



DAY ONE

January 21, 2017

Intercession

For the conversion of all hearts and the end to abortion.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

Pope Saint John Paul II described the “culture of life” as “the fruit of the culture of truth and of love” in his encyclical *The Gospel of Life* (no. 77). Do we build up the culture of life by living in truth and in love? Are we the kind of people whom a woman could and would come to if she found out she were pregnant and needed loving support and encouragement? How can we help those who suffer from the pain of abortion to experience God’s tender mercy? The brief articles in today’s “One Step Further” give suggestions for extending God’s merciful love to others.

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Go to an abortion clinic and pray, or set aside an hour today to pray for those who are struggling with a decision of life or death for their unborn child.
- Spend some time reflecting upon no. 77 of *The Gospel of Life*.
- Use the Respect Life social media toolkit (www.goo.gl/i8msnP) to build up a culture of life on social media.

One Step Further

If a woman who was unexpectedly pregnant came to you for support, would you know what to do? “**10 Ways to Support Her When She’s Unexpectedly Expecting**” (www.goo.gl/MkBfb9) provides simple, concrete tips for loving, life-affirming support. In “**Bridges of Mercy for Post-Abortion Healing**,” (www.goo.gl/MpC7RG) learn how you can be a bridge of God’s mercy for people suffering after abortion.



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DAY TWO

January 22, 2017

Because January 22, 2017 falls on a Sunday, the annual “Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children” is observed Monday, January 23 in 2017.

More Information: www.goo.gl/ueuvvB

Intercession

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

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

Today, on this 44th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we consider the past four decades in which our society has legally permitted abortion. Since that tragic decision, many children’s lives have been lost, and many 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.”

*“In the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, also called confession, we meet the Lord, who wants to grant forgiveness and the grace to live a renewed life in him. ... We bishops and priests are eager to help you if you experience difficulty, hesitation, or uncertainty about approaching the Lord in this sacrament. ... we are ready to welcome you.”**

Let us run into the arms of Jesus, who is love and mercy.

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Today, go visit an adoration chapel and spend some time with Jesus.
- Go to confession today or this week. Before you go, look up St. Faustina (www.goo.gl/bXcnwP) and learn a little about the message of Divine Mercy that she shared during her life.
- Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy (www.goo.gl/kMkSZ2) for those who are suffering the loss of a child through abortion, asking that they find healing and peace.

One Step Further

- Hope after Abortion (www.hopeafterabortion.com)
- “How to Talk to a Friend Who’s Had an Abortion” (www.goo.gl/bz3pld)
- “Life Matters: Forgiveness and Healing after Abortion” (www.goo.gl/J2WGnW)
- “Bridges of Mercy for Post-Abortion Healing” (www.goo.gl/MpC7RG)

*“God’s Gift of Forgiveness: Pastoral Exhortation on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation,” www.goo.gl/oXNDBj.

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DAY THREE

January 23, 2017

Because January 22, 2017 falls on a Sunday, the annual “Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children” is observed Monday, January 23 in 2017.

More Information: www.goo.gl/ueuvvB

Intercession

May all people embrace the truth that every life is a good and perfect gift, and is worth living.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

Our culture is obsessed with perfection—a superficial perfection. Photos are airbrushed, and social media sites depict seemingly perfect lives. God calls us to seek perfection, too. He does not call us, however, to perfection of appearance or abilities, but to perfection in love.

In “**A Perfect Gift**” (www.goo.gl/QbXpcn), one parent shares about the experience of raising a child with Down syndrome, contrasting it with what onlookers might perceive: “It’s like looking at a stained-glass window from the outside: The colors look dark, and you can’t quite make out the figures. From the inside, however, with the sun shining through it, the effect can be brilliant. From inside our family, love illuminates our life with Charlie.* What may seem dreary to others, perhaps even unbearable, is actually filled with beauty and color.”

May each of us experience the power of God’s transforming love, that our eyes may be opened to the incredible beauty of the people the Lord places in our lives.

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Say a prayer for your parish priest (www.goo.gl/jHVu2J). Without our priests, we could not have the Mass or the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Pray for your deceased relatives and those who have no one to pray for them.
- Spend quality time with a family member or friend; offer to help them with something with which they need assistance.

One Step Further

Charlie’s mother shares in “A Perfect Gift” that when people say, “I could never handle a child with a disability,” she explains to them, “[Y]ou aren’t given *a* child with a disability. You are given *your* child with a disability. ... You are not called to ‘handle’ a disability. You are called to love a particular person, and caring for him or her grows out of that love. ... Our [family’s] hearts... have become larger [by caring for Charlie].”

She also talks about the “secret” that is the fundamental truth of our existence, which she and other parents of children with Down syndrome share. Find out what it is in “A Perfect Gift,” available at www.goo.gl/QbXpcn.

**Name changed for privacy.*

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DAY FOUR

January 24, 2017

Intercession

May those near the end of their lives receive medical care that respects their dignity and protects their lives.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

When Maggie's active father suffered an accident that eventually led to his passing, her conversations with him turned to life's more serious topics, and his final days became a time that was cherished by the whole family. During this time, Maggie's dad taught her that "dignity can't be diminished by pain or loss of personal control," that "Jesus was walking along with him," and that "our suffering is not meaningless when we unite it with Christ's own suffering."

As a 50-year-old wife and mother of three, Maggie needed this message in a dramatically new way when she was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Instead of giving up hope, she embraced the legacy her father had left her, cherishing the life she still had left: "[M]y life is, always has been, and always will be, worth living." Read more about her experience in "**Maggie's Story: Living like Dad**" (www.goo.gl/JKnvWc).

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Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Take time to write a handwritten note to someone who is lonely or needing encouragement.
- Meet Maggie in the **brief, 3-minute video** (www.goo.gl/SGF7rP) that inspired the article, "Maggie's Story: Living like Dad."
- Read and reflect upon "**Caring for Loved Ones at Life's End**" (www.goo.gl/fvSEYp). Ten suggestions anchored in unconditional respect for human life help readers know how to provide authentically compassionate care. (Supplemental information: www.goo.gl/Ji3n35)

One Step Further

Proponents of doctor-assisted suicide try to draw a sharp distinction between those with a mental illness who want to end their lives and those with a terminal illness who express the same wish. "**Every Suicide is Tragic**" (www.goo.gl/KEXpR9) explores the consequences of this false distinction. (Supplemental information, including short videos: www.goo.gl/ufQyTv).



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DAY FIVE

January 25, 2017

Intercession

For an end to domestic violence.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

“A correct reading of Scripture leads people to an understanding of the equal dignity of men and women and to relationships based on mutuality and love. Beginning with Genesis, Scripture teaches that women and men are created in God’s image.” (“When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women” USCCB 2002. See: www.goo.gl/mH4b46).

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Do you love your cup of tea or coffee in the morning? Fast from caffeine today, or try your coffee black.
- Learn how to pray the Angelus prayer and consider saying it every day—on awakening, at noon, or at 6 p.m. (or all three times).
- Give up your favorite form (or all forms) of social media for the day. Spend some of the extra time meditating upon a Scripture verse or passage.

One Step Further

Three in four Americans are reported to know a victim of domestic violence. Learn to recognize some of the signs in “**Life Matters: Domestic Violence**,” which discusses the painful assault on human dignity that is domestic violence. Read the article at www.goo.gl/gVJ9fd.

Additional resources on domestic violence are available at **www.ForYourMarriage.org*** (www.goo.gl/CpKtLF), as well as the USCCB webpage on domestic violence (www.goo.gl/ajGdPz).

If you believe someone you know may be in a troubled situation, you should call a domestic violence hotline number for assistance, or encourage the person to call the hotline or emergency services themselves.



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DAY SIX

January 26, 2017

Intercession

May those affected by pornography experience the Lord's mercy and healing.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

We are created with a desire to love and be loved. We long to be known, understood, and accepted for who we are. In contrast, pornography distracts us from our call to love by objectifying people and bringing hurt and pain. As noted in *Create in Me a Clean Heart*, “it is an illusory substitute for real relationships and intimacy, which in the end bring true joy.”

However, “no wound is out of the reach of Christ’s redeeming grace. Christ is our hope! The Church proclaims the truth about love, sexuality, and the dignity of each person, and she seeks to provide the Lord’s mercy and healing for those harmed by pornography. ... For further resources and help, visit www.usccb.org/cleanheart.”*

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Don't push the snooze button. Get right out of bed and offer your day in prayer to God.
- Fast from snacking today. Eat three meals only.

- Contemplate a beautiful piece of sacred art today, and reflect upon how true beauty draws us closer to God.

One Step Further

Learn more about the spiritual, emotional, and neurological impact of pornography in “**Wash Me Thoroughly’: Healing from Pornography Use and Addiction**” (www.goo.gl/gjr3Wg) and “**Life Matters: Pornography and Our Call to Love**” (www.goo.gl/TkTpTV).



*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth, *Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography—Abridged Version*. (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016). 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). Copyright © 2016, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved.



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DAY SEVEN

January 27, 2017

Intercession

May those who long for a child of their own be filled with trust in God's loving plan.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

It can be very difficult and painful when the Lord doesn't answer our prayers the way we hope. We may have many doubts and questions, wondering why we face the challenges that we do. Yet even though our suffering is often shrouded in a sense of mystery, we believe that the Lord loves us with great tenderness and compassion that is beyond our imagination. Knowing this, we can trust that "all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).



Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Smile. Ask God today for the grace to be extra joyful and share Christ's love with those who need encouragement the most today.
- Today, pray the Rosary, or even just a decade, for someone who has hurt or disappointed you, and ask for the grace to forgive that person.
(Pro-Life Prayer Intentions: www.goo.gl/cUf6kj)
- We can sometimes forget how blessed we are to have many of our daily comforts. Give up sleeping on your pillow tonight.

One Step Further

"Seven Considerations While Navigating Infertility" (www.goo.gl/qUXiGg) seeks to provide compassionate guidance that is both practical and informative for married couples who are walking on this road. Although geared to such couples, the article is also helpful for anyone to read, offering insight into the experience of infertility and giving awareness of the need for sensitivity in our relationships with those who may be affected.

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DAY EIGHT

January 28, 2017

Intercession

For an end to the use of the death penalty in our country.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

As Catholics, we believe and put our hope in a merciful and loving God. We are conscious of our own brokenness and need for redemption. Our Lord calls us to imitate him more perfectly by witnessing to the inherent dignity of every person, including those whose actions have been despicable. Our faith and hope is in the mercy of God who says to us, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Mt 5:7) and “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Mt 9:13). As Christians we are called to oppose the culture of death by witnessing to something greater and more perfect: a gospel of life, hope and mercy.

Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Do something nice for someone else without being asked or telling anyone. Pray for him or her while you do so.
- Read about a Church teaching you don't understand in the Catechism (www.goo.gl/FfrkJD).

- Read about the life of a modern saint. You might be surprised by how much you have in common with him or her.

One Step Further

For some people who are committed to upholding the sanctity of human life, the death penalty can present a challenge. Properly understood, however, Catholic teaching against the death penalty is both persuasive and eminently pro-life. Find out why in “**Life Matters: A Catholic Response to the Death Penalty**” at www.goo.gl/ci87ud.



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DAY NINE

January 29, 2017

Intercession

For God's peace to fill the hearts of all who travel upon the path of adoption.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be

Reflection

The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us to “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 all who are involved in the adoption process would be filled with the hope of Christ and “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7). We also remember that we too can cling fast to this anchor of hope, for we have received “a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:15). May our loving Father envelop each of us in his love today and open our eyes in faith that we may see and rejoice in his love.



Acts of Reparation (choose one)

- Make an act of faith, hope, or love (www.goo.gl/QiIqQW).
- Today, ignore your sweet tooth. Make healthy eating choices.
- Make a “quiet hour” today, turning off all electronic devices (cell phone, iPod, computer, television, radio, video game system), and retreat to your room. Spend some time in prayer or prayerful reading, such as the “**Novena to St. Joseph: For Those on the Path of Adoption**” (www.goo.gl/dv7Dn2).

One Step Further

Maya*, who placed her child for adoption, gives nine suggestions for offering ongoing support in “**Accompanying Expectant Mothers Considering Adoption**” (www.goo.gl/srj6L3). In “**An Adoption Love Story**,” Jenny* shares her and her husband’s story of adopting their son, Andrew. Read about some of the challenges, concerns, and joys on their journey at www.goo.gl/fkhgyV. (Supplemental reference information regarding adoption can be found at www.goo.gl/EqCRV4.)

**Names changed for privacy.*

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