

ACTION GUIDE

Respect Life Month: October

**Please note: The ideas and resources provided are simply starting points. Please be sure to follow all civil regulations/laws and all diocesan and parish policies, especially those pertaining to minors and to protecting everyone's health and safety. If the suggestions or resources need to be modified or adapted to ensure safety and well-being, please do so.*

INTRODUCTION

Each October the Church in the United States celebrates *Respect Life Month*, and the first Sunday of October is observed as *Respect Life Sunday*. As Catholics, we are called to cherish, defend, and protect those who are most vulnerable, from the beginning of life to its end, and at every point in between. During the month of October, the Church asks us to reflect more deeply on the dignity of every human life.

Visit respectlife.org/respect-life-month for the free resources referred to in this action guide (unless otherwise noted).

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops provides resources to help parishes, schools, families, ministries, and individual Catholics share the Gospel of life during Respect Life Month and throughout the year. In the following pages, you will find a number of resources to help you celebrate Respect Life Month. Simple steps, homily helps, announcements, activities, and more are provided to help you get started. You are encouraged to adapt these resources as needed to fit your specific parish, school, or ministry. The resources mentioned in this action guide can be found at respectlife.org/respect-life-month, unless otherwise noted.

SIMPLE STEPS

Here is a list of simple steps that you can use in your parish, school, ministry, or home to help you celebrate Respect Life Month. These steps offer ideas on how to use the provided resources. Each step may not apply to your specific circumstance, but most can be adapted to suit your needs. These are a starting point, but the possibilities are endless!

1. Display the annual [Respect Life Program poster](#).

Think about a prominent place in your parish, school, or diocesan office. Hang the poster in the vestibule, on a door or window, on a bulletin board, or near the restrooms and water fountains. Choose a place where people will be most likely to see it. Parents could hang the poster on the refrigerator, a child's bedroom door, or a place you gather regularly as a family. *(Remember to seek appropriate permissions and follow any rules or guidelines if displaying the poster outside your home.)*

2. Print the [Respect Life reflection](#) in your bulletin or newsletter.

The Respect Life reflection unpacks the yearly theme. If space is an issue, short bulletin announcements are also available. Consider using our [free downloadable bulletin cover or wrapper](#) to help celebrate Respect Life Month with your parishioners. The Respect

Life reflection can also be printed in your diocesan paper, featured in an email or newsletter, or used to inspire discussion during a family meal.

3. Preach about respect for human life on Respect Life Sunday.

[Sample homily notes](#) are provided for use by priests and deacons to help expound on the Respect Life theme and prepare their homily for Respect Life Sunday. The Respect Life reflection can also be a source of inspiration. Encourage your local priests to preach about respect for human life by letting them know that these resources are available to them.

4. Pray for the protection of human life during the Prayer of the Faithful.

This is a great way for an entire parish or school to pray for the protection of life together! Sample intercessions are provided below for use during the Prayer of the Faithful at Sunday Mass. Consider including one intercession at Mass each weekend. Schools can use these to pray for the protection of human life at the beginning of the day or class period. Families can include these intercessions in their regular prayers in the morning, evening, or before or after a family meal.

5. Host an interactive Respect Life display activity.

Help parishioners or students understand respect for human life within the context of their own daily lives. Show how the Church's teaching is personal and relatable through a simple, interactive display that everyone contributes to. Instructions are at the end of this action guide.

We would love to see your Respect Life Month celebrations! Show us how you celebrated by emailing prolife@usccb.org, or tag us on Facebook ([fb.com/usccbrespectlife](https://www.facebook.com/usccbrespectlife)) or Twitter ([@usccbprolife](https://twitter.com/usccbprolife)).

BULLETIN & PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bulletin Announcement

- *Respect Life Sunday*

Today is Respect Life Sunday!

Join Catholics nationwide in celebrating Respect Life Month! [respectlife.org/celebrate](https://www.respectlife.org/celebrate).

Pulpit Announcements

- *Option 1: Respect Life Sunday (First Sunday of October)*

This weekend, the Church in the United States celebrates Respect Life Sunday, kicking off Respect Life Month. See this week's bulletin for more information and a short reflection on this year's theme, "Live the Gospel of Life".

- *Option 2: Respect Life Month*

Each October, the Church in the United States celebrates Respect Life Month. See this week's bulletin for more information and a short reflection on this year's theme, "Live the Gospel of Life."

INTERCESSIONS

These sample intercessions were written for use during Respect Life Month; however, many can be used throughout the year. These intentions are appropriate for inclusion in the Prayer of the Faithful at Sunday Mass. Consider including one intercession at Mass each weekend.

The intercessions can also be printed in the weekly bulletin, included during prayer at a ministry or community gathering, featured in email newsletters, shared on social media platforms, or prayed during personal or family prayer times.

For all Catholics:
That on this Respect Life Sunday
our resolve may be strengthened
to uphold the dignity
of every human life;
We pray to the Lord:

That during this Respect Life Month
our resolve will be strengthened
to cherish and protect
the gift of every human life;
We pray to the Lord:

That the life of every person,
from conception to natural death,
will be protected in our laws
and cherished in our hearts;
We pray to the Lord:

For women and men suffering after abortion:
May the Church's abortion healing ministry,
Project Rachel, help them find peace and healing
through Christ's endless mercy;
We pray to the Lord:

For those nearing the end of life:
May they receive care that respects their dignity
and protects their lives
as they place their hope
in the promise of eternal life;
We pray to the Lord:

May God grant us the wisdom and courage
to lovingly protect His gift of human life
at every stage, in sickness and in health;
We pray to the Lord:

HOMILY HELPS

On the first Sunday of October the Church in the United States celebrates Respect Life Sunday, and priests and deacons are encouraged to preach on the Church's teachings on human life. As Catholics, we believe that every human person is made in the image and likeness of God. Every human life is therefore sacred and inviolable and should be protected and cherished from conception until natural death. Practices such as abortion, assisted suicide, and capital punishment violate the dignity of the human person and must be rejected.

Each year, homily helps are provided to help priests and deacons reflect on the sanctity of human life and unpack the annual Respect Life theme. The provided notes can be used to supplement reflections on human life and the readings of the day.

Other ministry leaders can also use these notes during Bible studies, small groups, ministry gatherings, or in other faith formation settings.

Homily notes are available at respectlife.org/respect-life-month.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY

Interactive Respect Life Display

This activity utilizes the Respect Life Program poster to help create an interactive Respect Life display. The idea is to hang the Respect Life Program poster in the center of a large bulletin board or other prominent area with space around it. Then, invite members of your parish, class, youth group, or other ministry group to add their own items to the board (or to the surrounding area) that illustrate and unpack the Respect Life theme.

To illustrate the concept, you can pin some examples: a sonogram photo of a new family member; a birth announcement; a picture of aging grandparents; a flyer for an upcoming abortion-healing retreat; a note about volunteer opportunities at a local pregnancy center or long-term care facility; or a sticky note with a prayer request related to the gift of human life. This is where you can get creative! Invite others to pin items that help illustrate the gift of human life, from its beginning to its end, especially as it relates to the new theme for the year.

****Please note: The ideas and resources provided are simply starting points. Please be sure to follow all civil regulations/laws and all diocesan and parish policies, especially those pertaining to minors and to protecting everyone's health and safety. If the suggestions or resources need to be modified or adapted to ensure safety and well-being, please do so.***

Materials

- Annual Respect Life Program poster
- Large bulletin board (or a large wall or window)
- Push pins, masking tape, and/or a stapler
- Notecards or sticky notes
- Writing utensils (pens, pencils, markers)
- Scissors (optional)
- Construction paper in various colors (optional)

Directions

1. Begin gathering the materials you will need for the interactive Respect Life display. Enlist the help of volunteers who might like to help you complete the preparation for this activity. This is a great way to get youth involved and encourage parishioners to use their creative gifts.

2. Put together the interactive Respect Life display. Improvise as needed, and make it your own!
3. Place the poster in the center of a large bulletin board in your parish or school. (If you don't have a large bulletin board, you can also use a wall or window to achieve a similar result. Simply swap out push pins for masking tape.)
4. Select a number of items to post to get the display started. Choose from some of the examples listed above. Consider writing one of the provided intercessions for Respect Life Sunday/Month on a notecard and pinning it to the display.

Optional Embellishments

If you would like to be extra creative, use construction paper to help decorate your display. Use the Respect Life theme for inspiration. Consider using coordinating or contrasting colors to cut out fun shapes to attach to the display. These embellishments can be added sparingly without needing to fill in the entire display to add simple pops of color and visual interest. You'll want to ensure there is still blank space to post other items.

5. Beneath the poster, post an explanation of the display so those who pass by can draw inspiration or participate.

Sample Explanation

October is Respect Life Month. This year's theme is "Live the Gospel of Life." This Respect Life display is meant to unpack the theme and celebrate the sacredness of human life at every stage and in every circumstance—from birth announcements and pictures of aging loved ones to prayer requests and service opportunities. All parishioners are invited to participate by adding their own items that highlight the precious gift of human life.

6. Invite others to join in the activity by contributing their own content to the display. You will need to determine the best way to explain it and have participants bring their items. For example, if your whole parish is invited to participate, consider putting a note in the weekly bulletin and/or making an announcement before or after Mass. In a classroom or youth group setting, you can simply explain the activity and perhaps send a note home to parents. Families can also do this activity at home.

Sample Announcements

September

Please join us in celebrating Respect Life Month during October. We will be hosting an interactive Respect Life display in the _____. All parishioners are invited to participate by bringing in items that reflect this year's theme, "Live the Gospel of Life." You can add items to the display that illustrate the sacredness of human life in various stages and circumstances. Examples of items you may consider adding to the display

could include the following: an ultrasound photo of a new family member; a birth announcement; a picture of aging loved ones; a note about volunteer opportunities at a local pregnancy center or long-term care facility; or a sticky note with a prayer request. Be creative!

If you would like to have your item returned, please pick it up from the display by October [date]. Contact _____ for more information: _____.

First Weekend in October

This weekend, we celebrate Respect Life Sunday and kick off October as Respect Life Month. All parishioners are invited to help us celebrate human life by posting items to our Respect Life display located in the _____. For more information, stop by the display after Mass or see the bulletin. We welcome you in helping us celebrate the gift of life through your participation. Contributions are welcome throughout the month.

7. First Sunday of October (Respect Life Sunday)

On Respect Life Sunday, have volunteers staff a table near the interactive Respect Life display after each Mass (using social distancing precautions). Display examples of items to pin. Volunteers can help explain the activity and answer any questions. Feature display copies of Respect Life articles on different topics on the table, as well as websites in large font where each article can be found. Encourage visitors to the table to take pictures of the articles they'd like to read with the website address so they can look them up to read later. Many articles are available at www.respectlife.org. If your parish has the space, consider leaving the table up for the duration of Respect Life Month.

(In smaller group settings, once the display is complete, ask those who pinned items to the board to explain why they chose their specific items and what connections they see to respect for human life.)

8. Mid-October

Monitor the content being added to the Respect Life display and ensure that all materials are appropriate. Take special note of prayer requests, and consider how your parish community might pray for these specific intentions. Perhaps they can be included during a regularly scheduled Holy Hour, or lifted up during a particular ministry gathering. You may also want to include the intentions in your own daily prayers.

9. End of October

Take some photos of the interactive Respect Life display. Consider taking some with those who helped and/or participated, with their unique contributions. These photos* can then be shared in an email newsletter or on a parish social media page to highlight how your community celebrated Respect Life Month. These visual memories are also a great way to remember the final product and serve as examples if you'd like to do this activity in future years.

*Make sure you follow all parish and diocesan policies for taking and sharing photos, especially policies pertaining to minors.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

The following list provides additional activities that you may want to incorporate into your observance of Respect Life Month in your parish, school, or ministry.

- Feature a different Respect Life topic in each week's bulletin. Short, quarter-page [summaries](#) are available for many of our brochures, which cover a wide range of topics. Using the predesigned, downloadable bulletin box summaries, highlight a Respect Life topic each weekend of October. For those who would like to learn more, each bulletin box also includes a website address of the full article. Or, if you have the space, use one of the corresponding, full-length bulletin insert versions of the highlighted summaries. These can be found at the same website address listed in each bulletin box.
- Celebrate the gift of human life in newsletters, on your website, and on social media. You can use content that's already written, such as the pulpit/bulletin announcements and prayer intercessions above or the [reflection](#). Consider following and sharing from the Facebook and Twitter accounts of the USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities (Facebook: www.fb.com/usccbrespectlife / Twitter: [@usccbprolife](https://twitter.com/usccbprolife)).
- Scripture study on Psalm 139, the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38), the Visitation and Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), or other Scripture passages that highlight the dignity of each person, the gift of human life, and the protection of all human life.
- A prayer service, praying for those present or watching via live stream, as well as those who take or disregard human life. (See the "[Prayer Service for Forgiveness and Healing](#).") Consider also having opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of the prayer service.
- 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). For those unable to attend in person, consider whether it's possible to live-stream the event.
- Small group conversations on topics pertaining to respect for human life, such as abortion, capital punishment, or assisted suicide.
- A talk by a Catholic who specializes in a field relating to respect for human life, such as a doctor who could speak about hospice care from a Catholic perspective or a social worker who is knowledgeable about local pregnancy care services.
- A viewing of a movie, documentary, or other age-appropriate film relating to respect for human.
- A service project (on-site or off-site) related to providing care or assistance that supports and welcomes the gift of human life.