

WALKING WITH MOMS IN NEED



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A Prayer for Pregnant Mothers



@mukuni via Twenty20

O Blessed Mother, you received the good news of the incarnation of Christ, your Son, with faith and trust. Grant your protection to all pregnant mothers facing difficulties.

Guide us as we strive to make our parish communities places of welcome and assistance for mothers in need. Help us become instruments of God's love and compassion.

Mary, Mother of the Church, graciously help us build a culture of life and a civilization of love, together with all people of good will, to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life.
Amen.

*Cf. *Evangelium vitae* 105 © Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City. Adapted with permission. All rights reserved. Photo: @mukuni via Twenty20. Copyright © 2019, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

Walking with Moms in Need

Walking with Moms in Need can answer the question:
"Where is the Church?"

Women facing challenging pregnancies should see the Church as a place where they can find help, with its myriad of social services and organizations dedicated to meeting the needs of people in crisis.

Walking with Moms in Need



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But **do we as a Church have an accurate picture** at this crucial time of what is available for moms in need? Where help is available, how is it communicated? We have well over 17,000 parishes in the US. Everyone in the parish community should know where to refer and how to help a pregnant woman in need.

What is Walking with Moms in Need?

Walking with Moms in Need is a **process** whereby Catholic parishes "walk in the shoes" of local pregnant and parenting women in need.

It is a **national movement** where Catholic churches across the country focus deeply on the needs of vulnerable women and their children, **developing an inventory** of local resources and a plan to ensure no woman falls through the cracks.

What is Walking with Moms in Need?

Each parish follows this similar process that helps parishioners better understand, befriend, and serve women in need in their community.

Whether they already have a strong pregnancy care ministry or not, the *Walking with Moms* process helps **support and magnify** the work being done locally and at the parish.

Vision and Goals

Improve and better communicate help to pregnant women in need

- Parishes will self-assess their capacity, and discover local resources/providers to support moms in need
- Increase/improve communication of help to moms in need
- As appropriate, parishes will expand capacity

Vision and Goals

Inspire, excite, and engage the parish community around a holistic, life-affirming initiative

- Identify parish leaders (new and experienced)
- Provide effective tools for parish volunteers



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Vision and Goals

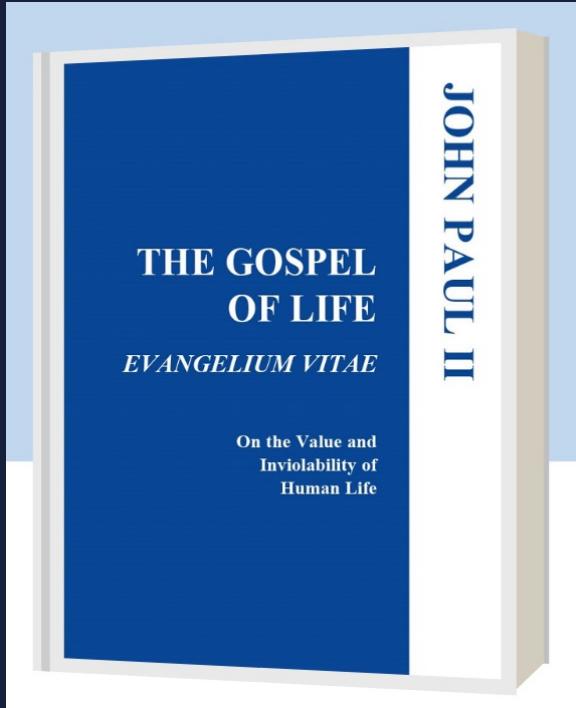
Move parishioners to a deeper vision of what it means to serve the Gospel of Life

- Helping moms and families draws people together
- New opportunities for collaboration, such as pro-life and social justice
- A proactive, pro-woman, pro-life vision that will draw people further into the fullness of the Church's cohesive teachings, and witness to the dignity of every human person.

Inspiration

- In honor and celebration of the 25th anniversary of *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium vitae)* written by Pope St. John Paul II.
- Pope Francis' call for the Church to go to and accompany those at the peripheries

Inspiration



“ With great openness and courage, we need to question how widespread is the culture of life today among individual Christians, families, groups and communities in our Dioceses. With equal clarity and determination we must identify the steps we are called to take in order to serve life in all its truth.”

(Evangelium vitae, 95)

Inspiration



CNS/Paul Haring

“

Dear brothers and sisters, how greatly I desire that all those places where the Church is present, especially our parishes and our communities, may become **islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference!**

Pope Francis, 2015 Lenten Message

Inspiration



Model used for illustrative purposes only.
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- Pregnant and parenting moms in need are in our parishes and our neighborhoods.
- Based on 2014 data, 24% of women choosing abortion self-identified as Catholic.

Inspiration



iStock.com/jferrer

- We have over 17,000 parishes in the U.S.
- Any woman who is facing a challenging or unexpected pregnancy—or who is parenting young children in difficult circumstances—needs to know the Church is a place where she can find help.

Inspiration

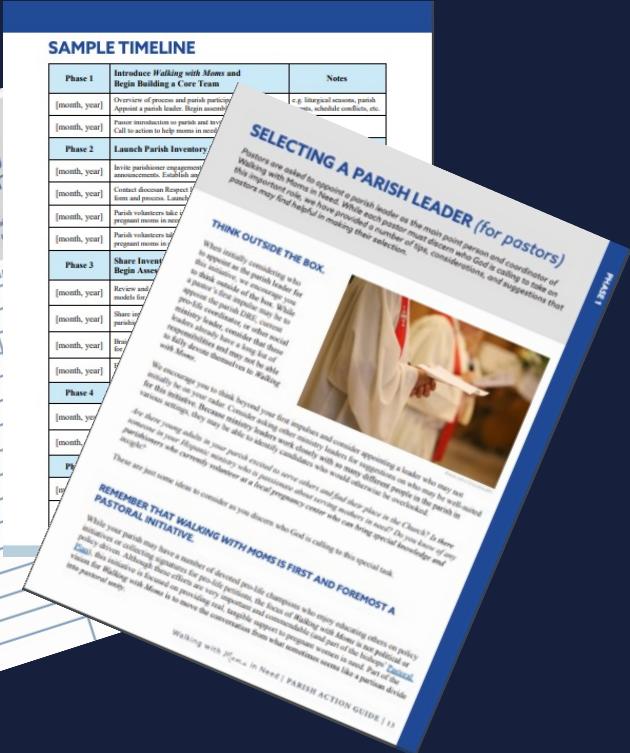


iStock.com/WDnet

Everyone in the parish community should know where to refer a pregnant or parenting woman in need.

3 Simple Steps for Parishes

1. Inventory local resources and services.
2. Assess the results and identify gaps.
3. Plan and implement a ***parish*** response.



Parish Participation

- The goal is NOT the completion of a checklist.
- A **process** of prayer and discernment.
- Parishes identify their gifts and how they can build on what already exists.

Parish Resources



The screenshot shows the 'PARISH RESOURCES' section of the website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: HOME, LEARN MORE, GET STARTED, PRAY, and NEWS. Below the navigation, the title 'PARISH RESOURCES' is displayed in a large, bold, dark blue font. To the right of the title is a small decorative graphic of a sprig with small flowers. The main content area contains text about the nationwide effort 'Walking with Moms in Need' and provides resources for parishes. It includes a thumbnail image of a computer screen showing a video player with the title 'WALKING WITH MOMS IN NEED a year of service' and a small logo. To the right of the thumbnail is a section titled 'Don't know where to start?' which describes an introductory webinar.

As part of the nationwide effort *Walking with Moms in Need*, parishes that have the support of their bishop and pastor are asked to complete a simple inventory of the resources currently available in their local area, assess the results and identify gaps, and plan and implement a parish response based on their findings. The following resources are provided to help guide parishes through the process as they work to better serve pregnant women in need.

Don't know where to start?

This [introductory webinar](#) explains the vision and inspiration for *Walking with Moms in Need*. It also guides you through the website and extensive resources, explaining how—with these tools—you can help pregnant and parenting moms in your community.

- Resources are available to guide you step-by-step through the process of a parish inventory, assessment, and response.
- Everything you need can be found online.

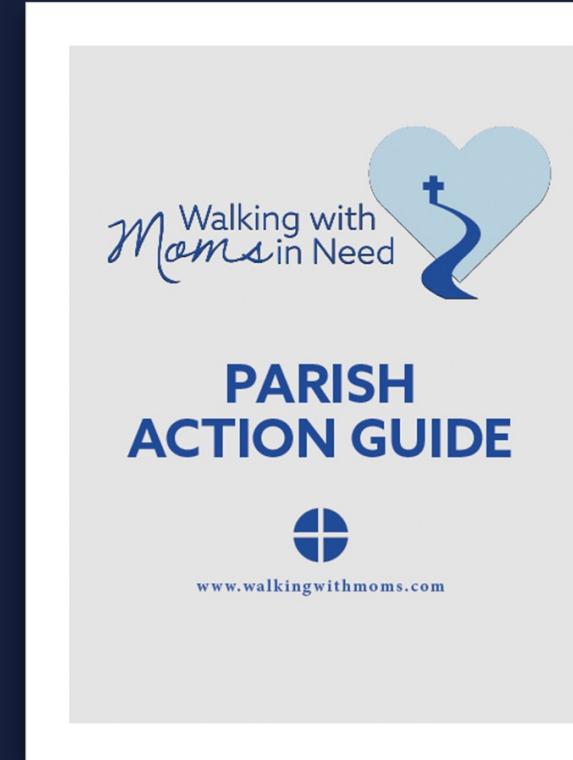
www.WalkingWithMoms.com/parish-resources



Parish Resources

Parish Action Guide:

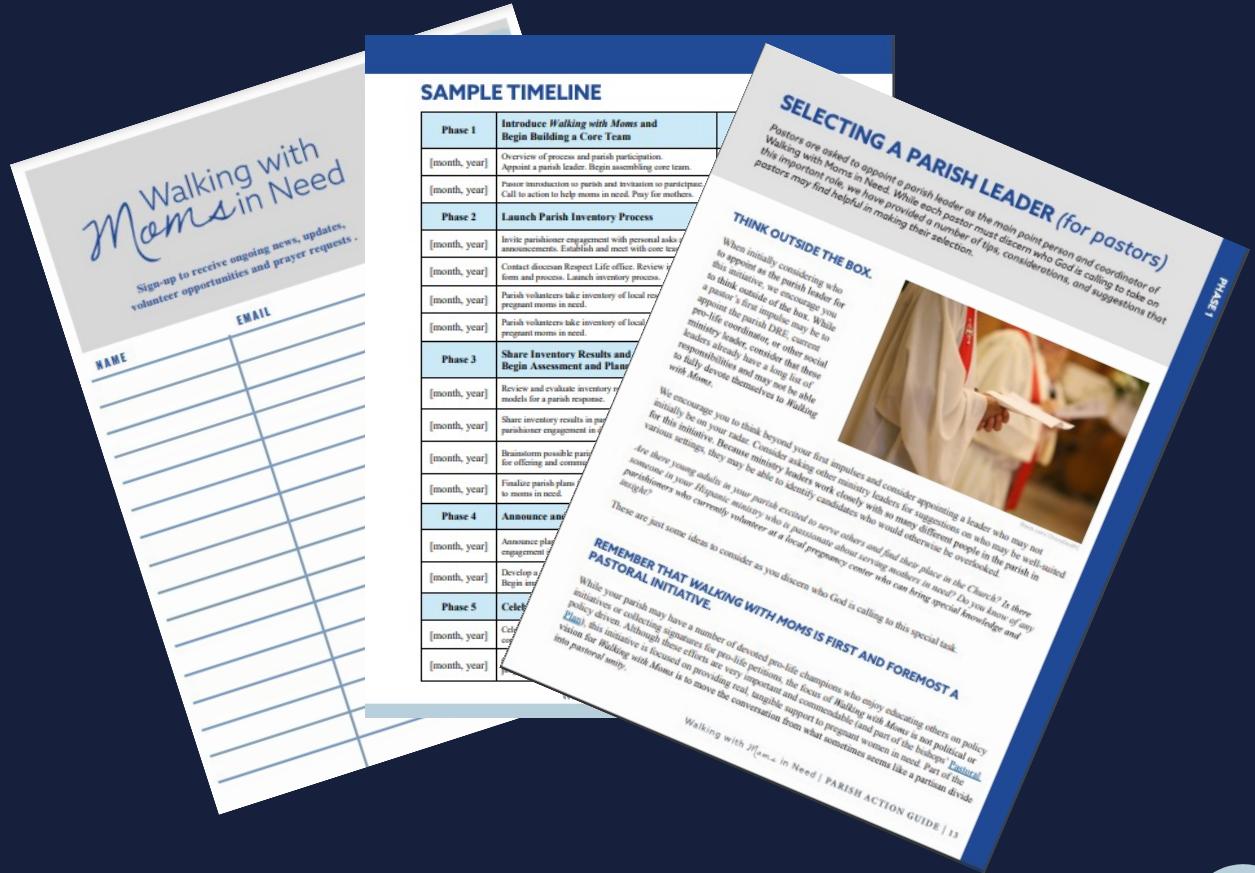
- 5 Phases
- Yearlong Process
- EVERYTHING you need



Parish Resources

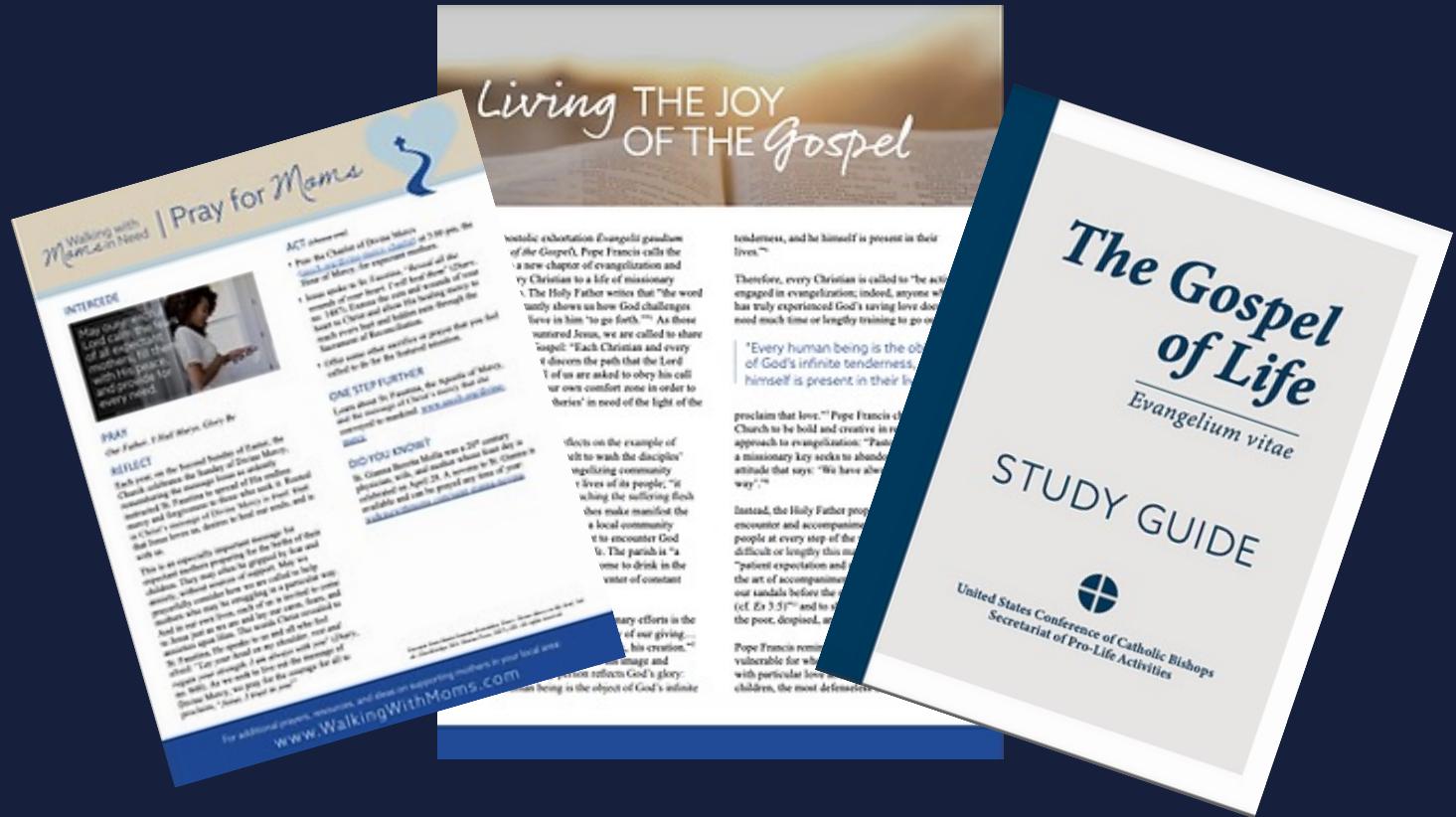
Resources including:

- Sample timelines
- Sample Meeting Agendas
- Homily Notes
- Intercessions
- Announcements
- Email Templates
- Sign-up Sheets
- and MORE!



Additional Resources

- Educational Materials
 - Bulletin Inserts
 - EV Study Guide & Compendium
- Prayer Resources
 - Prayer for Pregnant Mothers
 - Prayer Guides
 - St. Gianna Novena



Website Overview

www.WalkingWithMoms.com

- Parish Resources
- Action Guide
- Templates
- Educational Materials
- Prayer Resources
- Contact Us

Common Misconceptions

#1: We want to turn parishes into pregnancy centers.

- *Walking with Moms* is about *building relationships and referrals* to helping agencies, like pregnancy centers.
- We want parishes and parishioners to know where to refer a pregnant or parenting mother in need.
- Parishes should be places of welcome, support, and accompaniment for mothers in need, but this can be achieved through collaboration and partnerships with helping agencies.

#2: We already do this in our parish/diocese. We're just reinventing the wheel.

- *Walking with Moms* is a specific **process** that asks us to evaluate how we are supporting moms in need, and what might be missing.
- In completing the process, core team members are invited to actually walk in the shoes of a woman in need.
- It invites new insights and perspectives to help us identify and address gaps with a whole-Church response.

#3: Every parish is called to do the same thing.

- Part of the reason *Walking with Moms* is a **parish-based** effort is because every parish is unique, with its own set of challenges, as well as gifts and resources.
- It is important for every parish to complete the inventory process and prayerfully discern how the Lord is calling them to respond.
- Resist the temptation to compare yourself to other parishes. *Do what you can do and what the Lord is calling you to do.*

#4: Every parish needs to launch an entirely new ministry.

- While your parish may discern that it wants to start a new ministry, this is certainly not required.
- Often it may be more effective to utilize existing ministries, finding new and creative ways to collaborate.
- A large part of this process is also evaluating how we communicate our support of mothers in need, both to the mothers themselves, and to the people in the pews.

#5: Our parish can only participate if we have dedicated financial resources.

- There is literally no financial cost to implement *Walking with Moms* in your parish. All that is required is a handful of dedicated volunteers.
- Many of the sample parish responses included in the Parish Action Guide cost nothing to implement.
- In completing the process, you will evaluate your parish capacities and discern what the Lord is calling you to based on your gifts and specific circumstances.

#6: This is just one more thing I have to do as my parish's Respect Life Coordinator.

- While we do need your help to bring *Walking with Moms* to your parish, you do not need to be the leader for this initiative.
- Actually, we suggest selecting a new parish leader dedicated to implementing *Walking with Moms*.
- You can be especially helpful in identifying possible new leaders in your parish and sharing your suggestions with your pastor.

Walking with Moms in Your Parish

- A process, not just the completion of a checklist.
- Includes:
 - Enlisting new leadership
 - Identifying resources and building relationships with helping agencies
 - Discerning more effective ways to communicate help already available
 - Involving parishioners in a whole-church response
 - Committing to new parish efforts to walk with moms in need

Getting Started

How to Get Started

- Watch the introductory webinar.
- Familiarize yourself with program and materials.
- Contact your diocesan director.
- Talk to your pastor.
- Follow steps in the Parish Action Guide starting with Phase 1.

Talking to Your Pastor

- The mission excites, motivates, and inspires parishioners.
- It can help breathe new life into the parish post-pandemic.
- Requires minimal time, effort, or financial support of pastors.
- Parish leaders are guided with appropriate materials developed by the USCCB.
- The pastor only needs to be involved in a consulting and approval role.

Identifying a Parish Leader

- Tips in the Action Guide (p. 13-14).
- Prayer.
- Think outside the box.
- Consider holding an interest meeting.
- Invite candidates to join Core Team first.
- Offer encouragement.

SELECTING A PARISH LEADER (for pastors)

Pastors are asked to appoint a parish leader as the main point person and coordinator of Walking with Moms in Need. While each pastor must discern who God is calling to take on this important role, we have provided a number of tips, considerations, and suggestions that pastors may find helpful in making their selection.

PHASE 1

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX.

When initially considering who to appoint as the parish leader for this initiative, we encourage you to think outside of the box. While a pastor's first impulse may be to appoint the parish DRE, current pro-life coordinator, or other social ministry leader, consider that these leaders already have a long list of responsibilities and may not be able to fully devote themselves to *Walking with Moms*.

We encourage you to think beyond your first impulses and consider appointing a leader who may not initially be on your radar. Consider asking other ministry leaders for suggestions on who may be well-suited for this initiative. Because ministry leaders work closely with so many different people in the parish in various settings, they may be able to identify candidates who would otherwise be overlooked.

Are there young adults in your parish excited to serve others and find their place in the Church? Is there someone in your Hispanic ministry who is passionate about serving mothers in need? Do you know of any parishioners who currently volunteer at a local pregnancy center who can bring special knowledge and insight?

These are just some ideas to consider as you discern who God is calling to this special task.

REMEMBER THAT WALKING WITH MOMS IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A PASTORAL INITIATIVE.

While your parish may have a number of devoted pro-life champions who enjoy educating others on policy initiatives or collecting signatures for pro-life petitions, the focus of *Walking with Moms* is not political or policy driven. Although these efforts are very important and commendable (and part of the bishops' *Plan*), this initiative is focused on providing real, tangible support to pregnant women in need. Part of the vision for *Walking with Moms* is to move the conversation from what sometimes seems like a partisan divide into *pastoral unity*.

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Recruiting Volunteers

- Tips in Action Guide (p. 15-17).
- Prayer.
- Host a Sign-Up Sunday (p.24).
- Reach out to parishioners who haven't reengaged after COVID.
- Ask Pastor to include in his Homily.
- Hold an interest meeting.
- Personal invitations.

BUILDING A PARISH CORE TEAM

Once a parish leader has been selected, your parish can begin to build its core team. The core team will meet together throughout the Walking with Moms process and complete various tasks, including the parish inventory, assessment, and response planning and implementation. Members of the core team should understand the purpose and vision of Walking with Moms in Need and act as ambassadors of the initiative in the parish. While the entire parish community is invited and encouraged to participate, the core team helps to organize and plan these broader parish efforts. The following information includes a number of tips, recommendations, and considerations to assist you in building a core team in your parish.

Remember that these suggestions are only a framework to help you get started. While many of these recommendations mention "ideals," we also recognize that what is ideal in one parish isn't ideal in another. You may be facing specific challenges and feel like your circumstances are very different. Don't be discouraged! You may be surprised by what the Lord will do through your parish with your simple "yes."

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE ASSEMBLING A CORE TEAM

1. Size

From the outset you should consider how large you might want your core team to be. We recommend somewhere between five and ten people. Think about the core team like other committees within your parish. You may even inquire from other parish committees or ministries what size they have found to be most effective for leadership teams.

The size of your core team will likely be influenced by the size of your parish, but not necessarily. What works for one parish, may not be a good model for another. Ideally, you want a core team small enough that you can work together closely and in a manner in which everyone has the opportunity to share their opinions and insight, without creating never-ending meetings. However, you also want your core team large enough to represent the breadth of your parish community.

Some parishes may have difficulty pulling enough people together for a core team. Others may need to set limits and encourage additional volunteers to get involved by joining the broader parish support network. Keep in mind that while it's good to consider the size of your core team before getting started, this is only to give you an idea. It's possible that your core team may start off small and grow as the work progresses and new leaders are inspired to join. Let the Holy Spirit guide you, and don't worry if your team is smaller or larger than you anticipated.

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Why It's Important to Start Now

- Relevance to a post-*Dobbs* world—serves the “new reality” in both red and blue states.
- How the Church responds in this moment will determine our credibility for decades to come.
- There is an increased need of assistance, and we need to be there to meet it.
- Love thy neighbor—it’s what Jesus would do! And it’s what we’re supposed to do as Catholics.