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RESPECT LIFE NEWSLETTER



Working together to spread the Gospel of Life across the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Helping Women at the Parish Level

By: Bob Wurzelbacher

I wrote last December about the USCCB's **WALKING WITH MOMS IN NEED** initiative. This call is now more important than ever, and I encourage every parish to start working on this initiative, even in the midst of the Beacons process beginning this July.

The USCCB came up with the idea for this initiative in 2019, after the notorious display on the One World Trade Tower in Manhattan was lit in pink by then Gov. Andrew Cuomo to celebrate the passage of the Reproductive Rights Act, allowing abortion up to the very moment of birth. Other states were enacting similar legislation as well. Kat Talalas, assistant director for pro-life communications for the USCCB's Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, said about the initiative, "It's also important that, as some states implement aggressive abortion legislation in anticipation of the outcome of Dobbs, we have abundant, comprehensive pregnancy-care resources available to help women choose life with confidence." Talalas added: "We also have to effectively market and communicate these resources, so that women in those states are aware of meaningful alternatives to abortion. **WALKING WITH MOMS** helps parishes do both!"

Women in crisis pregnancies do not typically come to the Church for help—because they usually feel we

are more likely to condemn them than help them—but we need to change that perception. We need to make the local parish a place where a woman in a crisis pregnancy can come to find the resources she needs. This is not trying to turn parishes into crisis pregnancy centers. It is about inviting parishes to actively learn about the resources already available in their community, support those agencies, and communicate that to all staff and parishioners, so that these resources can in turn be passed on to any woman facing a crisis pregnancy. Additionally, if every parishioner knows where to send a woman in a crisis pregnancy, they can help women who they know of that do not come to their church as well. They can help their neighbors, friends and co-workers and the multitude of people they encounter throughout the day. They can be the hands and feet of Christ in the world in a very real way. As Pope Francis reminded us in a 2015 address, "...our parishes and communities [should] become islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference." We should all

know where to refer a pregnant woman in need. So, how do you start? Go to the **WALKING WITH MOMS IN NEED WEBSITE**. All the resources are free, so check out the Action Guide Summary, the Parish Inventory Tool, and head to our own Archdiocesan page to help you find more information about what is available in your local community. Start the process now with your parish, then include it in the work you do when your parish family begins



to work together later this year. You need to be active in ensuring pregnancy-care ministry is integrated into your parish family work as the Beacons process continues to unfold. Pro-life ministry is about helping all

women — not just Catholic women — and children in need. It is a true Catholic response to take the "crisis" out of pregnancies — and provide the opportunity for women to embrace their own maternity. Let's be the light needed in our communities and neighborhoods to ensure every mom in crisis finds the help she needs to choose life!



Welcome

Thank you for your openness to God's call to foster respect for human life at all its stages, from conception to natural death. We live in a time when so many in our culture promote values contrary to human life itself. These include life issues such as abortion and euthanasia, and issues of human dignity such as advocacy for those with disabilities or victims of violent crime. It is a monumental task, but one worth pursuing. What is needed is people of love and humility, devoted to God, immersed in the Sacraments of Jesus Christ, and open to the direction of the Holy Spirit in helping others bring a greater respect for all human life to the lives of all.

May God bless you in this work. Know that I am truly grateful to work with you in this. Together, let us build a culture of life here in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati!

Director, Office for Respect Life Ministries

Cross the Bridge 2022!

By: Bob Wurzelbacher



There is so much reason to come out to our annual Cross the Bridge for Life event on Sunday, June 5, 2022!

First of all, it was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, so we need to come back after 3 years bigger than ever before. Secondly, we need to keep praying for a favorable decision in the Dobbs case. Finally, we need to show the world that our message is not one of hate and oppression of women, but one of love, joy and empowering women! Formed as a collaborative effort between the Diocese of Covington and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Cross the Bridge for Life is co-sponsored by life-affirming organizations and businesses from Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky who come to show our community how we help women, children and families with life-affirming services.

We plan to gather at 1PM for family-friendly fun at Festival Park Riverfront Row in Covington with live music, free t-shirts, face-painting and balloons for kids of all ages. A short program with speakers will begin at 2PM, followed by a walk across the Purple People Bridge. Archbishop Schnurr of Cincinnati and Bishop Iffert of Covington are expected to lead the walk alongside priests, seminarians, Knights of Columbus and Hibernians. Mark your calendars and bring the whole family to help us celebrate life again in 2022! For more information, see the website [HERE](#).

MAY

Mother's Day

08

Mother's Day is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the beautiful vocation of motherhood and the gift of life. It calls us to cherish the gift of life that we receive from our mothers and to pray for all women to whom God has entrusted life in a very special way. [CLICK HERE](#) for ideas to promote a pro-life message on this special day!

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Abortion Under Cover

Please join the Church of the Incarnation Respect Life Ministry on Thursday, May 12 at 6:30PM in the Parish Center to learn the truth about two pills used to induce abortion that are growing in popularity. A panel of experts will discuss these pills that are available without a prescription or medical screening. [CLICK HERE](#) for more info.

Coordinator's Corner

This section is dedicated to providing seasonal resources for Parish Respect Life Coordinators. If there is a resource that you believe would be useful to include, please contact us at respectlife@catholicaoc.org.

- 01- Word of Life & Pray for Life
- 02- Dobbs Parish Leader Kit
- 03- Mother's Day Action Guide
- 04- Red/Blue Workshop



Respect Life Coordinator Resources

- 01 The month's Word of Life includes prayers for Mother's Day, a Mother's Day Action Guide (see below), and information about the **VISITATION NOVENA** that is coming up at the end of the month. (PDF: **English | Spanish**) You can also find the **PRAY FOR LIFE** page that includes monthly prayers for moms in need written in both English and Spanish.
- 02 This **DOBBS PARISH LEADER KIT** is a special edition of the Word of Life. This edition is not month-specific and is dedicated to providing resources to use leading up to and after the **Dobbs** decision. This Parish Leader Kit includes suggested intercessions, bulletin quotes, graphics, links to educational tools, online resources, and advocacy & action networks that parishioners can join at the national level and through your local state Catholic conference.
- 03 Mother's Day is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the beautiful vocation of motherhood and the gift of life. The USCCB **MOTHER'S DAY ACTION GUIDE** provides resources to help parishes, schools, families, ministries, and individual Catholics honor mothers, to whom God has entrusted the gift of life in a very special way. View the **WEBINAR** in which USCCB staff walk through the materials.
- 04 Do you find it challenging to organize pro-life activities and announcements because of a more liberal-oriented leadership team at your parish? Learn how to work and communicate better with those whose focus is different than yours by joining us for this two-part online workshop that brings together conservative leaning (red) and liberal leaning (blue) Catholics for structured discussions on June 2 & June 9 from 6 - 9PM. **REGISTER NOW** for both three hour sessions.

A Waiting Mom's Mother's Day

By: *Becky Schoenfeld*

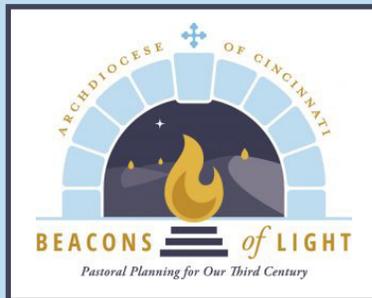
I had always pictured myself as being a mom. In 2019, after being married for 3 years, my husband and I were given the diagnosis of infertility. In 2021, we finally made the decision to pursue adoption through a local agency!

One thing we learned in "adoption class" was that we should be celebrating and anticipating new life just as couples do who bring biological children into the world. For Mother's Day last year, my husband surprised me with a shirt that said: "No bump, but so pumped...Adoption in Progress." It was probably the best gift I have ever received. I proudly wore that shirt to Mother's Day brunch, as I finally recognized myself as a MOM-to-be.

I recently found a support group for women who are waiting to become moms. As a woman, God puts this maternal instinct in us. Through this group, I've learned that God has called me to BE a mom. He has a plan for my husband and I to become parents- and our baby will enter this world at the exact moment he or she is meant to. One of my favorite scripture passages to remind me of this is Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." That moment hasn't come yet, but we pray each day for the beautiful woman who will choose life for her baby through the miracle of adoption.

Happy Mother's Day to all the biological moms, birthmoms, waiting moms, and any woman longing to be a mom!

Parish Inventories Beacons of Light Pathways



We're making our way through Phase 0: Warmup, the time of preparation before our Families of Parishes are implemented. The Pathway Phase 0 site includes numerous resources to equip parish leaders to pray, learn, and prepare.

PARISH INVENTORIES, focused on the six Beacons of Light guiding principles, have been added to the Phase 0 site. We encourage pastors, staff, and parishioner leaders to complete the inventories in the time between now and July 1. Then, when your Family comes together, you will be prepared to share what is currently part of the life of your parish, and you may begin to discern the future of your family, building on all that is in place right now.

These inventory tools are designed to help parish leaders assess one or more aspects of parish life before pastoral planning takes place within the Family of Parishes. Once the inventory tool is completed, it can be shared with leaders in the other parishes within the Family during Phase 1 to increase familiarity among all parishes.

MAY

Volunteers Needed

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Clean up for the Cemetery of the Innocent crosses is Saturday, 5/21 under the pavilion at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (Milford, Ohio) beginning at 10AM. If folks have them: bring gloves, a cordless drill and pliers, rags and a 5 gallon bucket. If not, they can help with sorting and cleaning. Text or call **Ginette Barcomb** with questions **513-722-4884**.

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DRTL Founders Lunch

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Dayton Right to Life. Join them in celebration at their Founders Lunch on Wednesday, May 25 from 12 - 2PM at *Reverie* in Miamisburg. **CLICK HERE** to register.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

By: *Andrew Musgrave*

In 1976, in the wake of the Watergate scandal, the U.S. bishops were called to remind Catholics of their obligation to be involved in our political process. One of the key tenants of Catholic Social Teaching is "Family, Community, and Participation" which builds on the idea that we are designed by God to be in relationship with our sisters and brothers, not only with those in our closest circles but also in the broader community. That 1976 document, Political Responsibility, seeks to encourage Catholics to engage in civic participation out of a sense of moral and civic responsibility. Since then, every four years the bishops review the document and update it based on the current issues facing our nation. The current version, titled Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, was drafted in 2007 and has been updated before each major election cycle. As we come into the 2022 midterm elections, let us remind ourselves of the key points laid out in FCFC:

1. The call to participate: the obligation to participate in political life is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do.
2. Forming conscience: Catholics have a serious and lifelong obligation to form their consciences, the voice of God resounding in our heart, in accord with human reason and the teaching of the Church.
3. Avoid evil & do good: there are some things we must never do, as individuals or as a society, because they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor, and we have a moral imperative to respond to the needs of our neighbors.
4. Apply Catholic Social Teaching: Stemming from the belief in the dignity of all life, we must seek to empower and support those on the margins, work for the common good, and stand in solidarity with all of God's children.

As we discern how we will engage in the upcoming elections, we ask that God helps us to be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group and to always be civil, clear, and compassionate in all of our activity.

Being Pro-Life

The Beauty of Adoption

When a woman is in a crisis pregnancy, there are many reasons why it can be very difficult at that moment to see adoption as a viable option. Choosing to continue carrying the pregnancy, letting everyone know that you are pregnant, going through the process of childbirth and then saying goodbye to the baby at the end of that journey, often takes a heroic amount of courage and love. If we are going to help women who feel unprepared for a pregnancy, and suggest adoption as a possible option, we need to better understand the journey of making that loving but difficult choice. Check out a past interview we had with a birthmother **HERE**, and hopefully we can gain a better perspective on the beauty behind the choice, so we can better support those who most need our help.



Capital Punishment

By: Bekky Baker

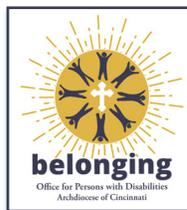
Ohio has never been this close to repealing the death penalty in our state. Two identical bills, Senate Bill 103 and House Bill 183, have both had committee hearings and House Bill 183 has had enough hearings to be voted out of committee and onto the House floor for a vote. Legislators are hearing our voices, as they continue to take meetings and note the number of postcards, phone calls, letters, and emails they receive from constituents. But we still have some work to do to take these bills across the finish line.

The work that has been accomplished so far would not be possible without faith communities and their leaders. People of faith value the inherent dignity and worth of each human life and give insight into the moral implications the death penalty has on our communities. There are a number of ways to get involved in the work to end the death penalty:

- Join the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center's **EMAIL LIST** for updates and events.
- Share campaign updates and events with your community
- Join the No Death Penalty OH Faith Table to network with other faith leaders across Ohio working on the issue by emailing Bekky Baker at bekky@IJPCcincinnati.org
- Organize people to write letters to their legislators. You can utilize the resources in the toolkit below.
- Check out the Faith Week Action Toolkit for more resources by clicking **HERE**.

Mental Health Awareness Month

By: Noelle Collis-DeVito



Did you know that one in five adults suffer from mental illness? That number may seem high, but like many other disabilities, mental illness is referred to as an "invisible disorder." Often people suffer silently due to the stigma that is affiliated with a mental health diagnosis. Mental illness is not often addressed by the Catholic Church, but we are called by Jesus to recognize those who are suffering in our midst and to accompany them on their journey.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and this provides us with a wonderful opportunity to shed some light on mental illness and to work towards eliminating stigma that prevents people from feeling fully welcomed into their faith communities. To promote awareness in your parish, please consider using these resources: **MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS BULLETIN INSERT, PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS, and PASTORAL RESPONSE TO PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS.**

Follow the **OFFICE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES** on Social Media and share some of our upcoming posts to raise awareness here in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The first step towards eliminating stigma is to provide opportunities for awareness and understanding. Let us work together to help our Church become a place of accompaniment for those who suffer silently from mental illness.

JUNE Cross the Bridge for Life

05

Join us at 1PM for family-friendly fun at Festival Park Riverfront Row in Covington with live music, free t-shirts, face-painting and balloons for kids of all ages. A short program with speakers will begin at 2PM, followed by a walk across the Purple People Bridge. Mark your calendars to help us celebrate life again in 2022! **CLICK HERE** for more information.

JUNE Catholic Red/Blue Workshop

02 & 09

Join us for this two-part **ONLINE WORKSHOP** that brings together conservative leaning (red) and liberal leaning (blue) Catholics for structured discussions. This workshop may help you work with others in your parish who seem at odds with your pro-life values. This workshop is conducted on two separate evenings for three hours each.



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Project Rachel

By: Becky Schoenfeld



This past weekend we were blessed to offer one of our weekend retreats! It's always such a beautiful thing to witness a woman coming into the retreat on Friday feeling broken, scared, and vulnerable, but by Sunday morning she is shining with the radiance of Christ. What a perfect display of God's unconditional love and boundless mercy!

Saturday evening of the retreat ended with a healing service, reconciliation, and Holy Mass. The women had the opportunity to pray, and "name and claim" their baby. Some even chose to write a letter to their child. For many, this is the first time that they have shared their abortion experience with anyone. They have hidden this secret for so long but are finally able to share their burden with others in the

confidence of this ministry.

It takes a lot of courage and strength to even make that first phone call or take the first step toward healing. It is indeed a testament to the Holy Spirit stirring within the hearts of these women who come to this ministry searching for healing and forgiveness within themselves. Please continue to pray for the women that were able to join us this weekend, that God continues to pour his love and mercy into their hearts. Pray also for the volunteers, priests, and facilitators that help with this ministry, that God continues to give them the strength and endurance to share the Truth of God's love.

Rest in Peace, Vicki Thorn (1950-2022), foundress of Project Rachel