



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
**Office of Human Life,
Family and Bioethics**



July 2020

Dear Friends for Life,

A Word of Thanks

In June, our diocese was blessed with the ordination of two new priests, Fr. Rafal Borowiejski and Fr. John Crozier, as well as the Episcopal Consecration of Bishop Luis Miguel Romero Fernandez, M. Id.. We pray for them to be faithful servants of God!

We are particularly fortunate in the Diocese of Rockville Centre for the enthusiastic support of Bishop Barres and our faithful clergy in the mission of our Office—to build a civilization of love and life. We are especially grateful at this time for the vibrant, joy-filled priests of our diocese who have resourcefully and steadfastly persevered in the last few months of surreal existence in parish life. We must continue to pray for all of our dear priests, who shepherd us through the good and the difficult times: those newly ordained, those ordained some time ago, those retired, those deceased and those whose vocations have yet to be discerned.

Introducing PEWS

Next month, you will notice our newsletter is gradually transforming with the expanded mission of our Office. (An upgrade to our website is forthcoming, too!) A significant change, for example, is that the pillars of our mission, unchanged in their essence, have new titles which we hope underscore something very important: the partnership that the clergy and lay people have in advancing the mission not only of our Office but of the influence of the Church and its teaching in the world.



The framework of our initiatives will continue to follow the traditional approach of the former Respect Life Office. But now, these four pillars are updated with the aid of the mnemonic, “PEWS” which represents our focus on **P**rayer, **E**ducation, **W**itness and **S**upport & Service. It acknowledges that our greatest resource to build a culture of life is the lay faithful—all of us, you and me, *in the pews*. It is also there *in the pews* of our parishes, in participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, that families and individuals, in community, derive their spiritual strength. From here, they grow in formation of the Faith such that they are inspired and prepared to bring the Good News into the world around them. It is the one place where we all can easily “connect” with our priests on whom we rely for the Sacraments that strengthen and heal us in the battles of this life, to be spiritual fathers who guide and instruct us in the truths of our Faith, and to prepare us, without compromise, for the next life.¹ But we, in the pews, as

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church with modifications from the Editio Typica*, 2nd edition Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 1997, 1548—1549.

the body of the Church, must go forth into the world and bring the radical message of Jesus Christ to those who do not know it in its fullness.²

Although most of the programs we are developing are not limited to one pillar, there is often a dominant focus.

Prayer: Private and public prayer and worship, bolstered by Eucharistic Adoration and fasting, must be the underpinning of all our good works and intentions. "...but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God." (The New American Bible, Philippians 4:6)

Education: We must be knowledgeable on all life issues, keep informed on legislative issues, and learn how our Catholic moral teaching is applied to matters of daily living especially in the biosciences and healthcare, i.e. bioethics.

Witness: This work occurs through our daily activities that demonstrate true holiness and Christian charity by putting our words into action. This means pursuing what is morally right and obligatory, not necessarily popular and easy. It also includes legislative advocacy in which we oppose unjust laws and seek laws that instead honor and respect the supreme gift of life, etc. Our witness can be demonstrated at the bedside, in the streets, in our families, in Albany or Washington—anywhere that we need to bring the light of Christ!

Service & Support is performed not only in our small, often unnoticed, sacrifices for the good of the other but also in formal ways through entities that help others in difficult times. This is accomplished through financial, volunteer and other support of programs that foster the dignity of the human person and uphold the sanctity of all human life. It can be as simple as praying at the bedside of a dying person, serving as a volunteer taking calls for a suicide helpline or providing companionship to a single mom facing a challenging pregnancy alone. "For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (James 2:26)

I encourage you to read the rest of the newsletter, but wish to highlight three items in which we take great pleasure announcing:

- This month, we celebrate **National Natural Family Planning (NFP) Awareness Week**, July 19-25. In recognition of this, Jamey Hutchinson, BSN, CFCP, CFCE, will be offering a **free webinar** to introduce some of the basics of fertility awareness. Jamey is now a part of our Office acting as the liaison for education with the Gianna Center for Women's Health and Fertility. There is also a link to USCCB materials that explains why NFP methods are compatible with God's gift for procreation.
- In our Take Action section, please check out our vaccine overview, "**Vaccines: What You Need to Know**," at www.vaccinebioethics.com, to be launched this week. It is a general guide on some of the bioethical issues and Church teaching concerning vaccines produced using immorally derived cell lines. This issue will be increasingly important in the near future as vaccinations, currently in development for COVID-19, become available for public use. We hope this will help you to make healthy and holy decisions for you and your family. Nevertheless, the information and our moral duties apply to all vaccines, so this may be used as a general reference, too.

² Catechism, 897-903.

- We are adding **“A Bit of Bioethics”** each month as a companion article to the Director’s letter in which I will cover a timely topic in bioethics. This month, I will review **the morality of the human act** that we might continue to deepen our understanding of Church teaching and grow in holiness—despite these challenging times.

I hope you find these changes and the information contained therein edifying. Please keep praying without ceasing!

God bless you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Honkanen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "H".

Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D.