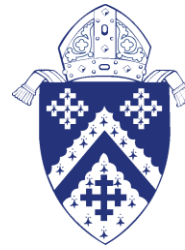


2025 Respect Life Month Digital Toolkit



Catholic Diocese
of Cleveland

To the families, parishes, and schools in the Diocese of Cleveland:

Every October, the Church invites us to enter more deeply into **Respect Life Month**—a time to cherish, defend, and protect the gift of life at every stage. It begins with **Respect Life Sunday** and continues throughout October as an opportunity for parishes, schools, and families to reflect on the Gospel of Life and witness to the dignity of every human person.

This toolkit has been developed collaboratively by the **Office for Human Life, the Office of Marriage & Family Ministries, and the Diocesan Social Action Office**, drawing inspiration from the [USCCB's National Respect Life Action Guide](#) produced by the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities. It has been tailored to help our communities here in Northeast Ohio see that *Respect Life Month means respecting the life and dignity of all human beings—from the unborn to the elderly, and all those in between.*

A Consistent Ethic of Life

The consistent ethic of life, sometimes called the “seamless garment,” reminds us that **every life is sacred, inviolable, and worthy of love and protection**. As St. John Paul II wrote: “*Respect, protect, love, and serve life—every human life!*” (*Evangelium Vitae*, 5). This holistic vision is especially vital in today’s polarized culture. Each of us may be called to focus on a particular issue—abortion, capital punishment, end-of-life care, peace-building, or others—but our witness should never suggest indifference to other threats. Together, we stand as one Body with many parts (cf. 1 Cor 12), united in protecting and promoting life.

Weekly Themes

To help bring this vision to life, each week of October focuses on a specific topic or theme:

- **Week 1 (Respect Life Sunday, Oct. 4–5):**
Celebrating the Gift of Life and Protecting the Unborn
- **Week 2 (Oct. 11–12):**
Working to End the Death Penalty & Supporting Restorative Justice
- **Week 3 (Oct. 18–19):**
Caring for Our Elders — End-of-Life Issues & Accompanying the Elderly, Sick, and Dying
- **Week 4 (Oct. 25–26):**
Embracing Peace: At Home and Abroad

How to use this Toolkit:

Aligned with the USCCB's [Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities](#), each week provides resources related to the plan's four pillars:

1. **Pray**—homily helps, sample petitions, and specific prayers
2. **Learn**—one-page handouts/bulletin-inserts highlighting Church teaching.
3. **Serve**—suggested outreach and simple acts of accompaniment
4. **Advocate**—actions to help transform policies for the protection of human dignity

This year's advocacy focus will be a **month-long letter-writing initiative** in support of the proposed **"No State-Funded Death" legislation** in the Ohio House and Senate, as promoted by the [Catholic Conference of Ohio](#)..

Share What you are Doing!

Whether you pray, serve, advocate, or host an event, let's inspire one another by sharing how our communities are living out Respect Life Month. Post your efforts on social media and tag us **@humanlifeCLE** (Facebook & Instagram). Don't forget to use **#respectlifeCLE** so we can highlight and celebrate your witness across the diocese!

Together, our voices and actions can help Northeast Ohio reflect the truth that all life is a sacred gift from God, worthy of love and protection.

Please keep all of us in your prayers, as we promise to keep you in ours. May this Respect Life Month deepen our conviction that Christ came so that all might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).



Suggested Activities throughout Respect Life Month:

The following are examples of ways that individuals, families, parishes, and/or schools could increase engagement and participation in *Respect Life Month*:

1. Interactive *Respect Life Month* bulletin-board: [see resource](#) from USCCB. For a modification to use in homes or at schools, [click here](#).
2. Pray [Catholic Mobilizing Network's Annual Novena to End the Death Penalty](#) (in anticipation of World Day Against the Death Penalty, 10/10). Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) is the Catholic Church in the United States' organization committed to end the death penalty, advance justice, and begin healing.
3. Pray [Respect Life Month Novena](#) (USCCB).
4. Host a prayer service, praying for those present, as well as those who take or disregard human life. (See the ["Prayer Service for Forgiveness and Healing," USCCB](#)) Consider providing opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of the prayer service.
5. Host a screening of the film, *Just Mercy*. A trailer to the movie can be found here: [Just Mercy](#) (2019, Rating: PG-13; Run Time: 136min). CMN provides a "Catholic Study Guide" on the film, which can be [found here](#).
6. A pilgrimage to pray for the protection of human life at local sites (such as churches, chapels, and other Catholic destinations, or places where the dignity of human life is or may be violated, such as abortion facilities, prisons, and hospitals).
7. A service project (on-site or off-site) related to providing care or assistance that supports and welcomes the gift of human life (such as pregnancy care centers).
8. Participate in the *Respect Life Month Advocacy Campaign* (see details below).

Important October Dates:

Although not referenced specifically in the toolkit, the following dates could be highlighted during *Respect Life Month*:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 10/1: | International Day for Older Persons (UN) |
| 10/2: | International Day of Nonviolence (Anniversary of Gandhi's birth; UN) |
| 10/4-5: | World Day for Migrants & Refugees (Vatican) |
| 10/10: | World Day Against the Death Penalty (CMN) |
| 10/15: | Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day |
| 10/17: | International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (UN) |
| 10/24-30: | Disarmament Week (UN) |

Respect Life Month Advocacy Campaign

Letter Writing Guide – Ohio House Bill 72 & Senate Bill 134

Why We Are Writing

As part of Respect Life Month, individuals, families, parishes, and schools are invited to participate in a **month-long letter-writing campaign** to support HB 72 and SB 134 — legislation that prohibits state funding of abortion, assisted suicide, and the death penalty (referred to commonly as the “No State-Funded Death Bill”). This action flows directly from the **Advocacy pillar** of the *USCCB’s Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*, which invites us to bring our voices to the public square in defense of life and dignity.

Even though the themes of each week in Respect Life Month will vary (unborn, death penalty, end-of-life, etc.), this campaign provides a **consistent weekly action step**: write, send, and follow up.

For more information on the proposed bills, including talking points, be sure to visit the [Catholic Conference of Ohio’s website](#). A copy of the Ohio Bishops’ joint letter to the Ohio Congress, [click here](#).

How to Participate

1. Choose the correct form letter

- a. Use the **House version** if you are writing to your Ohio Representative.
- b. Use the **Senate version** if you are writing to your Ohio Senator.
- c. Both sample letters are included in this toolkit — simply fill in your name, address, and the legislator’s information.

2. Find your legislators

- a. Ohio House: www.ohiohouse.gov → “Find Your Representative”
- b. Ohio Senate: www.ohiosenate.gov → “Find Your Senator”

3. Send your letter

- a. Letters can be mailed, emailed, or delivered in person.
- b. Schools and parishes may consider organizing a group mailing to show broad support.

4. Make a phone call after sending your letter — thank your legislator for their service and briefly state why you hope they will support HB 72 or SB 134. A personal call strengthens your letter’s impact.

5. Stay engaged

- a. Pray each week for legislators and all those impacted by these life issues.
- b. Share this action step with family, parishioners, or classmates.

Form Letter to Ohio House Representatives

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[City, State ZIP]

[Email / Phone, optional]

[Date]

The Honorable [Representative's Full Name]

Ohio House of Representatives

[Office Address]

Re: Support for House Bill 72 – Protecting Life and Human Dignity

Dear Representative [Last Name],

I write to you as a concerned citizen and a person of faith to ask for your support of House Bill 72, legislation that reflects Ohio's deepest values by prohibiting state funding of the intentional termination of human life.

HB 72 reinforces current law banning taxpayer funding for abortion, expands protections against assisted suicide, and abolishes the death penalty by linking these prohibitions together. This consistent ethic of life approach reflects a commitment to human dignity at every stage and circumstance — from the child in the womb, to the elderly, to those who have committed serious crimes.

As St. John Paul II taught, we are called to “respect, protect, love, and serve life — every human life” (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 5). I believe HB 72 offers Ohio a chance to live out that vision by ensuring that our laws and budgets never undermine human dignity but instead uphold it.

Please commit to preventing taxpayer funding of the intentional termination of life by supporting House Bill 72. Thank you for your service to our state, and know that I am praying for you and your colleagues as you deliberate this important matter.

Respectfully,

[Your Name]

Please add your own story about this issue to personalize your message:

Form Letter to Ohio Senators

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[City, State ZIP]

[Email / Phone, optional]

[Date]

The Honorable [Senator's Full Name]

Ohio Senate

[Office Address]

Re: Support for Senate Bill 134 – Protecting Life and Human Dignity

Dear Senator [Last Name],

I urge you to support Senate Bill 134, vital legislation that prohibits state funding of practices that intentionally end human life.

SB 134 strengthens Ohio's culture of life by reinforcing current law against taxpayer funding of abortion, expanding protections against assisted suicide, and abolishing the death penalty. As its sponsors have noted, this is a first-of-its-kind bill that marries fiscal responsibility with moral clarity, ensuring Ohioans' tax dollars are never used to undermine human dignity.

Pope Francis has reminded us that human dignity must not be defended selectively, but consistently, in every circumstance. SB 134 represents such a consistent ethic of life, affirming that every life — regardless of age, condition, or past actions — bears the image of God.

Please join in upholding the inherent dignity and sacredness of every human life by supporting Senate Bill 134. Thank you for your leadership and public service.

Respectfully,

[Your Name]

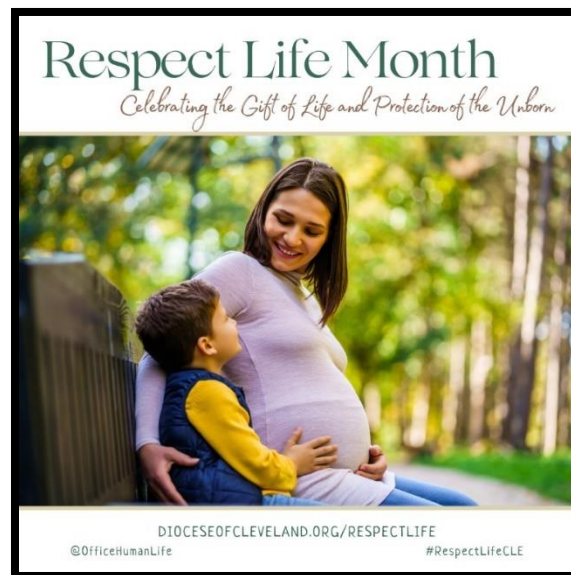
Please add your own story about this issue to personalize your message:

Week #1 (10/4-10/5):

Respect Life Sunday, 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Week One Theme:

Celebrating the Gift of Life and Protecting the Unborn



A PRAYER FOR HOPE

Heavenly Father, in the sacrament of Baptism, you have given us the gift of new life. Through your son our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, you have made us your own.

Help us to recognize the gift of human life as a sign of hope in our world.

Reveal to us the places where your precious gift of life is most in need of protection and strengthen us to defend life in all stages and circumstances, from the child in the womb to the elderly and dying.

Guided by your Holy Spirit, guard us from discouragement and give us the grace to be messengers of hope, filled with confidence that nothing can separate us from your love.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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To order, visit store.respectlife.org.

PRAY: Week #1—Respect Life Sunday

Respect Life Sunday Homily Helps

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 17:5–10)—October 4th and 5th

- **“Increase our faith” (Lk 17:5):**

The disciples ask for more faith because they know discipleship is demanding. To defend life—from the unborn to the elderly, from the poor to the imprisoned—requires the kind of faith that trusts God can work through even our small efforts (mustard seed faith).

- **Mustard seed faith uproots what seems immovable (Lk 17:6):**

In a culture of death, it may feel like our voice for life is too small. Yet Christ assures us that even a little faith can move mountains—or uproot entrenched mentalities that devalue life. *Evangelium Vitae* calls us to resist discouragement by noticing the “positive signs” of a culture of life already growing.

- **Servants of the Gospel of Life (Lk 17:7–10):**

Jesus reminds us that discipleship is not about applause but obedience. We don’t defend life for praise or recognition but because it is our duty as followers of Christ. As *Gaudium et Spes* insists, every person must treat their neighbor as “another self,” especially the vulnerable.

- **Faith as humble service:**

Respect Life Sunday reminds us that serving life is not an optional extra—it’s core to the Gospel. Pope Francis says, “*Our defense of the innocent unborn needs to be clear, firm, and passionate... Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor... the infirm and elderly... the victims of human trafficking.*” To serve life is to serve Christ himself (cf. Mt 25:40).

- **Duty rooted in love, not ideology:**

Jesus calls us “unprofitable servants” who have “done what we were obliged to do” (Lk 17:10). Respecting life is not a political stance or a special interest—it’s simply living our Catholic identity. As St. John Paul II writes: “*Respect, protect, love, and serve life, every human life!*”

Possible Preaching Hooks

- Tell a story of someone whose “mustard seed” act for life (adoption, advocacy, caring for the sick, walking with a mother in crisis) bore fruit beyond what they imagined.
- Invite the congregation to see their *ordinary* faithfulness—praying, volunteering, accompanying—as powerful “seeds” in God’s hands.
- Stress that on Respect Life Sunday we don’t congratulate ourselves; we recommit ourselves humbly, as servants, to the Gospel of Life.

PRAY: Week #1—Respect Life Sunday

Sample Petitions for Prayers of the Faithful

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 17:5–10)—October 4th and 5th

For Pope Leo XIV and those in leadership in the Church, as they work to end the culture of death and promote a culture of life. Give them strength as they work to end all that which threatens the God-given dignity of human life. *We pray to the Lord...*

For all Catholics: that on this Respect Life Sunday, the Lord will strengthen our resolve to protect the gift of every human life; *let us pray to the Lord:*

May the Lord help us to understand more deeply the challenges of pregnant and parenting moms and to respond with increased care and support; *We pray to the Lord:*

For women and men suffering after participating in an abortion: may the Church's abortion healing ministry, help them find peace and healing through God's endless mercy; *let us pray to the Lord:*

LEARN: Week #1—Respect Life Sunday

The Inviolable Sanctity of Human Life: A Catholic Perspective on Respect Life Sunday

As Catholics, we believe every human life is a precious gift from God—sacred, inviolable, and worthy of protection from conception until natural death.

Core Themes:

1. **Life is Sacred from the Moment of Conception** – The Church teaches that "from the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth."
2. **The Tragedy of Abortion** –The Church has consistently affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion since the first century, a teaching that remains unchangeable. Direct abortion is considered "gravely contrary to the moral law" and, alongside infanticide, is an "abominable crime" and an "unspeakable crime".
3. **Culture of Life vs. Culture of Death** – The Church calls us to resist societal trends that devalue life and to build a culture that welcomes it.

“Respect, protect, love, and serve life, every human life!”

— St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no.5

4. **Our Social Responsibility** – A just society protects the vulnerable; laws that deny the right to life undermine true freedom. "To claim the right to abortion, infanticide and euthanasia, and to recognize that right in law, means to attribute to human freedom a perverse and evil significance: that of an absolute power over others and against others. This is the death of true freedom."
5. **Openness to Life** – A society that welcomes life flourishes; one that rejects life falters. "Openness to life is at the center of true development. When a society moves towards the denial or suppression of life, it ends up no longer finding the necessary motivation and energy to strive for man's true good."
6. **Care for All the Vulnerable** – The Church emphasizes that the defense of the innocent unborn is intrinsically linked to the defense of every other human right and the dignity of all vulnerable individuals. This includes the poor, the destitute, the abandoned, the infirm, the elderly, and victims of human trafficking. It is not "progressive" to eliminate human life to solve problems.

Other Important Teachings:

- The Church rejects sterilization, surrogate motherhood, and technologies that treat children as products rather than gifts.
- Adoption is a beautiful and generous option that reflects God's love.
- A well-formed conscience must guide political and social choices, always prioritizing the defense of human life.

What Can I Do?

- **Pray** for the unborn, mothers in need, and all who suffer.
- **Learn** more about Catholic teaching on life issues.
- **Support** ministries that accompany women, children, and families.
- **Advocate** for laws and policies that defend human dignity.
- **Serve** by walking with those in crisis—be it pregnancy, poverty, illness, or isolation.

Take-Home Message:

Every Catholic is called to witness to the Gospel of Life. In our homes, parishes, workplaces, and public life, may we always be people who respect, protect, love, and serve every human life.

Reflection Question:

Where in your daily life do you see the dignity of human life being challenged — and how might you respond as a Catholic missionary disciple?

Church Teachings to Consult (*if you want to learn more*):

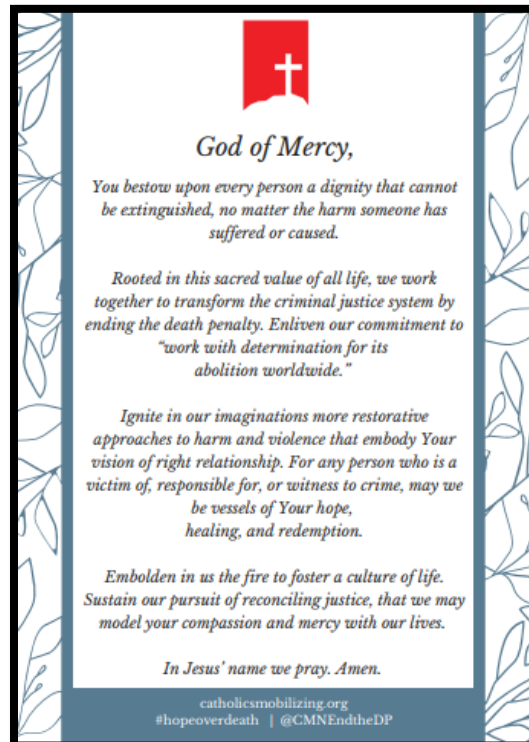
- [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#) (nos. 2270–2275)
- [*Gaudium et Spes*](#) (Second Vatican Council, 1965; no.27)
- [*Evangelium Vitae*](#) (St. John Paul II, 1995; nos.13, 20, 26, 54, 58-60)
- [*Caritas in Veritate*](#) (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009; nos.28, 75)
- [*Gaudete et Exsultate*](#) (Pope Francis, 2018; no.101)
- [*Amoris Laetitia*](#) (Pope Francis, 2016; nos. 42, 179)

Week #2 (10/11-10/12):

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Week Two Theme:

Working to End the Death Penalty & Supporting Restorative Justice



PRAY: 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Week #2 Sunday Homily Helps

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 17:11–19)—October 11th and 12th

- **Jesus sees the outcast:** The ten lepers cry out from a distance, excluded by law and stigma. Likewise, people on death row are often cast aside as “untouchable” or “unredeemable.” Yet Jesus acknowledges their dignity and responds with healing mercy.
→ Connect: Catholic teaching affirms that “the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes” (CCC 2267).
- **Healing leads to gratitude:** Only the Samaritan—considered a “foreigner”—returns to give thanks. He embodies the response of faith. We are called not just to receive mercy, but to give thanks by becoming agents of mercy ourselves.
→ Connect: Ending the death penalty is an act of gratitude for God’s mercy toward us; it extends that mercy to others.
- **Faith and salvation, not punishment, transform:** Jesus tells the Samaritan, “Your faith has saved you.” Healing and salvation come not through retribution, but through faith that leads to restored relationship.
→ Connect: Restorative justice asks not “How should they be punished?” but “What was the harm, and how can relationships be healed?”
- **Jesus rejects a culture of vengeance:** The other nine may have been satisfied with ritual purity, but the Samaritan recognizes something deeper: salvation. Similarly, our culture often seeks retribution (death penalty) rather than redemption.
→ Connect: Pope Francis insists: “Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 269).
- **The Church’s call to consistent life ethic:** Just as Jesus did not exclude the Samaritan or the leper, we cannot exclude those guilty of grave crimes from the community of life. The death penalty denies the possibility of conversion and redemption.
→ Connect: “The death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person” (CCC 2267)

Possible Preaching Hooks

- **“Who do we treat like lepers today?”** Just as the lepers were cast out of the community, many in our society are deemed “untouchable” — including those on death row. Jesus shows us that no one is beyond the reach of mercy.
- **“Only one came back.”** The Samaritan’s gratitude reminds us that faith isn’t just about receiving blessings — it’s about responding. How do we respond to God’s mercy? One way is by extending mercy to others, even those society considers beyond saving.

PRAY: Week #2

Sample Petitions for Prayers of the Faithful

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 17:5–10)—October 4th and 5th

For lawmakers and elected officials. May your spirit of love and compassion transform their hearts and inspire them to place the needs of human life above all. *We pray to the Lord...*

For all those impacted by crime and acts of harm. May the victims of crime and their families know your healing power and be transformed by your mercy. *We pray to the Lord...*

For all those on death row awaiting execution, and those lives we have lost to the death penalty. May they know your unending love and forgiveness as children of God. *We pray to the Lord...*

For each of us who works to end the death penalty, advance justice, and promote healing in our hurting world, and for all the prayers we hold in the silence of our hearts
May we know the comfort of God's love and remain steadfast in our pursuit of Jesus' reconciling way. *We pray to the Lord...*

LEARN: Week 2 Handout

A Catholic Perspective on Abolishing the Death Penalty & Supporting Restorative Justice

As Catholics, we believe every person is created in the image and likeness of God. This dignity is never lost, even after grave harm has been done. For this reason, the death penalty is inadmissible—it violates the Gospel call to respect, protect, love, and serve every human life.

Core Themes:

1. **Human Dignity Never Lost** – “Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 269).
2. **The Death Penalty is Inadmissible** – The Church teaches that today the death penalty is an “attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person” (CCC 2267).
3. **Consistent Ethic of Life** – The Church opposes abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment alike, because all human life is sacred “from conception to natural death.”

“Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity.”

— Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no.269

4. **Risk of Innocence & Injustice** – For every 9 people executed in the U.S., 1 has been exonerated after being proven innocent. The poor, people of color, and the mentally ill are disproportionately sentenced to death.
5. **Justice That Heals, Not Vengeance** – The Gospel calls us to restorative justice, which seeks to repair harm, meet victims’ needs, and hold offenders accountable in ways that respect dignity and promote healing.
6. **Building a Culture of Mercy** – A society that rejects vengeance and embraces reconciliation better reflects Christ, who commands us to beat “swords into plowshares” (Is 2:4).

Other Important Teachings:

- The death penalty is unnecessary for protecting society; modern means exist to ensure safety without taking life.
- Executions do not bring true healing to victims' families and often prolong their pain.
- Capital punishment fosters a culture of retribution rather than the Gospel call to mercy.
- Restorative justice offers a faith-filled alternative: inviting accountability and fostering reconciliation.

What Can I Do?

- **Pray** for victims of violence, those on death row, and their families.
- **Learn** about Catholic teaching on the death penalty and restorative justice.
- **Support** prison ministry, re-entry programs, and victim support services.
- **Advocate** for laws and policies that end capital punishment & expand restorative justice.
- **Serve** practice reconciliation in your own life and build communities rooted in mercy and peace.

Take-Home Message:

Every Catholic is called to witness to the Gospel of Life. In our homes, parishes, workplaces, and public life, may we always be people who resist vengeance, protect dignity, and serve as instruments of Christ's mercy.

Reflection Question:

Where in your life do you see the temptation toward vengeance or retribution? How might you respond instead with the Gospel's call to mercy and reconciliation?

Church Teachings to Consult (*if you want to learn more*):

- [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#) (no. 2267)
- [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (Pope Francis, 2020; nos. 263-270)
- [*Evangelium Vitae*](#) (St. John Paul II, 1995, no.56)
- [*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*](#) (2004, no.405)
- [*USCCB, A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death*](#) (2005)
- Catholic Mobilizing Network: catholicismobilizing.org

Week #3 (10/18-10/19):

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Week Three Theme:

*Caring for Our Elders — End-of-Life Issues & Accompanying the Elderly,
Sick, and Dying*



Prayer of the Elderly, Saint Pope John Paul II, 1999

Grant, O Lord of life,
That we may savor every season of our lives as a gift
filled with promise for the future.
Grant that we may lovingly accept your will,
and place ourselves each day in your merciful hands.
And when the moment of our definitive "passage" comes,
grant that we may face it with serenity,
without regret for what we shall leave behind.
For in meeting you,
after having sought you for so long,
we shall find once more every authentic good
which we have known here on earth,
in the company of all who have gone before us
marked with the sign of faith and hope.
Mary, Mother of pilgrim humanity,
pray for us "now and at the hour of our death."
Keep us ever close to Jesus, your beloved Son and our brother,
the Lord of life and glory. Amen!

PRAY: 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Week #3 Sunday Homily Helps

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 18:1-8)—October 18th and 19th

- **“Pray always without becoming weary” (Lk 18:1):**
Jesus tells the parable of the persistent widow, whose continual plea for justice moved even an unjust judge. If such persistence can touch the heart of one indifferent, how much more will God hear the cries of His chosen ones—especially the elderly, the sick, and the dying.
- **The widow’s cry = the cry of the vulnerable (Lk 18:3):**
In Scripture, widows symbolize the voiceless and forgotten. Today, their cry echoes in the lonely elder, the abandoned sick, the terminally ill. The Gospel calls us to hear and respond with compassion, not indifference. As Pope Francis warns, we must resist a “throwaway culture” that discards those “no longer needed” (*Fratelli Tutti* 18).
- **Persistence in prayer, persistence in care (Lk 18:5–7):**
Prayer is not passive; it strengthens us to act with faithful perseverance. To pray always is to refuse to give up on those who suffer. Like the widow, we keep knocking—through visits, advocacy, and presence. As St. John Paul II reminds us: “True compassion leads to sharing another’s pain; it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear” (*Evangelium Vitae* 66).
- **Faith revealed in how we treat the weak (Lk 18:8):**
Jesus ends with a haunting question: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” Faith is shown not by words alone but in concrete acts of mercy. Benedict XVI teaches: “It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but by our capacity for accepting it... through union with Christ” (*Spe Salvi* 37).

Possible Preaching Hooks

- Share the story of someone who persevered in caring for a sick or dying loved one—an everyday “widow’s persistence” that witnessed to God’s justice.
- Invite parishioners to see prayer for the elderly and sick not as an afterthought but as fuel for concrete action—visits, advocacy, accompaniment.
- Stress that Week Three of Respect Life Month reminds us: respecting life at its end is not optional—it is part of our Catholic identity to honor every person until natural death.

PRAY: Week #3

Sample Petitions for Prayers of the Faithful

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 17:5–10)—October 18th and 19th

For those nearing the end of life: may they receive care that respects their dignity as they prepare in hope to share eternal life with Christ; *let us pray to the Lord:*

For all who suffer: that the Lord will provide them with the comfort of family and friends and interior peace in prayer, that they will have hope in eternal life; *We pray to the Lord:*

For all who are forgotten or thrown away, and especially for the poor, the sick and the aged: that God might change our hearts and move us to love them as the image of Christ; *We pray to the Lord:*

That the elderly may cherish each moment of their lives, and in their sunset years, experience the love and attention they need; *We pray to the Lord:*

That the sick may find strength and courage in the cross of Christ and discover the redemptive value of their suffering; *We pray to the Lord:*

For all who live in nursing homes, and especially for those who are alone or in pain: that we might cherish the gift of their wisdom, and the perduring example of their faith; *We pray to the Lord:*

LEARN: Week 3 Handout

Caring for Our Elders — End-of-Life Issues & Accompanying the Elderly, Sick, and Dying

As Catholics, we are called to accompany the elderly, the sick, and the dying with love and respect. In a culture that often measures worth by productivity and independence, the Church proclaims that every human life—especially in moments of weakness—is a sacred gift, deserving of care, dignity, and compassion.”

Core Themes:

1. **Every life is sacred until its natural end.** “Those whose lives are diminished or weakened deserve special respect” (CCC 2276).
2. **Euthanasia and assisted suicide are never morally acceptable.** Directly intending death to eliminate suffering is always wrong (CCC 2277).
3. **Refusing over-zealous treatment is not euthanasia.** Extraordinary or disproportionate medical measures may be forgone when death is imminent, but basic care and pain management must remain (CCC 2278–79).

“True compassion leads to sharing another’s pain; it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear.”

— St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* 66

4. **Palliative care is an act of charity.** It accompanies the dying with dignity and hope (CCC 2279).
5. **The elderly are a gift, not a burden.** Their wisdom strengthens families and communities (Ps 92:15; *Compendium* 222).
6. **Hope transforms suffering.** Pope Benedict XVI: “It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ” (*Spe Salvi* 37).
7. **Resist the throwaway culture.** Pope Francis warns against discarding those considered “no longer needed” (*Fratelli Tutti* 18).

Other Important Teachings:

- **Honoring Father and Mother:** Scripture reminds us to care for parents and elders as a sacred duty (cf. Ex 20:12; *Amoris Laetitia* 191).
- **The Elderly as Witnesses:** Older persons carry memory, wisdom, and faith that bind generations together and enrich the whole Church (*Compendium* 222; *Evangelii Gaudium* 108).

What Can I Do?

- **Pray** for those nearing death, that they may be surrounded by love, peace, and faith. Remember caregivers, nurses, doctors, and family members who accompany the suffering.
- **Learn:** read *Evangelium Vitae* (John Paul II) on euthanasia and the value of life in weakness. Reflect on *Spe Salvi* (Benedict XVI) and *Fratelli Tutti* (Francis) on suffering, hope, and solidarity.
- **Support** ministries that provide hospice and palliative care. Reach out to those who may feel forgotten or abandoned.
- **Advocate:** promote laws and policies that protect the dignity of the sick and elderly.
- **Serve:** visit the elderly in nursing homes or parish communities.

Take-Home Message:

To respect life at its end is to affirm that no one is disposable and no suffering is meaningless in Christ. May we be people who resist the throwaway culture by walking with our elders and the sick.

Reflection Question:

How does our treatment of the sick and elderly reveal whether we live in a culture of life or a culture of disposal?

Church Teachings to Consult (if you want to learn more):

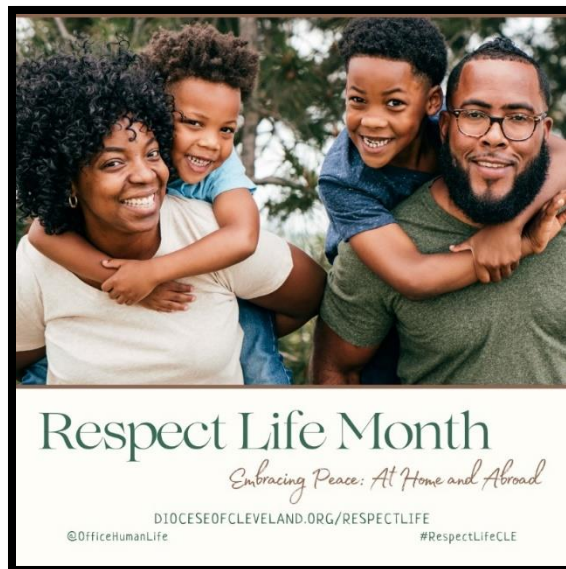
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nos. 2276–2279)
- *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004; nos. 5, 148, 155, 222, 285)
- John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995; nos. 15, 64–67, 73, 89, 94)
- Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi* (2007; nos. 25, 35–40), *Caritas in Veritate* (2009; nos. 28, 75–76)
- Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (2020; nos. 18–21, 35, 98), *Amoris Laetitia* (2016; nos. 48, 83, 128, 191), *Laudato Si* (2015; nos. 122–123)

Week #4 (10/25-10/26):

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Week Four Theme:

Embracing Peace: At Home and Abroad



PRAYER FOR PEACE (POPE FRANCIS)

Lord God of peace, hear our prayer!

We have tried so many times and over so many years to resolve our conflicts by our own powers and by the force of our arms. How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced; how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered; how many hopes have been buried... But our efforts have been in vain.

Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say: "Never again war!"; "With war everything is lost". Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters. Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace; enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarreling into forgiveness.

Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words "division", "hatred" and "war" be banished from the heart of every man and woman. Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be "brother", and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam!

Amen.

Credit: USCCB

PRAY: 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Week #4 Sunday Homily Helps

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 18:9-14)—October 25th and 26th

- **“O God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (Lk 18:13):**
The tax collector’s humble prayer contrasts sharply with the Pharisee’s self-righteousness. Humility, not pride, opens us to God’s mercy. Our response to violence in the world must begin with this posture of humility—acknowledging sin, asking forgiveness, and seeking conversion.
- **Violence begins with contempt (Lk 18:9):**
Jesus addresses this parable to “those who despised others.” Violence—whether war, gun violence, or domestic abuse—takes root when we see others as less than ourselves. The Consistent Ethic of Life insists we treat every person as a brother or sister created in God’s image.
- **God justifies the humble, not the violent (Lk 18:14):**
Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. Violence exalts power, domination, and control. Humility, in contrast, recognizes that every life is sacred and must be protected. The Church teaches: “Violence is a lie... it destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings” (Compendium, no. 496).
- **The Gospel of Life is a call to nonviolence:**
From nuclear weapons to domestic abuse, the Church is clear: “Violence, inside or outside the home, is never justified” (USCCB, *When I Call for Help*). Pope Francis reminds us that “war is the negation of all rights... every war leaves the world worse than it was before” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 257, 261).
- **Peacemaking as discipleship:**
To walk humbly with God means confronting violence in our homes, streets, and nations. Jesus blesses the peacemakers (Mt 5:9) and calls us to be healers and reconcilers. Respecting life means building communities of peace, hope, and justice.

Possible Preaching Hooks

- Contrast the Pharisee’s prayer of pride with modern excuses for violence (“It’s not my problem,” “They deserved it,” “That’s just how the world works”).
- Share a story of a survivor of domestic abuse or gun violence, connecting their cry for mercy to the tax collector’s prayer.
- Invite the community to consider what it would mean for us—families, parishes, even nations—to humble ourselves, acknowledge complicity in violence, and seek God’s mercy.

PRAY: Week #4

Sample Petitions for Prayers of the Faithful

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 18:9-14)—October 25th and 26th

That our nation will work sincerely to create peace everywhere in the world, avoiding aggression and embracing understanding. *We pray to the Lord...*

That, led by the example of Jesus the peacemaker, Christians will answer the call to build harmony throughout the world, especially where there is disorder and strife. *We pray to the Lord...*

That we will lead our children and young people in the ways of love and peace as Jesus has taught us, showing them examples of nonviolence and respect for all people. *We pray to the Lord...*

For peacemakers around the world, their courage and faith will be sustained, and many will follow their example. *We pray to the Lord...*

LEARN: Week 4 Handout

Embracing Peace: At Home and Abroad—Catholic Teaching on War & Violence

As Catholics, we are called to reject the culture of violence in all its forms—on our streets, in our homes, and among nations. The Gospel of Life summons us to be peacemakers, healers, and builders of justice.

Core Themes:

1. **Violence in War:** All war brings grave evil. The use of force is only morally tolerable in rare cases of legitimate defense under strict conditions. “Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities... is a crime against God and man” (CCC 2314).
2. **Gun Violence:** The U.S. bishops support reasonable regulation of firearms to protect life—such as universal background checks, limits on assault weapons, and stronger community-based peacebuilding.
3. **Domestic Violence:** “Violence, inside or outside the home, is never justified” (*When I Call for Help*, USCCB). Abuse in any form—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal—is sinful and often criminal. We can group various forms of abuse under a single umbrella: coercive control. Be sure to explore our [Coercive Control Advocacy Handbook](#) to learn more.

“Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings”

— *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no.496

4. **Nuclear and Modern Warfare:** The Church condemns weapons of mass destruction and the arms race as “acts of aggression against the poor” (*The Challenge of Peace*, 1983).
5. **Call to Nonviolence:** The bishops urge a cultural shift: “We must come to understand that violence is unacceptable... The best antidote to violence is hope” (*Confronting a Culture of Violence*, 1994).

Other Important Teachings:

- **Blessed are the Peacemakers:** Christ calls us to peacemaking as a requirement of discipleship (cf. Mt 5:9).
- **Root Causes of Violence:** Poverty, racism, family breakdown, and injustice fuel cycles of violence and must be addressed.
- **Conscience and Responsibility:** Christians may serve honorably in military or civic roles but must also support nonviolent solutions and conscientious objection where moral conviction demands.

What Can I Do?

- **Pray:** for peace in families, communities, and nations torn by abuse, violence, or war.
- **Learn:** read, study, and discuss pastoral letters like USCCB's *The Challenge of Peace* and *When I Call for Help*.
- **Serve:** Support survivors of domestic abuse and connect them with resources. Participate in parish peacebuilding or restorative justice ministries.
- **Advocate:** promote policies that reduce gun violence (background checks, limits on assault weapons, safe storage).

Take-Home Message:

Every Catholic is called to witness to the Gospel of Life. In our homes, parishes, workplaces, and public life, may we always be people who respect, protect, love, and serve every human life.

Reflection Question:

In what concrete ways can our parish, school, or family be witnesses to peace and nonviolence in everyday life?

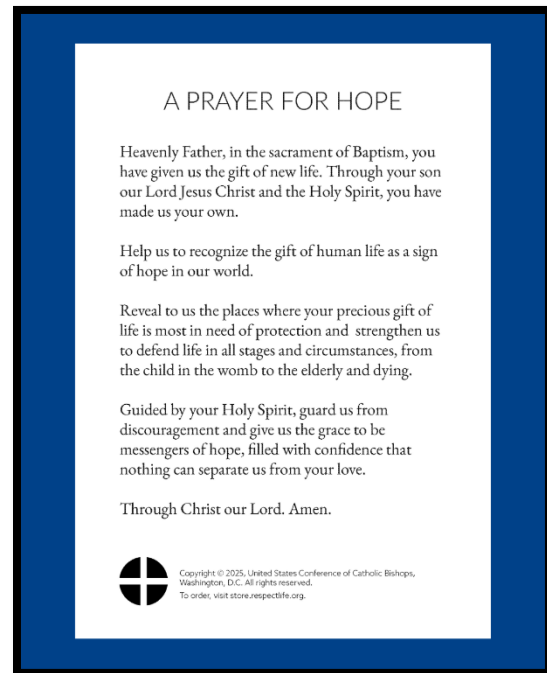
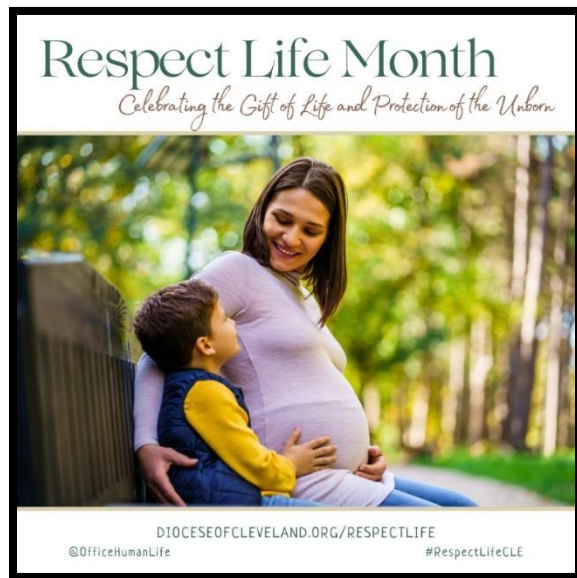
Church Teachings to Consult (*if you want to learn more*):

- [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#) (nos. 2307–2330)
- [*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*](#) (2004; nos. 496–512)
- [*Gaudium et Spes*](#) (1965; nos. 80–82)
- USCCB, [*The Challenge of Peace*](#) (1983)
- USCCB, [*Confronting a Culture of Violence*](#) (1994)
- USCCB, [*When I Call for Help*](#) (2002 update)
- USCCB, [*A Mercy and Peacebuilding Approach to Gun Violence*](#) (2020)
- Pope Francis, [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (2020; nos. 256–262)

Social Media Graphics:

Feel free to use the following on your social media feeds or in your weekly parish bulletins to amplify awareness of each week's respective theme.

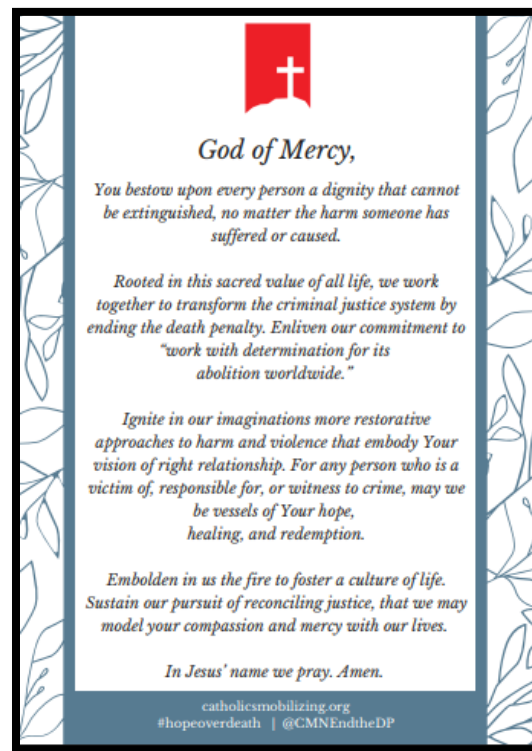
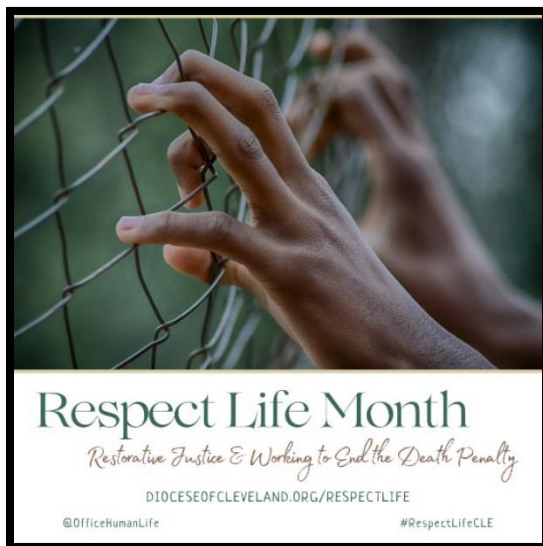
Week #1—Celebrating the Gift of Life and Protecting the Unborn



Sample Bulletin Announcement for Week #1:

This weekend we celebrate **Respect Life Sunday**, a time to reaffirm our belief that every human life is a sacred gift from God, worthy of protection from conception to natural death. Rooted in the Gospel and the words of St. John Paul II—“*Respect, protect, love, and serve life, every human life!*”—we are invited to pray, learn, and act in ways that witness to the dignity of all. May this week strengthen our resolve to be missionary disciples who build a true culture of life.

Week #2—Working to End the Death Penalty & Supporting Restorative Justice



Sample Bulletin Announcement for Week #2:

This week, our Respect Life focus turns to abolishing the death penalty and supporting restorative justice. As Catholics, we believe that every person—no matter their past actions—bears the image of God, and that “*not even a murderer loses his personal dignity*” (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* 269). Let us pray, learn, and act together to reject vengeance and build a culture of mercy that heals and restores.

Week #3—Caring for Our Elders — End-of-Life Issues & Accompanying the Elderly, Sick, and Dying



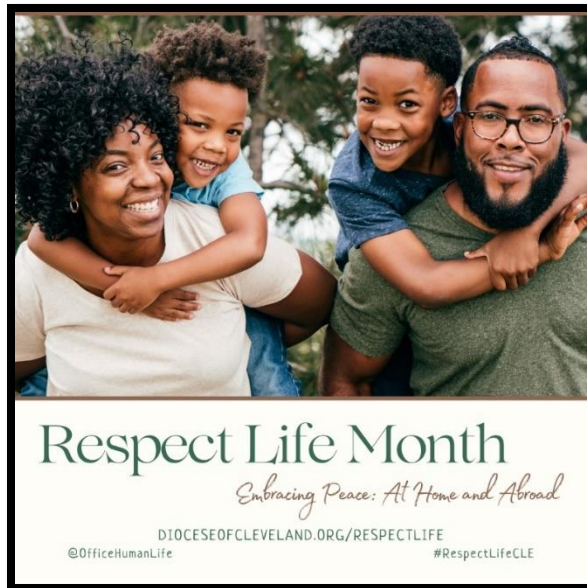
Prayer of the Elderly, Saint Pope John Paul II, 1999

Grant, O Lord of life,
That we may savor every season of our lives as a gift
filled with promise for the future.
Grant that we may lovingly accept your will,
and place ourselves each day in your merciful hands.
And when the moment of our definitive "passage" comes,
grant that we may face it with serenity,
without regret for what we shall leave behind.
For in meeting you,
after having sought you for so long,
we shall find once more every authentic good
which we have known here on earth,
in the company of all who have gone before us
marked with the sign of faith and hope.
Mary, Mother of pilgrim humanity,
pray for us "now and at the hour of our death."
Keep us ever close to Jesus, your beloved Son and our brother,
the Lord of life and glory. Amen!

Sample Bulletin Announcement for Week #3:

This week of Respect Life Month, we turn our attention to caring for the elderly, sick, and dying. The Church reminds us that every life is sacred until its natural end, and that true compassion means accompanying others in their suffering with love, dignity, and hope (cf. *Evangelium Vitae* 66). May we resist the "throwaway culture" and witness to Christ's mercy by walking with our elders and the vulnerable.

Week #4—Embracing Peace: At Home and Abroad



PRAYER FOR PEACE (POPE FRANCIS)

Lord God of peace, hear our prayer!

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Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words "division", "hatred" and "war" be banished from the heart of every man and woman. Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be "brother", and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam!

Amen.

Credit: USCCB

Sample Bulletin Announcement for Week #4:

This final week of Respect Life Month invites us to reflect on rejecting all forms of violence—war, gun violence, and domestic abuse—and building a culture of peace. The Church reminds us that *"violence is a lie... it destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings"* (*Compendium*, 496). As missionary disciples, may we follow Christ the Peacemaker, working humbly for justice and reconciliation in our homes, communities, and world.

USCCB Respect Life Month 2025 Social Media Graphics

Taken from the USCCB *Respect Life Month* webpage ([click here](#))

