

Catholic Charities of Central Florida

A Ministry of the Diocese of Orlando

Parish Culture of Life Guide



*"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your Word."*

LUKE 1:38

Table of Contents

Overview/Introduction	3-4
Objectives	5
Steps for COL Ministry	6-7
COL Chairperson Role and Duties	8-9
Parish COL Committee Structure and Role	10
Responsibilities	11
Organization Ministry Chart	12
Diocesan Deaneries	13-14
Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities	15
Prayer and Worship	16-17
Public Information and Education	18-20
Pastoral Care	21-24
Public Policy Advocacy	25-27
Events	28
Resources	29-31

Questions, concerns or suggestions? We want to hear from you!

Although an effort is made to provide updates when needed, it is possible a link or other information included in this document could become outdated.

Contact us: Email: cultureoflife@cflcc.org Call: (407) 658-1818 Ext. 1085

Overview

At the Annunciation, Mary said to the angel Gabriel, *“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your Word”* (Luke 1:38). Mary's Fiat, her “yes” to God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, conceived our Lord Jesus, who was and is, fully God and fully human.

The concept of human dignity derives from the sacredness of human life. If Jesus is truly and completely human from the moment of conception, then the same holds true for every individual.

Our commitment to upholding the sanctity of life is not an isolated aspect within the Church's principles. Rather, it finds its foundation in the teachings of the Gospel and is firmly grounded in creation. Instead of diverting attention from the core message, it holds a pivotal role in proclaiming the essence of our faith.

As humans are created in the image and likeness of God, we possess a singular and distinct nature. The dignity of every person is a divine gift, granted by God Himself, which means every individual, from the moment of conception until natural death, possesses inherent dignity and immeasurable worth. This includes unborn children, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, the incarcerated, the exiled, and individuals marginalized by society. It is our responsibility to advocate for, safeguard, and cherish all human life.

Actively promoting a renewed respect for human life is the responsibility of every Catholic!

Thank you for your own *“fiat”* to serve your parish community.

Introduction

The Culture of Life office developed this guide to assist parish leaders in highlighting Church teachings, promote dialogue, and inspire action that transforms our culture, so all life from conception to natural death is protected in law and welcomed in love.

Whether you are starting the Culture of Life (COL) ministry in your parish, replacing a chairperson, or have been a chairperson for years, this guide is equipped with information and resources to unite and strengthen COL committees that seek to become better advocates for human life and dignity.

The structure is based on the model of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities' document, ***Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life***, developed in 1975 and revised in 2001. This pastoral plan calls upon all resources of the Church—its people, services, and institutions—to pursue this effort with renewed energy and commitment.

Also provided is a list of specific responsibilities and duties to guide the chairperson and committee in carrying out this work in the parish.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with insights into the four core principles outlined in the pastoral plan: ***Prayer & Worship, Public Education & Information, Pastoral Care, and Public Advocacy***. Additionally, the guide offers a range of recommended initiatives, resources, and parish self-assessment tools to assist you in effectively addressing the needs of your parish community.

You are not limited to these initiatives, nor are you expected to attend all events mentioned. These are simply guides for you to actively evangelize, raise awareness, and to make culture of life issues visible to the parish community.

In our present social context, marked by a dramatic struggle between the “culture of life” and the “culture of death”, there is need to develop a deep critical sense, capable of discerning true values and authentic needs.

— Pope St. John Paul II, ***Evangelium Vitae***, no. 95



Objectives

Foster awareness to support legal protection to safeguard the lives of all human beings.

Coordinate parish distribution of annual **Respect Life** materials, promote them within the parish, especially religious education programs; and encourage parish discussion groups using approved resources.

Promote and assist pregnancy counseling and comprehensive **pregnancy and maternity support services**, as well as **post-abortion counseling and reconciliation ministries**, and make these well known in the parish and local community.

Develop or adopt, where feasible, a parish-based ministry for pregnant women and their children (example: **Walking with Moms in Need** initiative).

Encourage and support parishioners' involvement in ministries to help those dealing with **unplanned pregnancies, chronic illness, disabilities, or terminal illness** and their families.

Encourage focused prayer in the parish for mothers and unborn children, for those who are dying, for those who are disabled, for **prisoners on death row** and those they have harmed, and indeed for all who are in need, that the culture of death may be replaced by a culture of life.

As Catholics, we are called to carry the values of the Gospel and the teachings of our Church into the public square. It should be noted the Catholic Church does not engage in partisan politics. Rather, it fosters the responsibility of every Catholic to exercise their **citizenship faithfully** by being well informed.

The **FCCB Election & Political Activities Guide (English)|(Spanish)**, approved by the bishops of Florida, helps pastors, parishes, and diocesan staff encourage faithful to get involved in appropriate election related activities.

“While individual citizens are free to engage fully in partisan politics, churches and other 501(c)(3) institutions that qualify for tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code are not. The Church and Church organizations may not be involved in partisan politics. Expressions of preference for a political party and of direct or indirect support for or in opposition to specific candidates or political parties are not permissible” (Ref Pg. 4).

Steps for Culture of Life Ministry

If you are starting a Culture of Life ministry in your parish, here are some steps to follow.

Step 1 Inform and Educate Yourself	Step 2 Meet with Your Pastor	Step 3 Know Your Parish
<p>Read the <u>USCCB's Pastoral Plan for Pro Life Activities</u>.</p> <p>Understand, accept and embrace Church teaching on the sanctity of human life found in: <u>Sacred Scripture, The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Canon Law</u>, papal encyclicals, and pastoral letters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Humanae Vitae</u> (of Human Life) written by Pope Paul VI and dated July 25, 1968, provides beautiful and clear teaching about God's plan for married love and the transmission of life. • <u>Evangelium Vitae</u> (The Gospel of Life: Compendium) written by Pope St. John Paul II in 1995, explains the value and inviolability of human life. • <u>Evangelii Gaudium</u> (Two-page summary of the Joy of the Gospel) Apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis in 2013, explores our Christian call to evangelization and missionary discipleship, highlighting care for those who are vulnerable, like mothers and children on the peripheries. • <u>Samaritanus Bonus</u> (Good Samaritan compendium and study guide) a letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith written in 2020 reaffirms the Church's teaching on care for those who are critically ill or dying and offers additional pastoral guidance for increasingly complex situations at the end of life. <p>Remain informed and up to date on current COL resources and communications. Review these documents periodically as they provide the background behind Catholic teaching and serve as a blueprint for implementing the Pastoral Plan.</p>	<p>Before planning the COL ministry objectives for your parish, meet with your pastor to find out his vision, priorities, and goals.</p> <p>Implement the vision, priorities and goals discussed into the COL parish committee objectives.</p>	<p>Familiarize yourself with your parish community and discover the most effective approaches to collaborate with your pastor and parish leaders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the most active ministries in your parish?</i> • <i>Which parish leaders understand....</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>How liturgy is planned</i> ◦ <i>Who is responsible for writing intercessory prayers</i> ◦ <i>The deadline for submitting approved bulletin inserts</i> ◦ <i>How communication resources are published on the parish website</i> ◦ <i>How your parish utilizes social media</i> ◦ <i>How to submit requests to access those social media platforms</i>

<p style="text-align: center;">Step 4 Assess the Parish COL Ministry</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Step 5 Become an Effective Leader</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Step 6 Know Your Parish</p>
<p>Assess the current COL ministry to evaluate how effectively your parish is implementing the Pastoral Plan.</p> <p>There may be other parish committees or ministries already engaged in certain aspects of the ministry. You can extend your support and enhance their endeavors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is the parish aware of the <u>Walking with Moms in Need</u> initiative?</i> • <i>Do parishioners know where the <u>local pro-life pregnancy centers</u> are located?</i> • <i>Do parishioners know how to connect those impacted by abortion with <u>Project Rachel</u>?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Project Rachel Anonymous Hotline: 888-456-4673</i> • <i>Do parishioners visit local nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or homes for the disabled?</i> 	<p>Cultivate and sustain a strong and unwavering prayer life while regularly participating in the Sacraments. Remaining intimately connected to Christ is essential in carrying out His work effectively.</p> <p>Your task as the chairperson is to guide the parish committee and work in conjunction with the other parish COL leaders in your deanery.</p> <p>You will need to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Outline goals. B. Identify individual committee member strengths. C. Work through your objectives. <p>Be mindful a leader who does it all will experience burnout. Know your leadership style, strengths, and weaknesses.</p> <p>Empower delegation! Leverage unique gifts and talents of each committee member to enhance effectiveness. Engage more individuals to foster enthusiasm and shared responsibility.</p>	<p>Prior to sharing any information obtained from sources other than the Diocese, FCCB, or USCCB, it is crucial to verify accuracy through the Culture of Life office!</p> <p>Set monthly meetings and create a calendar with your parish committee.</p> <p>Email may be the best way to communicate with team members about upcoming events, meetings, and parish activities, as well as notifying them of urgent legislative action alerts from the FCCB or the USCCB.</p> <p>It is a good idea to use a distinct email address for parish COL activities rather than your own personal email address.</p> <p>For example: <u>COL@ParishName.org</u></p> <p>This parish email address can then be passed from one leader to the next. If you are replacing someone, ask if there is an established email already in use.</p> <p>IMPORTANT REMINDER: Volunteers cannot communicate outbound messages that handle official church business. If volunteers manage the email address, they must forward the email to an employee if a response is needed.</p> <p>Take into consideration the majority of ministry members prefer not to be overwhelmed with a multitude of emails. Be mindful of the urgency or significance of each email, considering the specific needs and priorities of the parish.</p> <p>Remember to include individuals who do not have access to email. They should be informed of alerts and ministry activities through alternative communication methods.</p>

What is
OUR MISSION?



As a parish Culture of Life chairperson, I am called to love, respect, protect, and serve as a witness to uphold the sanctity and dignity of every human life from conception until natural death within this parish and community.

I am called to help build a culture of life and love together with all people of good will, for the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life.

Culture of Life Ministry Chairperson Role

As a Culture of Life (COL) chairperson, you have been called to collaborate with your pastor and with the other members of your parish to speak the Gospel of Life.

Initiatives and events should be undertaken only with approval and support from your pastor.

The Chairperson will work with the **Diocese of Orlando Culture of Life office** and through it, the **Florida Catholic Conference of Bishops** (FCCB), and the **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops** (USCCB) so we speak with one voice.

The chairperson of the parish committee is appointed by the pastor as a volunteer for a **period of three (3) years**, and it is important the two work well together.

The chair recruits members to assist in fulfilling the committee's objectives. Parish committees should be mindful of the need for renewal from time to time acknowledging each member's talents and interests.

Parish COL Chairperson Duties

Serve as the chairperson of the parish committee and facilitate all COL committee meetings.
Serve as liaison between the pastor, parish committee, diocesan Culture of Life office, and the parish.
Support your pastor and priests in building a COL presence through prayer and visible activity at the parish level.
Establish a parish committee and hold periodic meetings as determined in agreement with the pastor and the committee.
Review, plan, and set goals with your pastor on any COL activities or events that will be advertised or carried out in the parish.
Keep updated COL information visible in the parish through bulletins and other communications— a table, pamphlet rack or bulletin board.
Implement annual Respect Life materials and resources from the USCCB in the parish and other specific initiatives requested by the diocesan Culture of Life office.
Initiate specific COL efforts (no matter how small) at least once per month. Review and evaluate these efforts at least twice per year with the pastor and parish committee.
Communicate and work with other COL leaders in your deanery and in the diocese to promote spiritual action, public information & education, pastoral care, and public advocacy.
Help educate, share, and inform the parish community on COL issues through the guidance, resources, and support of the diocesan Culture of Life office.
Participate in deanery gatherings organized by the Culture of Life office for parish COL committees.

Parish COL Committee Structure

The COL committee assists in a special way by helping to make the parish a center of life, a place where parishioners understand the needs of the most vulnerable—especially mothers and unborn children, the seriously ill or dying and their families.

Committee membership should include representatives from both adult and youth parish groups, those responsible for education and pastoral care and members of service organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, Council of Catholic Women, and others who represent minorities and those with disabilities.

Parish COL Committee Role

The parish committee relies on the diocesan COL chairperson for information and guidance.

The committee should play a vital role in parish life to advertise events that promote the dignity of the human person. It is vital the committee receive strong support of parish priests and other key personnel.

The committee should seek opportunities to collaborate with other parish ministries or educational programs to advocate for the protection of all human life, from conception to natural death, in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Responsibilities

The Diocese asks three essential things of all members as we work together:

First	at all times, witness the sanctity of all human life while speaking the truth in charity and love.
Second	respect the dignity of every human person and encourage others to do the same within your parish and your community.
Third	work with your fellow parish ministry leads, the Culture of Life office , and through us, the larger Church in building up the culture of life and a civilization of love.

COL committee members should act in accord with Christ's Will in obedience to your pastor, the bishop, and the Church. Develop a relationship with your pastor to learn about his priorities and goals for the parish.

The COL chairperson and COL committee members represent the Catholic Church, the bishop and your pastor. This representation must be reflected in your leadership. Influence by outside groups, organizations or legislation should be approved by the diocesan Culture of Life office.

Know your parish, its strengths and weaknesses so you may see the unique gift that your parish is and call upon others to help serve. You are both a servant and a leader.

Understand your abilities and limitations. Pray for humility, courage, and the knowledge you need. Christ has called you to do this work, and He will equip you to do it, if you allow Him to do so.

"Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that of ourselves we are qualified to take credit for anything as coming from us; rather, our qualification comes from God."

- 2 Corinthians 3:5

Organization Ministry Chart



Diocesan Deaneries

Northern Deanery

Astor
St. Hubert of the Forest Mission

Bellevue
St. Theresa

Bushnell
St. Lawrence

Candler
Immaculate Heart of Mary

Citra
Christ the King Mission

Clermont
Blessed Sacrament
St. Faustina

Dunnellon
St. John the Baptist

Eustis
St. Mary of the Lakes

Lady Lake
St. Timothy

Leesburg
St. Paul

Mascotte
Santo Toribio Romo Mission

Mt. Dora
St. Patrick

Ocala
Blessed Trinity
Misión Católica de La Guadalupeana
Our Lady of the Springs
Queen of Peace
St. Jude

Silver Springs
St. Joseph of the Forest Mission

Summerfield
St. Mark the Evangelist

Wildwood
San Pedro de Jesus Maldonado
St. Vincent de Paul

Central Deanery North

Altamonte Springs
Annunciation
St. Mary Magdalen

Apopka
St. Francis of Assisi

Casselberry
St. Augustine

Longwood
Nativity

Orlando
St. Andrew
St. Charles Borromeo
St. Philip Phan Van Minh

Oviedo
Most Precious Blood

Sanford
All Souls

Winter Park
St. Margaret Mary
Sts. Peter and Paul

Winter Springs
St. Stephen

Central Deanery South

Celebration
Corpus Christi

Kissimmee
Holy Redeemer
St. Catherine of Siena

Lake Nona
St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

Orlando
Blessed Trinity
Good Shepherd
Holy Cross
Holy Family
St. Ignatius Kim Mission
St. Isaac Jogues
St. James Cathedral
St. John Vianney
St. Joseph

Poinciana
St. Rose of Lima

St. Cloud
St. Thomas Aquinas

Winter Garden
Resurrection

Diocesan Deaneries

Eastern Deanery

Daytona Beach
Basilica of St. Paul
Our Lady of Lourdes

Debary
St. Ann

Deland
St. Peter

Deltona
Our Lady of the Lakes
St. Clare

Edgewater
St. Gerard Mission

New Smyrna Beach
Our Lady Star of the Sea
Sacred Heart

Ormond Beach
Prince of Peace
St. Brendan

Pierson
San Jose Mission

Port Orange
Church of the Epiphany
Our Lady of Hope

Southern Deanery

Barefoot Bay
St. Luke

Cocoa
Blessed Sacrament

Cocoa Beach
Church of Our Saviour

Indialantic
Holy Name of Jesus

Melbourne
Ascension
Our Lady of Lourdes

Melbourne Beach
Immaculate Conception

Merritt Island
Divine Mercy

Mims
Holy Spirit

Palm Bay
Our Lady of Grace
St. Joseph

Rockledge
St. Mary

Titusville
St. Teresa

Viera
St. John the Evangelist

Western Deanery

Bartow
St. Thomas Aquinas

Fort Meade
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Haines City
St. Ann

Lakeland
Church of the Resurrection
St. Anthony
St. John Neumann
St. Joseph

Lake Wales
Holy Spirit

Wahneta
Centro Guadalupano Mission

Winter Haven
St. Joseph
St. Matthew

Bishop's Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities

In consultation with your parish pastor, the COL chairperson organizes and implements the efforts as called for by the **Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities** through four major pillars:

Prayer and Worship	directed to participation in the Sacramental life of the Church and in ministries of communal and individual prayer, so the culture of death that surrounds us today will be replaced by a culture of life and love.
Public Information and Education	to foster a deeper understanding of the profound sacredness inherent in every human life. This includes recognizing the inherent dignity of unborn children, acknowledging the grave moral offense of intentionally ending lives, regardless of whether it occurs during the earliest stages or near the end of their earthly existence. To highlight the mission of the Church to actively bear witness to and diligently serve the sanctity and dignity that encompasses all human life.
Pastoral Care	to accompany and support women encountering challenges associated with pregnancy; to all individuals who have been involved in abortion; for those who are disabled, ill, and nearing the end of life, along with their families, caregivers; for those who have experienced the loss of loved ones due to violent crimes; and to individuals in prison who have been sentenced to death.
Public Policy	advocacy efforts directed to safeguarding the lives of unborn children and ensuring the well-being of other vulnerable individuals, particularly those who are disabled, elderly, or nearing the end of life, without additional pressures to end their lives by assisted suicide.

Prayer and Worship



“Prayer is the foundation of all that we do in defense of human life. Our efforts –whether education, pastoral or legislative –will be less than fully fruitful if we do not change hearts and if we do not ourselves overcome our own spiritual blindness. Only with prayer – prayer that storms the heavens for justice and mercy, prayer that cleanses our hearts and our souls –will the culture of death that surrounds us today be replaced with a culture of life.”

—U.S. Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities

“Priests and deacons are asked to preach the truth about the dignity of all human life, born and unborn, and about the moral evil of the purposeful destruction of innocent human life, including abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and infanticide. They should encourage parishioners and others to treat with compassion those who find themselves in stressful situations, and to offer practical assistance to help them to make life-affirming decisions.

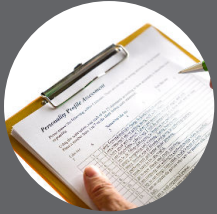
Parishes should give special pastoral attention and offer special prayers for those who have suffered the loss of an unborn child due to miscarriage, abortion, or other cause. The readings of the Church's liturgy provide ample opportunity to proclaim respect for the dignity of human life throughout the year. The Liturgy of the Hours as well as paraliturgical services also offer opportunities for the celebration of life and instruction in the moral teaching of the Church.

Parishes should include in the petitions at every Mass a prayer that we become a nation that respects and protects all human life, born and unborn, reflecting a true culture of life.”

—U.S. Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities

The USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities provides many free resources that may be downloaded, printed, and reproduced for use in your parish, school, or ministry. These resources undergo regular updates and assist Catholics in comprehending and appreciating the preciousness of human life. They also contribute to fostering a culture that upholds and safeguards this gift.

Parochial Self-Assessment: Implementation of Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities



How do we PRAY?

Does your parish...

- have a weekly, monthly, or annual **Holy Hour for Life** or **Rosary for Life** to pray for all the victims of abortion, those at the end of life, and those facing execution?
- offer **General Mass Intercessions** that regularly include petitions to foster respect for all life, especially the unborn, the dying, special needs, human trafficked, and those on death row?
- observe the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 373, which designates **January 22** as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the “**Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children**”?
- invite parishioners to the livestreamed **National Prayer Vigil for Life**? This is a prayer vigil held on the eve of the March for Life each January. Thousands of pilgrims from across the nation pray for an end to abortion and a greater respect for all human life. It is held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.
- invite parishioners to pray the **9 Days for Life** novena for the protection of human life in January?
- pray the **Stations of the Cross for Life** during Lent?
- celebrate **Respect Life Month** in October and the first Sunday of October, designated as Respect Life Sunday?

Public Information and Education



The **Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities** calls for a “twofold educational effort” to both the Catholic community and to the general public.

This endeavor seeks to enhance comprehension of the sacredness of human life and seeks to raise awareness of the moral wrongness associated with intentionally taking lives, whether it occurs during the earliest stages or towards the end of life. Additionally, it underscores the Church's mission to bear witness to and diligently serve the entirety of human life.

“In our present social context, marked by a dramatic struggle between the ‘culture of life’ and the ‘culture of death’, there is need to develop a deep critical sense, capable of discerning true values and authentic needs. What is urgently called for is a general mobilization of consciences and a united ethical effort to activate a great campaign in support of life. All together, we must build a new culture of life.”

– *Pope St. John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no.95*

Catholic Community

“An ongoing, long-range, and intensive educational effort in the Catholic community can provide an understanding of the issues and lead people to conviction and commitment.”

Just as Jesus formed His disciples and commissioned them to go into the world and proclaim the Gospel, we are grateful to those who participate in the Church's teaching ministry for all they have done and continue to do on behalf of human life. We invite them in a special way to be leaders in this campaign to build a culture of life.

Encourage the involvement of your Catholic Community members, such as:

Priests, deacons and religious, who exercise their responsibility to preach the word *“in season and out of season”* (cf. 2 Tm 4:2) in the pulpit, in other teaching roles, through parish programs, or through public support for pro-life projects.

Lay persons and volunteers, who through their charisms and unique responsibilities impact individuals and the broader community in a profound way when they assume roles of leadership in their parishes and in society.

Teachers in schools, religious education programs, youth ministries, campus ministries, and church-sponsored educational programs and agencies who provide factual information, moral teaching, and motivation to participants.

Parents who, through discussion of critical life issues within the family, and by their example and guidance, teach and help to mold their children in faith and respect for all human life from conception to natural death.

All church-sponsored or identifiably **Catholic organizations** involved in adult education and Sacramental preparation, whether national, regional, diocesan, or parish-based.

Catholic **social service** and **health care agencies** through their educational seminars and other appropriate programs, including efforts to publicize programs and services providing alternatives to abortion, post-abortion reconciliation and healing, and care for those who are terminally ill or disabled.

General Public

“It gives the issues visibility and prompts those who are uncommitted to reach a firm conviction.”

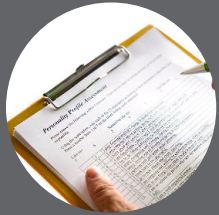
The primary purpose of an educational effort directed to the general public is the development of pro-life attitudes and the rejection of abortion and euthanasia. Even today, there remains a need for accurate information about these threats to life.

A public information initiative creates awareness of the threats to human life and human dignity inherent in abortion, research that destroys human embryos, euthanasia, assisted suicide, infanticide, and capital punishment. It allows people to see more readily the need to correct the situation by establishing legal safeguards for the right to life. It gives the issues visibility and prompts those who are uncommitted to reach a firm conviction. It helps to inform the public discussion, and it witnesses to the Church's commitment to a long-range pro-life effort. Such an initiative can also bring to light information about abortion's negative and often long-lasting impact on many women and others.

Any initiative that takes place in the public square should affirm the value of human life in the manner of its expression as well as the content, seeking to explain and persuade, while showing respect to all who disagree. It will take a variety of forms: for example, public statements and press releases; accurate reporting of newsworthy events and speaking with media representatives when such events occur; conferences and seminars on pro-life issues; development and distribution of educational materials; public relations and advertising campaigns; newspaper advertising; posters in local stores and community centers.

—U.S. Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities

Parochial Self-Assessment: Implementation of Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities



How do we EDUCATE the parish community and general public?

Does your parish('s)...

- pastor and key staff receive monthly Culture of Life office communications via email?
- have regular COL bulletin inserts or information on its website, social media accounts including COL news and upcoming events?
- have a COL pamphlet display rack or bulletin board?
- Catholic school and faith formation program have an educational program to promote the virtue of chastity and respect for human life? Do they use videos, posters, and speakers?
- have adult educational programs on COL topics, invite speakers, discuss documents or issues publicized at your parish or within the deanery?
- make occasional pulpit announcements and provide bulletin inserts with information on pregnancy resources and healing after abortion?



Pastoral Care

“Pastoral care encompasses a broad range of services provided with competence, compassion, and dignity. It includes spiritual assistance and essential material help, and may include supplementary services beyond those available in the community. Providing pastoral care to those in need is a primary way that the Church expresses its love for all God's children.”

—U.S. Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities

Pro-life Pregnancy Services

Respect for human life compels us to reach out to those with special needs. With the support of the faith community, Catholic organizations and agencies provide pastoral services and care for pregnant women, especially those vulnerable to abortion and who would otherwise find it difficult or impossible to obtain high-quality medical care.

Ideally such ministries include:

- factual and educational information on **alternatives to abortion**
- nutritional, prenatal, childbirth, and postnatal care for the mother, including information about the latest developments in prenatal and neonatal medicine
- **agency-sponsored adoption** and **foster care services** to all who want them, as well as an educational effort presenting adoption in a positive light
- counseling and spiritual assistance that supports those facing difficulties related to pregnancy and parenting, including engaged or married couples who may have concerns about the health of their future children
- opportunities for teen and college-age parents to continue their education during pregnancy and after childbirth, including school policies that encourage and enable them to complete their high school education, and counseling and assistance encouraging continued undergraduate or graduate studies
- compassionate understanding, encouragement, and support for victims of rape and other forms of abuse and violence
- education on the virtue of chastity, as well as education on fertility awareness for young men and women, enabling them to take responsibility for their power to generate life
- expansion of **natural family planning ministries** and education in their mission as responsible parents for married couples and for engaged couples as they prepare for marriage

Many of these services involve the dedicated efforts of both professionals and volunteers. Such services have been and will continue to be provided by church-sponsored health care and social service agencies. Collaboration with other private and public agencies and with volunteer groups and local communities, as well as efforts to obtain government assistance, are necessary extensions of the long-range effort. Parishes are also increasingly providing pregnancy assistance. Such services are sometimes available within the parish; at other times, the parish ministry links those needing help to local services.

“Even when pregnancies do not involve particular challenges, encouragement and support should be given to couples who have conceived a child. In a culture that often gives negative messages regarding parenthood, it is important that our parishes celebrate the gift of new life.”

—*U.S. Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*

Post-Abortion Healing and Reconciliation

“The Church offers reconciliation as well as spiritual and psychological care for those suffering from abortion's aftermath primarily through diocesan-based programs, most often called Project Rachel. Such ministries utilize specially-trained priests and professional counselors who provide one-on-one care. Other post-abortion ministries that involve support groups and retreats are also available in many areas.

Every church-sponsored program and identifiably Catholic organization and agency should know where to refer those in need of post-abortion healing. Special resources to assist priests in this ministry are available from the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities and from many diocesan pro-life offices.”

—*U.S. Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*

Care for Those Who Are Chronically Ill, Disabled, or Dying

“Euthanasia and assisted suicide can appear a reasonable and even compassionate solution to the suffering of individuals and families struggling with illness or the dying process. Yet these are not real solutions—they do not solve human problems, but only take the lives of those most in need of unconditional love.

As Christians, we are called to help build a civilization of life and of love, in which seriously ill persons and their families are never abandoned, but are supported with services, friendship, and love. In order to do so, we should:

- reach out to those in the parish family or broader community who are dying, particularly those at risk of dying alone, and keep company with them; provide support to the family, especially with difficult end-of-life decisions; encourage people to volunteer or provide other assistance to **local hospice programs**;
- encourage physicians and other health professionals to provide appropriate **palliative care**;
- foster prayers, at Mass and in homes, for those who are dying and their families to receive the respect and care they need and to be comforted by the peace of Christ;
- develop and support programs of respite care for families caring for seriously ill members at home, programs of visitation to nursing homes, or perhaps even parish nurse programs; and
- foster efforts to fully welcome persons with disabilities into the Church community.”

—U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*

Care for Prisoners, Those on Death Row, and Victims of Violent Crime

“When violent crime impacts a community there is a temptation to respond with anger and vengeance. But the Gospel calls for rehabilitation, reconciliation, and restoration and teaches us to respect the dignity of all human beings, even those guilty of committing horrendous crimes. To promote these ends, we should:

- encourage outreach to prisoners through programs of visitation or letter-writing;
- ensure the spiritual needs of prisoners are met and that they can receive the Sacraments;
- foster pastoral outreach to victims of violent crime;
- offer emotional and material support to the family members of prisoners, especially children, and to pregnant women and new mothers in prison.”

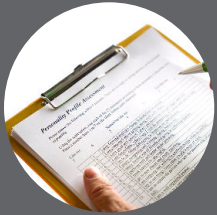
—U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*



“Every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God who was made flesh, is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church.”

— Pope St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 3

Parochial Self-Assessment: Implementation of Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities



How do we ACT?

Does your parish...

- publicly make available resources for pregnant women in your community?
- know where to refer those in need of help with **counseling**, support, **medical needs**, or baby items?
- know about the list of vetted pregnancy centers and local parishes participating in Walking with Moms in Need ministry?
- support the local pregnancy resource centers or maternity homes with financial support, volunteerism, clothing, and other donations?
- address the needs of the disabled, the dying, and the elderly in your parish and community?
- have post-abortion healing resource cards in the confessional?
- promote post abortive ministries available for those in need of support and healing after an abortion including **Project Rachel**, **Rachel's Vineyard** and **Support After Abortion**?
- promote **human trafficking** prevention education within the parish and community?
- provide outreach to a local prison?
- office staff know about the COL committee's efforts and who to contact?



Public Policy Advocacy

“Protecting and promoting the inviolable rights of persons is the most solemn responsibility of civil authority. As Americans and as religious leaders we are committed to governance by a system of law that protects human rights and maintains the common good.

The Declaration of Independence, written more than 200 years ago, speaks of the “Laws of Nature and of Nature's God” before making this historic assertion: “*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.*” Today we see the tensions increasing between these founding principles and political reality. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the continuing effort to ignore the right to life of unborn children, as well as in efforts to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide.

The law is not the only means of protecting life, but it plays a key and often decisive role in affecting both human behavior and thinking. Those called to civil leadership, as Pope St. John Paul II reminds us, “have a duty to make courageous choices in support of life, especially through *legislative measures.*” This is a responsibility that cannot be put aside, “especially when he or she has a legislative or decision-making mandate, which calls that person to answer to God, to his or her own conscience and to the whole of society for choices which may be contrary to the common good” (*The Gospel of Life*, no. 90).

A public policy initiative requires well-planned and coordinated advocacy by citizens at the national, state, and local levels.

- Such activity is not solely the responsibility of Catholics, but instead requires widespread cooperation and collaboration on the part of groups large and small, religious and secular.
- As U.S. citizens and religious leaders, we see a critical moral imperative for public policy efforts to ensure the protection of human life.
- We urge our fellow citizens to see the justice of this cause and to work with us to achieve these objectives.”

—U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*

As faithful Catholics, being effective in advocacy is viewed as a manifestation of responsible citizenship. Engaging in the political process is considered a moral duty, and every follower is encouraged to embody faithful citizenship by actively participating in politics while being well-informed and accountable.

It is of utmost importance to emphasize that when discussing political affairs and elected representatives, only materials provided by the Diocese, the FCCB, or the USCCB should be disseminated within the parish.

Prior to distributing any information, ensure that it has received approval from the diocesan Culture of Life office.

While serving as the Culture of Life Parish chairperson, it is important to abstain from endorsing or opposing candidates for political office on behalf of the Church within the parish community.

For pastoral reasons, the **Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops** has long held a policy against collecting petitions to amend the Florida Constitution in its parishes. This policy remains in effect. For additional election materials and guidelines, click [here](#).

Although materials from other pro-life organizations are permissible for personal use and gathering information, it is solely through the USCCB and the FCCB that we acquire information suitable for distribution within the parish.

Not all organizations are 501(c)3 organizations, and even if they are, they may not necessarily be in alignment with the fullness of the teachings of the Catholic Church, which are rooted in scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Canon Law, and the Catholic Church's status as a tax-exempt organization.

“This task is the particular responsibility of civil leaders. Called to serve the people and the common good, they have a duty to make courageous choices in support of life, especially through legislative measures. In a democratic system, where laws and decisions are made on the basis of the consensus of many, the sense of personal responsibility in the consciences of individuals invested with authority may be weakened.”

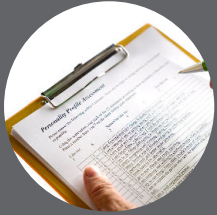
— **Pope St. John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no.90**



The Catholic bishops of the United States issued the document, **Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship**, a teaching on the political responsibility of Catholics.

This statement represents the guidance for Catholics in the exercise of their rights and duties as participants in our democracy. It urges pastors, lay and religious, and all people of good will to use this statement to help form their consciences; to teach those entrusted to their care; to contribute to civil and respectful public dialogue; and to shape political choices in elections in light of Catholic teaching.

Parochial Self-Assessment: Implementation of Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities



How do we ADVOCATE?

Does your parish encourage parishioners to support...

- The **USCCB's Pro-Life Action Alerts** to contact elected representatives to express concerns and opinions on upcoming national legislation in support of Pro-Life issues?
- The **Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops** (FCCB) to receive legislative alerts and be aware of legislative issues within our state via the **Florida Catholic Advocacy Network** (FLCAN).
- The **Annual March for Life** in Washington, DC?
- The annual **Catholic Days at the Capitol** hosted by the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishop's staff?

Events

Diocese	State	National
<p>Annual Mass for Life in January at the <u>Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe</u>. This special liturgy serves as a reverent observance, dedicated to praying for the sanctity of life and striving for the end of euthanasia, the death penalty, suicide, abortion, and any action that undermines the inherent dignity of every human person.</p>	<p>The annual <u>Florida Culture of Life Conference</u>. This informative and uplifting event includes speakers on a variety of topics including abortion, end of life, and the death penalty.</p>	<p>The <u>USCCB’s Pro-Life Action Alerts</u> remind you to contact elected representatives to express concerns and opinions on upcoming national legislation.</p>
<p>The annual <u>Central Florida Laps for Life</u> or <u>Brevard Laps for Life</u> walk-a-thons are held the first Saturday in March by the <u>Knights of Columbus</u>. These fundraising events facilitate the provision of valuable ultrasound machines for pregnancy centers as well as training and maintenance support.</p>	<p>Attend or designate at least one member from the parish COL committee to attend the annual <u>Catholic Days at the Capitol</u> (CDAC). Each year during the legislative session, Catholics from across the state gather in Florida's capital to put their faith and civic responsibility into action.</p>	<p><u>Justice for Immigrants (JFI) Campaign</u> advocates for dignified and fair reforms in immigration and refugee laws and policies that reflect the principles enunciated by the bishops with the latest advocacy efforts via <u>votervoice.net</u></p>
<p>For further service and advocacy opportunities connect with your parish's <u>Council of Catholic Women</u> (CCW) ministry.</p>	<p>Sign up with the <u>Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops</u> (FCCB) to receive legislative alerts via the <u>Florida Catholic Advocacy Network</u> (FLCAN).</p>	<p>The <u>National Committee for a Human Life Amendment</u> sends out federal pro-life legislative initiatives.</p>
<p>Annual Mass for Remembrance and Healing in September. This Mass prays for those affected by the loss of a family member or friend.</p>	<p><i>TBD State March for Life</i></p>	<p><u>National March for Life</u> is a peaceful, vibrant, and joy-filled rally of women, men, young people, and children from across the country. Every January, thousands of pro-lifers converge on the National Mall and march on Capitol Hill on the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling.</p>

Resources

Weekly bulletin inserts are an extremely effective way to invite parishioners to prayer.

Timely submission of all bulletin inserts to the bulletin editor is required, and approval from the pastor is necessary.

A designated spot in the bulletin or on the parish website to submit weekly briefs with an interesting quote or prayer is ideal!

Explore the various resources listed below.

National

Respect Life materials can be used in bulletins, newsletters, social media, classrooms, narthex/gathering spaces, culture of life resource table for the parish ministry fair, and more.

The **Catholic Mobilization Network (CMN)** holds **monthly prayer vigils** on the first Friday of each month. These vigils are dedicated to pray for change for upcoming executions and standing as witnesses to the immutable value of every human life.

Action Guide feature ideas and tools to help integrate respect for human life into parish ministries or school.

Subscribe to all the following Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities **here**.
To access additional Prayer and Devotionals, click **here**.

Word of Life is a monthly publication for parishes containing:



- Feature of the Month
- Intercessions for Life
- Bulletin Quotes
- Bulletin Art

The **General Instruction of the Roman Missal** (GIRM), no. 373, designates January 22 as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the “Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children”. Parishes and Catholic schools are invited to hold Adoration with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament following the celebration of Mass on this day.

Sidewalk Advocates for Life and **40 Days for Life Campaign** will prepare groups before they pray outside local abortion clinics. In addition to training and tools to equip you on the sidewalk, they offer ongoing, full time, staff support so you can be as effective as possible.

Local	State	National
<p>Catholic Charities of Central Florida a ministry of the Diocese of Orlando, works to embrace those in need with hope, transforming their lives through faith, compassion, and service.</p>	<p>Visit the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops (FCCB) latest news, resources, and advocacy efforts on life issues in our state.</p>	<p>Catholic Charities USA was founded over a century ago by men and women who believed that the collective efforts of the church to faithfully serve people in need could change the course of poverty in our nation.</p>
<p>Walking with Moms in Need (WWMIN) in the Diocese of Orlando to support pregnant and parenting moms.</p> <p>For Natural Family Planning (NFP) diocesan resources and information, click here.</p>	<p>Pregnancy Centers can be found all over Florida and are staffed with compassionate professionals who provide counseling, training, and free resources.</p>	<p>Walking with Moms in Need (WWMIN) is a USCCB initiative for Catholic parishes and communities to support and "walk in the shoes" of local pregnant and parenting women in need.</p> <p>While not trying to turn Catholic parishes into pregnancy centers, we can support local pregnancy centers where they exist, and we can also find and share other resources with pregnant and parenting women.</p> <p>Natural Family Planning helps married couples to deepen conjugal love and achieve responsible parenthood as part of the Church's total pastoral ministry to Catholic spouses.</p>
<p>The Diocese of Orlando's Human Trafficking Task Force mission is to engage, educate, and empower communities within central Florida to prevent human trafficking, and to provide wholistic support to trafficking survivors. The ministry includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Trafficking Training Events • Awareness Outreach • Intervention Outreach <p>In addition, Catholic Charities of Central Florida has case managers who provide support for human trafficking survivors including social services (Basic Needs, Medical, and Refugee Services).</p> <p>For assistance, email HTAssist@cflcc.org</p>	<p>If you suspect a child is a victim, please call the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.</p>	<p>The USCCB's Anti-Trafficking Program aims to educate on the scourge of human trafficking as an offense against the fundamental dignity of the human person, to advocate for its end, and to provide training and technical assistance to support survivors.</p> <p>U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking is a collaborative, faith-based national network that offers education, supports access to survivor services, and engages in advocacy in an effort to eradicate modern-day slavery.</p>
<p>Kingdom of Heaven Ministry at Queen of Angels cemetery, accompanies families who have experienced the loss of children through miscarriage or those who have tragically passed away within their first year of life including proper Catholic burial <i>at no cost</i>.</p> <p>For more information, call 407-246-4919 or email dbranson@orlandodiocese.org</p>	<p>The Florida Catholic Medical Association represents eight guilds spread throughout the state and is part of the the national Catholic Medical Association.</p> <p>Orlando Catholic Physicians Guild was established in 2005 and is a Chartered Guild of the Catholic Medical Association (CMA). We serve the Catholic medical community of the Orlando Diocese and surrounding areas in Central Florida in Region V of the CMA.</p>	<p>Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) highlights current legislative campaigns, legislative action, appeals for clemency, executions and provides sample letters and other resources to facilitate advocacy.</p>

Additional Resources

Local	National
<p>The Healthcare Services and Behavioral Health Services Ministries provide the connective research and support to engage individuals and families in services to support and enhance their recovery. They can provide services to connect clients to all healthcare and mental health needs. If they cannot serve the individual or the family directly, they work to find an appropriate referral. (407) 658-1818 Ext. 1069</p>	<p>USCCB Catholic Care for the Sick and Dying Prayers, articles, and educational resources to help Catholics bear Christ's love to those who are suffering from illness or dying.</p>
<p>Magnify works diligently to support individuals with disabilities to live independently in their community, develop life skills, and work toward competitive and self-employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Catechesis with People with Disabilities Create welcoming and accessible parishes using the information and suggestions from the experts at the National Catholic Partnership on Disability.</p>
<p>Florida confidential helpline: 1-877-767-BABY (2229)</p>	<p>A Safe Haven for Newborns is dedicated to saving the precious lives of newborns from the dangers of abandonment and assisting pregnant girls and women in crisis. National Helpline: 1-844-767-2229</p>
<p>Diocesan Project Rachel Confidential Helpline: call/text (407) 222-8584 or EMAIL</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <p>To request these 4x4 resource cards available in both English and Spanish, please reach out to the Culture of Life office.</p>	<p>Project Rachel offers post-abortion counseling for both women and men who have been emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually impacted by an abortion.</p> <p>Call 1-888-456-HOPE (4673). All calls are confidential.</p>
<p>St. Peter Claver Prison Ministry is a faith-based mentorship program empowering the incarcerated, ex-offenders and their families obtain self-sufficiency and reduce recidivism. They are a special conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society serving Central Florida.</p>	<p>The Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition (CPMC) seeks to enhance Catholic ministry to those incarcerated, detained, or reentering society and those affected by incarceration, while also assisting the Church in the United States to work for justice that is integrated, inclusive, and restorative.</p>

National
<p>Patients' Rights Action Fund (PRAF) is a leading national, non-partisan single-issue organization that protects the rights of patients, people with disabilities, elders, and people who are poor from deadly harm and discrimination inherent in assisted suicide laws.</p>
<p>The National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) provides education, guidance, and resources to the Church and society to uphold the dignity of the human person in health care and biomedical research.</p>
<p>USCCB Accompany expectant mothers considering adoption.</p>

Conclusion

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her.

LUKE 1:57-58



Our Blessed Mother models a profound witness to love and life in the Gospel account of the Visitation.

Mary proclaims to all generations that the Lord lifts up the lowly, fills the hungry with good things, and remembers his promise of mercy from age to age (Lk 1:46-56). In both word and deed, Mary speaks a message of hope—not only to Elizabeth, but also to every person in need, and to each one of us.

Mary's example serves as a compelling call to act with love and compassion. It urges us to swiftly assist vulnerable individuals who may be experiencing isolation and solitude. In doing so, we can also carry the spirit of Christ within ourselves and enable others to encounter His divine presence.

Inspired by the Blessed Mother's example and guided by the Holy Spirit, may we offer Christ's presence and love to all people in their time of need through our faithful service and support.

Prayer for Radical Solidarity

O Blessed Mother, at the angel's word you went in haste to the aid of your cousin Elizabeth. Although pregnant yourself, you placed her needs before your own.

By your example of radical solidarity, teach us to reverence and protect those in need, without conditions or expectations. Ask your Son to give us unfailing determination to witness to the profound dignity of every person, at every stage and in every circumstance.

In that first Eucharistic procession, you carried Jesus to Elizabeth in her time of need. Obtain for us the grace to bring Christ to any expectant mother who is alone and afraid. May our support help them to find hope and strength in the Lord.

Amen.