DAY ONE

January 21, 2021

INTERCESSION

May the tragic practice of abortion end.

PRAYERS

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

REFLECTION

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

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

ACTS OF REPARATION *(choose one)*

- Take a break from television and movies today. Consider spending some of that time praying with today's reflection.
- Pray the short prayer "Every Life is Worth Living," reflecting on the gift of human life. (The prayer is also available to order or download at usccb.org/worth-living.)

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

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

ONE STEP FURTHER

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

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DAY TWO

January 22, 2021

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

DID YOU KNOW ?

In the Catholic Church in the United States, January 22nd is designated as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children." As Catholics, we are called to observe this day through the penitential practices of prayer, fasting, and/or giving alms.

More Information: usccb.org/january-22

INTERCESSION

May all unborn children be protected in law and welcomed in love.

PRAYERS

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

REFLECTION

Today, on this 48th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we mourn the many children's lives ended by abortion and remember in prayer those who suffer the aftermath. The Church comes together today to pray for the protection of all unborn children and to make reparation for abortion, trusting that the Lord hears our prayers.

The importance of prayer is reflected in *Evangelium vitae* (100), which says, "A great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world. Through special initiatives and in daily prayer, may an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and lover of life, from every Christian community, from every group and association, from every family and from the heart of every believer" (*Evangelium vitae* 100). May that prayer arise in our hearts today and each day forward until every human being is protected in law and welcomed in love.

ACTS OF REPARATION *(choose one)*

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

Father and maker of all,
you adorn all creation
with splendor and beauty,
and fashion human lives
in your image and likeness.
Awaken in every heart
reverence for the work of
your hands, and renew among
your people a readiness to
nurture and sustain
your precious gift of life.
Grant this through our Lord
Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with
you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, God forever and ever.
Amen

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

ONE STEP FURTHER

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

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

*The L.O.V.E. Approach™ is trademarked by Heartbeat International, Inc. and may not be adapted or modified. The L.O.V.E. Approach™ is used in "What to Do When a Friend Is Considering Abortion" with permission from Heartbeat International, Inc.

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3 WAYS TO JOIN

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DAY THREE

January 23, 2021

INTERCESSION

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

PRAYERS

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

REFLECTION

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she opened her heart to receive his message that she would conceive the Son of God in her womb. As a young, betrothed, but unmarried, woman, Mary knew that her pregnancy presented many challenges. Despite this knowledge, she faithfully responded, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

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

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

ACTS OF REPARATION *(choose one)*

- Sign up to pray for and serve expectant mothers in need in your community through a parish-based program called *Walking with Moms in Need* (walkingwithmoms.com/pledge).
- Pray the Angelus today (usccb.org/angelus). You might also consider saying it every day for the next week—on awakening, at noon, or at 6 p.m. (or all three times).
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

ONE STEP FURTHER

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

9daysforlife.com

3 WAYS TO JOIN

Image: A mosaic of Our Lady of Guadalupe decorates a side altar in the Church of Santa Maria della Famiglia at the Vatican. Dec. 15. (CNS photo/Paul Haring.)

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DAY FOUR

January 24, 2021

INTERCESSION

May expectant fathers lovingly support the mothers of their children in welcoming new life.

PRAYERS

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

REFLECTION

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

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

ACTS OF REPARATION *(choose one)*

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

ONE STEP FURTHER

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

Image: A mosaic of Our Lady of Guadalupe decorates a side altar in the Church of Santa Maria della Famiglia at the Vatican. Dec. 15. (CNS photo/Paul Haring.)

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DAY FIVE

January 25, 2021

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

INTERCESSION

May each person suffering from the loss of a child through abortion find hope and healing in Christ.

PRAYERS

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

REFLECTION

After more than four decades of legalized abortion, many children's lives have been ended, and many parents and family members suffer that loss—often in silence. Yet God's greatest desire is to forgive. No matter how far we have each strayed from His side, He says to us, "Don't be afraid. Draw close to my heart." Be assured that it is never too late to seek God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

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

ACTS OF REPARATION *(choose one)*

- Abstain from meat today.
- Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for those who are suffering the loss of a child through abortion, asking that they find healing and peace (usccb.org/divine-mercy-chaplet).
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today's intention.

ONE STEP FURTHER

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

9daysforlife.com

3 WAYS TO JOIN

Image: A mosaic of Our Lady of Guadalupe decorates a side altar in the Church of Santa Maria della Famiglia at the Vatican. Dec. 15. (CNS photo/Paul Haring.)

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DAY SIX

January 26, 2021

INTERCESSION

May expectant mothers choosing adoption receive grace and support in embracing this loving option.

PRAYERS

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

REFLECTION

Mothers placing their children for adoption often face many challenges along the way. One of the greatest obstacles can be inaccurately perceiving adoption as abandonment. But mothers who make an adoption plan for their children are not abandoning their children. Rather, they are exemplifying the sacrificial love of Christ on the Cross in choosing to do what is best for their children, even at great cost to themselves. Like Christ, they pour out their bodies and souls for the sake of another. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that, in the face of fears and trials, we can "hold fast to the hope that lies before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm" (Heb 6:18-19). We pray that each expectant mother choosing adoption will be filled with "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding" (Phil 4:7) as she makes a loving choice for her child. Let us all cling fast to the anchor of hope, for we have received "a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father!'" (Rom 8:15).

ACTS OF REPARATION *(choose one)*

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

ONE STEP FURTHER

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

9daysforlife.com

3 WAYS TO JOIN

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DAY SEVEN

January 27, 2021

INTERCESSION

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

PRAYERS

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

REFLECTION

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

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

ACTS OF REPARATION *(choose one)*

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

ONE STEP FURTHER

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

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DAY EIGHT

January 28, 2021

DID YOU KNOW ?

Although the annual National Prayer Vigil for Life is closed to in-person attendance due to health concerns, you can participate live from anywhere in the country on Thursday, January 28! Visit usccb.org/national-prayer-events-for-life for more information.

INTERCESSION

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

PRAYERS

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

REFLECTION

The Declaration of Independence boldly affirms that first among our inalienable rights is the right to life, given to us by the Creator. Yet despite being so solemnly proclaimed, the right to life is today threatened and often denied, particularly at the moments when life is most fragile. Our laws should—first and foremost—protect life. But "our highest Court does not recognize children in their mothers' wombs as persons and claims that abortion is a constitutional right. Further, many political leaders work actively to increase access to abortion. Some falsely describe it as health care and even as a basic human right" (*Priorities at the Polls*). Laws and policies that legalize or promote an intrinsic evil like abortion violate the virtue of justice.

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

ACTS OF REPARATION *(choose one)*

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

ONE STEP FURTHER

When discussing faithful citizenship in 2019, the U.S. bishops reaffirmed, "the threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed." Archbishop Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas and Chair of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities, explains more in *Priorities at the Polls*: respectlife.org/priorities-at-the-polls.

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DAY NINE

January 29, 2021

March for Life, Washington, DC

INTERCESSION

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

PRAYERS

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

REFLECTION

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

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

ACTS OF REPARATION *(choose one)*

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

ONE STEP FURTHER

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

9daysforlife.com

3 WAYS TO JOIN

Image: A mosaic of Our Lady of Guadalupe decorates a side altar in the Church of Santa Maria della Famiglia at the Vatican. Dec. 15. (CNS photo/Paul Haring.)

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