

A Message from the Director Fall 2025

To my fellow NEO companions in Christ:

On August 4th, I parked for the first time outside the Cathedral of John the Evangelist and officially started as the Director of the Office for Human Life – a moment that will forever remain with me. Each day that I cross East 9th to begin work, it hits me that I am now serving the very community that formed me. It has been a surreal and humbling experience to say the least! I am deeply grateful to Bishop Malesic for entrusting me with this ministry, and I pray to honor and expand the legacy of Mary Von Carlowitz who did much throughout our diocese, witnessing boldly to the dignity of every human life.

St. John Paul II beautifully captures the essence of OHL's mission: "*Respect, protect, love, and serve life, every human life!*" (*[Evangelium Vitae](#)*, no.5). His words reflect the crux of the Gospel itself – Christ who came so that we "might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). I desire that every program, partnership, and pastoral endeavor of OHL flows from that simple but profound conviction.

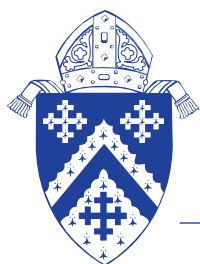
In the *[Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities](#)*, the USCCB shares a roadmap for its implementation: (1) prayer, (2) education, (3) advocacy, and (4) pastoral care. Pedagogically, the US Bishops echo an ancient maxim of the Church: *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi* – "how we pray informs what we believe, which informs how we live."

These four pillars constitute concrete expressions of our faith as Catholics. Thus, as director my role is fundamentally catechetical. At its core, catechesis is "the name given to the totality of the church's efforts to make disciples" (John Paul II, *[Catechesi Tradendae](#)*). This endeavor is a never-ending process of development, not limited to one phase of our faith journey. Furthermore, our Church rightly sees an intimate link between formation and evangelization.

I am convinced the OHL exists to empower missionary disciples to bring the Gospel of Life into our parishes, neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. As Bishop Malesic exhorts us in *[A Flourishing Apostolic Church](#)*: "every faithful Catholic must take seriously his or her call as a missionary disciple. Jesus' command to go and make disciples demands renewed urgency."

Too often, we have "*[thought it enough to simply go to Mass and be a good person](#)*," a sentiment that fails to fully capture the heart of discipleship in the missionary key. If we, the Body of Christ incarnate in Cleveland, do not embrace and trust our "sacred story" – living it truthfully – then it will be nearly impossible to convince our broader secular society that the Church has anything worthwhile to offer.

The *consistent ethic of life* (CEOL) will be the driving philosophy of my leadership as director. Also understood via the image of the "*seamless garment*," a consistent ethic "cannot tolerate bias or discrimination, for **human life is sacred and inviolable at every stage and in every situation**" (*[EV](#)*, no.87). Our commitment must extend from the unborn to the elderly, from the refugee to the prisoner, from the hungry child to the person struggling with addiction.



Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the first American bishop to coin the language of CEOL, admitted “this is both a complex and a demanding tradition; it joins the humanity of the unborn infant and the humanity of the hungry.” Hence, faithful Catholic missionary disciples must resist contradictory positions, holding firm the conviction that all human life manifests the image of the Divine Creator and is thus deserving of dignity (cf. Gen. 1:27).

This holistic vision is especially vital in today’s polarized culture. Too often, we have been conditioned to see life and dignity issues primarily through the lens of party politics, rather than through the lens of our Catholic identity. Yet, the Gospel calls us to something broader and more hopeful: to engage such issues as Catholics first, rooted in the fullness of our faith and its teaching. Each of us may be drawn to focus on a particular issue – abortion, capital punishment, end-of-life care, immigration, or others – but our efforts should never stand apart from the wider commitment to a consistent ethic of life. Our witness in one area should never suggest indifference or opposition to another.

Instead, I pray we draw strength from our shared mission, recognizing the common thread underlying the myriad of threats to life & dignity in our society: **all human life is a sacred gift**. Like one body with many parts (cf. 1 Cor 12), our different passions for life-issues make sense only when they are connected to the whole truth of the *Gospel of Life*.

To that end, as director I carry the significant responsibility of serving as a bridge-builder between our various pro-life organizations and ministries throughout Northeast Ohio. Thus, in these nascent days on the job, I will especially spend much time listening and learning. I want to hear about the life-affirming ministries already happening – in classrooms and parishes, at clinics and food pantries, in advocacy at city councils and statehouses. I want to amplify your good work by connecting communities and fostering collaboration across the diocese. Together, we can embody a Church that consistently *respects, protects, loves, and serves life*.

In closing, let us take seriously Bishop Malesic’s exhortation: “*I would like each and every Catholic in the Diocese of Cleveland to be able to identify his or her mission of service in the world.*”

Please keep me in your prayers, as I will keep you in mine. I look forward to meeting you, learning from you, and joining you in this mission.

Much pax,

Tony