. Visit hopeafterabortion.org.

Intercession: May each person suffering from participation in abortion find forgiveness, hope, and healing in Christ.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: Countless children's lives have been ended by abortion, and countless parents and family members suffer guilt, grief, and regret—often in silence. Yet God's greatest desire is to forgive. No matter how far we have each strayed from His side, He says to us, "Don't be afraid. Draw close to my heart." Be assured that it is never too late to seek God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Consider the parable of the Prodigal Son. After repenting of sinning against his father, he returns from far away to seek forgiveness and work as a servant. But his father sees him approaching, runs to warmly embrace him, and hosts a banquet to celebrate his return. So, too, does God welcome all His children who come to Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation with contrite hearts, no matter how serious the sin. Let us turn confidently to Our Lord, Who is love and mercy.

Acts of Reparation (Choose one.)

- Abstain from meat today.
- Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for today's intention (usccb.org/divine-mercy-chaplet).
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

One Step Further: If a friend confided in you that she had an abortion, would you be able to listen and respond in a way that brings her closer to forgiveness and healing? Learn how in "How to Talk to a Friend Who's Had an Abortion" (usccb.org/friend-had-abortion).

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Day Three

Intercession: May every pregnant mother receive compassionate care and support as she nurtures the life in her womb.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she opened her heart to receive his message that she would conceive the Son of God in her womb. As a young bride who had not yet lived with her husband, Mary knew that her pregnancy presented many challenges. Despite this knowledge, she faithfully responded, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

Like the Blessed Mother, women who unexpectedly become pregnant often face significant challenges. They, too, are called to place their trust in God and faithfully respond to His *gift* of new life. And we are called to walk with them in their time of need. As Jesus taught us, when we love and serve others, we are loving and serving Him.

May all expectant mothers be encouraged by Mary's example and receive support and grace in lovingly welcoming their children into the world.

Acts of Reparation (Choose one.)

- Pray for pregnant and parenting moms in need in your local community, and ask the Lord how you can help them by using your unique gifts. (You can sign up for monthly stories of how Catholics across the country are *Walking with Moms in Need* at walkingwithmoms.com/subscribe.)
- Pray the Angelus today (usccb.org/angelus). You might also consider saying it every day for the next week—on awakening, at noon, or at 6 p.m. (or all three times).
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

One Step Further: When a woman is facing an unexpected pregnancy, the reaction of the first person she tells tends to set the tone for her decision-making. Pregnancy can be difficult and frightening, but no matter the circumstances, it's important for an expectant mother to feel supported and loved. Read "10 Ways to Support Her When She's Unexpectedly Expecting" (respectlife.org/support-her) for simple tips on how to provide loving, life-affirming support for a friend who is unexpectedly pregnant. Your support may be the only support she receives.

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Day Four

Intercession: May every father of a preborn child lovingly support the mother of his child in welcoming new life.

Prayers: *Our Father,* 3 *Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: Fatherhood has its origins in God, who chose to reveal Himself to us as Our Father, sending his only Son for the sake of our salvation. Fathers therefore have a special role "in revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God" (*Familiaris consortio* 25). Fathers are called to exhibit "generous responsibility for the life conceived under the heart of the mother" (*FC* 25). They are uniquely entrusted with the protection and defense of both mother and child and, in this way, in safeguarding the sanctity of human life.

As evidenced in our world today, the role of the father "is of unique and irreplaceable importance" (*FC* 25). Often women choose abortion because they do not have the support of the child's father, or—even worse—the father of the child pressures her to make the decision to abort. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge with compassion that men can also be overwhelmed by an unexpected pregnancy and that society increasingly tells them that they should have no say in their children's lives. In the face of these false messages, we pray that fathers of preborn children will find courage in the example of Saint Joseph—who embraced the role of father amid difficult circumstances—and offer loving, life-affirming support to the mothers of their children.

Acts of Reparation (Choose one.)

- Give up sleeping on your pillow—or even your bed—tonight. Offer this small sacrifice for the intention that fathers of preborn children will courageously answer their call to support both mother and child.
- Pray a decade of the Rosary for all fathers of preborn children, that through her intercession, Our Lady may inspire in them the virtues of Saint Joseph: usccb.org/how-to-pray-the-rosary.
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

One Step Further: Research continues to show that one of the top reasons a woman chooses abortion is due to a lack of financial resources. Read "Poverty and Abortion: A Vicious Cycle," which explores the connections between abortion and poverty, and how the absence of fathers contributes to this ongoing cycle (respectlife.org/poverty-and-abortion).

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Day Five

Intercession: May every pregnant mother choosing adoption receive grace and support in embracing this loving option.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: Mothers placing their children for adoption often face many challenges along the way. One of the greatest obstacles can be perceiving adoption as abandonment. But a mother who determines that making an adoption plan is best for her child isn't deserting her child. Rather, she is following the example of Christ's sacrificial love on the Cross in choosing a life-giving option that she has determined is ultimately in the best interest of her child, even at great cost to herself. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that, in the face of fears and trials, we can "hold fast to the hope that lies before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm" (Heb 6:18-19). We pray that each expectant mother will be filled with "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding" (Phil 4:7) as she decides which life-giving option is best for her child. Let us all cling fast to the anchor of hope, for we have received "a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father!'" (Rom 8:15).

Acts of Reparation (Choose one.)

- Do you have a sweet tooth? Or do you prefer salty snacks? Pick your favorite kind of treat, and give it up for the day.
- Look up one of the Scripture passages from today's reflection, and spend some time with it in prayer. What is the Lord saying to you?
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

One Step Further: "Accompanying Expectant Mothers Considering Adoption" suggests nine ways to offer ongoing support to a woman who is considering making an adoption plan for her preborn child (respectlife.org/mothers-considering-adoption). Many of the tips given are also helpful for supporting a friend who is experiencing a challenging or unexpected pregnancy, even if adoption has not been brought up. Supplemental resources regarding adoption can be found at usccb.org/adoption-resources.

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Day Six

Intercession: May all who support or participate in abortion experience a conversion of heart to seek and receive the Lord's boundless mercy.

Prayers: *Our Father,* 3 *Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: When God fashioned the human person in His own image and likeness, He destined us for eternal life with Himself. Yet because of the sin of our first parents, death entered the world. The book of Genesis recounts the first occasion in which a person takes the life of another, as Cain violently kills his brother Abel. This instance of brother rising up against brother "at the very dawn of history is thus a sad witness of how evil spreads with amazing speed" (*Evangelium vitae* 8).

Since this time, disregard for human life has continued to spread. When we, like Cain, allow sin to find a place in our hearts, we become blinded to the truth. Sometimes this blindness might be so deep that we fail to recognize the undeniable humanity of preborn children. We may even tragically believe the lie that abortion is an act of compassion. But we know that "life, especially human life, belongs only to God: for this reason whoever attacks human life, in some way attacks God himself" (*EV* 9). Let us pray that all who support abortion will encounter the transforming love of the Father and, with repentant hearts, seek His mercy.

Acts of Reparation (Choose one.)

- Smile. Ask God today for the grace to be extra joyful and to share the light of Christ with those most in need of His love and mercy.
- Make an act of faith, hope, or love (usccb.org/faith-hope-love).
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

One Step Further: *Evangelium vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*) was written to reaffirm the value and inviolability of every human life and to appeal to all people to respect, protect, love, and serve every human life. A brief summary highlights key themes and foundational teachings from the papal encyclical, exploring how the Church's teachings regarding human life are at the heart of Jesus' entire Gospel message (respectlife.org/gospel-of-life-summary).

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Day Seven

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

Did You Know?

*"In all the Dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion" (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 373).*

Intercession: May all preborn children be protected in law and welcomed in love.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: Today, we mourn the many children's lives ended by abortion and remember in prayer those who suffer the aftermath. We pray that children in their mothers' wombs would again be protected in law and do penance in reparation for abortions that have been committed in our world.

In his encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*), Pope John Paul II said, "may an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and lover of life, from every Christian community, from every group and association, from every family and from the heart of every believer" (*EV* 100). May that prayer arise in our hearts today and each day forward until every human being is protected in law and welcomed in love.

Acts of Reparation (Choose one.)

- Fast from one meal today.
- Offer this brief "Prayer for Life" for all preborn children whose lives are at risk. (The prayer is also available at usccb.org/prayer-for-life.)

Father and maker of all,
you adorn all 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 life.

Grant this through our Lord
Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in
the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever.
Amen

- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

One Step Further: More women and girls consider abortion than we may realize. They are our relatives and friends, people who work with us or for us. Even if someone identifies as being pro-life, the shock of an unexpected pregnancy, the devastation of a difficult prenatal diagnosis, shame, pressures, or fears may influence her to consider abortion.

If someone shared with you that she was pregnant and hadn't ruled out having an abortion, would you know how to respond in a loving way that is life-affirming for both her and her baby? Learn about the four steps of the L.O.V.E. Approach™*: *Listen and Learn*, *Open Options*, *Vision and Value*, and *Extend and Empower* (respectlife.org/l-o-v-e).

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Day Eight

Intercession: May civic leaders work for the protection of all human life, in every stage and circumstance.

Prayers: *Our Father,* 3 *Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: The Declaration of Independence boldly affirms that first among our inalienable rights is the right to life, given to us by the Creator. Yet despite being so solemnly proclaimed, the right to life is today threatened and often denied, particularly at the moments when life is most fragile. Our laws should—first and foremost—protect life. Even with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, many states still do not recognize children in their mothers' wombs as persons and still claim that abortion is a right. Further, many political leaders work actively to increase access to abortion. Some falsely describe it as health care and even as a basic human right. Laws and policies that legalize or promote an intrinsic evil like abortion violate the virtue of justice.

Those who work as public officials and civic leaders have a duty to serve the common good, and therefore have a profound obligation to safeguard this most fundamental right to life. Through our own prayer, witness, and civic participation, we can encourage our leaders to truly answer their call to protect the rights of all people. For "there can be no true democracy without a recognition of every person's dignity and without respect for his or her rights" (*Evangelium vitae* 101).

Acts of Reparation (Choose one.)

- Sacrifice some of your free time to do a small act of service, such as making breakfast for a family member, writing a note of encouragement to a coworker, or praying for the intentions of a friend.
- Sometimes restrictions on religious freedom constrain our efforts to live out the Gospel of life. We must be free to live out our Catholic faith in the public square. Offer this Prayer for Religious Liberty, that Christians may always be free to respect, protect, and defend human life: usccb.org/prayer-for-religious-liberty.
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

One Step Further: When discussing the political responsibility of Catholics, the U.S. bishops have repeatedly affirmed, "the threat of abortion remains our pre-eminent priority."[1] Abortion directly attacks life itself, takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and destroys over a million lives annually in the United States. Learn more in "Priorities at the Polls": respectlife.org/priorities-at-the-polls.

[1] *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States,* Introductory Note. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2023.

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Day Nine

Intercession: May all who defend life find strength and renewal in the Holy Spirit.

Prayers: *Our Father,* 3 *Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: God has carefully, tenderly created every person in His own image and likeness, to be in a loving relationship with Himself. From each tiny child knit within a mother's womb, to every person approaching death, all are loved perfectly and completely by God: "It is therefore a service of love which we are all committed to ensure to our neighbor, that his or her life may be always defended and promoted, *especially when it is weak or threatened* [emphasis added]" (*Evangelium vitae* 77).

In a world in which those who are most vulnerable are so often overlooked and disregarded, Christ calls us to embrace and uphold the unconditional dignity of every human life. In answering this call, we help to build "a new culture of life, the fruit of the culture of truth and of love" (*EV* 77). May the Holy Spirit continually renew us as we strive to faithfully defend God's gift of life.

Acts of Reparation (Choose one.)

- Do you love your cup of coffee? Abstain from caffeine today, or try your coffee black.
- "Unplug" for some time today, and reflect on how God may be asking you to help build a culture of life in your home, workplace, or Church community.
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

One Step Further: Watching the news and reading headlines, we may often feel helpless in the face of heartbreaking lack of respect for human life. When our efforts to make a difference feel small, it's important to remember that changing the culture is a process of conversion that begins in our own hearts. It includes a willingness to be instructed by the Holy Spirit and a desire to be close to Jesus—the source of joy and love. "How to Build a Culture of Life" briefly explains where to start: respectlife.org/culture-of-life.

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Want more? The Bishops' Pro-Life office offers many prayer resources to aid you, your family, and our parish community to lift up our hearts and minds to God for the protection of sacred human life. Visit **usccb.org/pro-life-prayer**