

FAITH OPENS OUR EYES TO HUMAN LIFE  
IN ALL ITS GRANDEUR AND BEAUTY



LITURGY GUIDE 2012-2013  
RESPECT LIFE

CONTENTS



RESPECT LIFE SUNDAY—OCTOBER 7, 2012

Preaching for Life 3  
Intercessions for Life 5

A DAY OF PRAYER AND PENANCE FOR LIFE—JANUARY 22, 2013

*Fortieth Anniversary of the Supreme Court Abortion Decisions*

Preaching for Life 6  
Intercessions for Life 7

MASS FOR GIVING THANKS TO GOD FOR THE GIFT OF HUMAN LIFE  
AND REFLECTIONS ON THIS MASS 8

FROM THE BOOK OF BLESSINGS—

Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb 10  
Order for the Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrim 10

A PRAYER SERVICE FOR FORGIVENESS AND HEALING 13

*The Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities is profoundly grateful to Msgr. James P. Moroney for preparing the materials herein (with the exception of the sample homily notes suggested for January 22, 2013). Msgr. Moroney is Rector of St. John's Seminary in Boston and is Executive Secretary of the Vox Clara Committee.*

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## RESPECT LIFE SUNDAY OCTOBER 7, 2012

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(Gen 2:18-24; Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6; Heb 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-16)



### *Preaching for Life*

Each one of us here at today's Mass is priceless—as is everyone who has ever lived!

Why? Because we are loved for all eternity by God the Father and have been redeemed at the cost of his Son's crucifixion and death. Through the mystery of the Incarnation and his life of self-giving love, leading all the way to the sacrifice of Calvary, Jesus reveals to us the inviolable dignity and value of every human life. He calls us to the same life-giving love, a love which compels us to treasure and actively defend the life of every human being.

A look at the headlines or glimpse of the evening news is enough to see that our society is falling short of that ideal. One outcome of the cultural upheavals of the 1960s was that many people began to reject the demands of authentic love and the shared moral vision of our culture. They began to put "self" above others, valuing freedom from commitments to others and promoting individualistic moral standards. When a "me-first" mentality takes root in a society, it's not long before those who have a special claim on our loving support—members of our families and those in our community who are vulnerable due to age, health or poverty—begin to be viewed as burdens by some.

Foreseeing that the weakening of committed love can put innocent lives at risk, forty years ago the Catholic bishops in the United States designated October as Respect Life Month, and named the first Sunday of October "Respect Life Sunday." Throughout October, Catholics are called in a special way to reflect on the gift of human life, the threats against it and how we can protect all persons from conception to natural death. And we recall the true meaning of love—love that always seeks the good of the other person despite the personal cost.

Love and life are bound together. We see this most clearly at the heart of the family: the permanent, faithful and life-giving love of husband and wife to which Jesus was referring in the Gospel reading today. It is an especially fitting Gospel for today, since a culture of life and civilization of love are inseparable.

Marriage has been called the "school of love," where husband and wife learn to cherish and make sacrifices for each other and, by accepting children lovingly from God, parents are able to experience the fullness of joy and love. If this phrase "accept children lovingly from God" (*Rite of Marriage*, 3) sounds familiar, that's because the priest asks couples this very question during their wedding ceremony. This question lies at the heart of the holy Sacrament of Marriage, because marriage is both directed to the good of the spouses and "ordered to the procreation and education of children," who are "the supreme gift of marriage" and its "ultimate crown" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 48 and 50).

## FAITH OPENS OUR EYES TO HUMAN LIFE IN ALL ITS GRANDEUR AND BEAUTY

Love and life go together. The total, one-flesh union of husband and wife is fruitful, never self-enclosed; it is open to the other and open to the gift of the child. From the very beginning, God had a purpose in mind. He made man and woman for each other, to be united as one, and at the same time he lovingly commanded them to be fruitful and multiply, to be partners with him in creation by bringing forth new life, cherishing and sustaining it.

Sometimes, the desire to cooperate with God in bringing forth new life may become a source of heartache, for example, to married couples who are unable to conceive or give birth to children. The Church acknowledges their suffering, and assures them that infertility does nothing to diminish the value of their marriage (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 14). And, as Blessed Pope John Paul II has written, infertility can in fact become an opportunity to love and serve children through foster care, “adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children” (*Ibid.*)

Each child who is cradled in her parent’s arms is swaddled in the love which comes from God and consecrated in the Sacrament of Marriage. She will be blessed all the days of her life, for through the love of her father and mother, she will know God’s protective care. She will learn to walk in his ways, for her parents will teach her that God is at her side. She and her brothers and sisters will be, as the Psalmist tells us, like olive plants within a fruitful household, fruitful with love.

And some day she will grow up and she too may stand before the altar with her husband and God will consecrate them in his love. And as this great story *continues until the end of time, the blessing of the Psalmist will come true: “May you see your children’s children!”*

*All this stems from parents’ willingness to be what God has called them to be, “a real and visible sign of the love of Christ for the Church” (Pope Benedict, Homily in Santiago, Cuba, March 26, 2012). The domestic Church which they build of faithful love is the only worthy sanctuary for the birth and education of a child. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is the true meaning of today’s Gospel, as Jesus fulfills the establishment of married love in creation with a new Commandment: “Let the children come to me!”*

Parents who bring their children to the baptismal font, who teach them to make the sign of the cross, and who walk them down the aisle to their first communion, obey the Lord Jesus. Parents who lead their child to Jesus participate in the love of God, first showered on us in creation and revealed fully in the love of Christ. Parents who welcome a child welcome hope and love. That love makes us holy. It is a sacrament, first sworn before the altar and lived out in faithful and fruitful love till death.

But whether married or not, whatever our vocation in life, each of us is called to respond to God’s unconditional love with the gift of ourselves in service to others.

Beginning today, on this Respect Life Sunday, and throughout the Year of Faith proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI to begin on October 11, let us resolve to study and reflect on the wise and inspiring teachings of our faith on human life and the gift of married love so that we can become modern day apostles, capable of transforming American culture and building a civilization, life, love and hope.

May the Lord grant us the grace to see his love revealed in our lives, and the grace to respond by respecting and protecting human life in all its stages and conditions.

## INTERCESSIONS FOR LIFE

For the tiny unborn child in her mother's womb,  
that God might teach us  
how to love, nurture and support her;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For every woman whose heart is broken  
by the sin of abortion:  
for the courage to accept God's mercy, healing, and peace;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For those who work to promote the Gospel of Life  
by prayer, by witness and by action:  
that God might bless them for their goodness;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For our President and all who work with him:  
that God might fill his heart with a love  
for the weakest, the littlest and the most defenseless of our citizens;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For all who will die today:  
that by the prayers and consoling presence of family and friends,  
they might gently journey home to God;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For those who have grown very old,  
and suffer the losses and pains of old age:  
that God might give us the grace to love and cherish them;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For all who are tempted to suicide:  
that through our love and faith  
we might encourage them to embrace the cross  
and to live in obedience to their loving Lord;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For the parents of every unborn child:  
that God might fill their hearts  
with love for the child he has placed in their care;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For our country:  
that by recognizing the rights of each of her citizens  
to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,  
she might stand as a beacon of hope to all the world;  
*We pray to the Lord:*



## A DAY OF PRAYER AND PENANCE FOR LIFE—JANUARY 22, 2013

### *Fortieth Anniversary of the Supreme Court Abortion Decisions*

*In all the Dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion. The liturgical celebrations for this day may be the Mass “For Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life” (no. 48/1 of the Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions), celebrated with white vestments, or the Mass “For the Preservation of Peace and Justice” (no. 30 of the Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions), celebrated with violet vestments. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 373; American adaptation)*



### *Preaching for Life*

*(using optional readings Is 49:1-6/ Ps 8:4-5, 6-7, 8-9/ Mt 18:1-5, 10, 12-14)*

Today we solemnly observe the fortieth anniversary of the Supreme Court’s tragic abortion decisions in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* that created an unlimited abortion license. How could our nation—founded on Christian principles—have gone so far astray?

Perhaps it is true that every generation must face its own moral crisis. Perhaps every generation must be reminded of the truth that each human being, from the moment of conception, has a sublime dignity and worth. From Genesis we learn that man, in his reason and in his will, is made in the very image and likeness of God. As a result of this, man is given a special role as custodian and ruler over all creation. As we heard in today’s responsorial psalm, “You have given him rule over the works of your hands, / putting all things under his feet.” Men and women are given this dominion to care for all creation, especially human life. It is the duty of every person, and especially of every Catholic, to promote and safeguard the dignity of all human beings.

As we see in the first reading from Isaiah, God calls each of us into existence out of love. Isaiah says, “The Lord called me from birth, / from my mother’s womb he gave me my name.” Hence, all humans have an invaluable worth and dignity due to their being a daughter or son of God from conception.

Today we reflect on the devastating consequences when a culture rejects the belief that every human life has infinite value. In today’s gospel reading Jesus reminds us that “it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.” Yet 53 million unborn children in our country have lost their lives, and nearly always for the sake of the convenience of their parents, families and communities. For accepting, condoning and participating in these deaths, countless people have been wounded by the part they’ve played. And society as a whole suffers from a general cheapening of life that we see played out in so many areas. We have been descending, progressively and imperceptibly, into a culture of death. But while we contemplate the great losses over these past forty years, let us never forget God’s great mercy and his promise of hope for the future.

Trusting in the salvation won for us by Christ on the cross and the great mercy of God, let us acknowledge our personal and national responsibility and seek forgiveness for ourselves and for our country. In today’s reading from Isaiah, we hear God’s desire “to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him....” Taking Isaiah as our example, we are also called to be messengers of God’s mercy to all who have been hurt and wounded by abortion.

The fortieth anniversary of legalized abortion in the United States falls within what Pope Benedict XVI has called the Year of Faith, a time of study, prayer and recommitment to the teachings of our faith. During the Year of Faith we are given a special opportunity to acknowledge the great tragedy of abortion and to make reparation for our part. We are invited to rededicate ourselves to transforming a culture of death into a culture of life, while always trusting in God’s mercy. Let us embrace our mission of promoting life in all of its stages during this Year of Faith by being radiant examples of Christ’s welcoming and forgiving love in our world.

## INTERCESSIONS FOR LIFE

For all who march for life,  
in Washington D.C. and across our nation:  
that their voices may be heard  
and the lives of children may be saved;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For our President:  
that as he begins this term of office  
he may stand for the rights of all citizens  
from conception to natural death;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For all children who will be born today:  
that they may come to know a world  
which chooses life over death  
and light over darkness;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For obstetrical nurses and doctors  
and all who nurture the life of children in the womb:  
that God might bless them for their faith,  
compassion and love;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For all little children who await the birth of a new sister or brother:  
that the joyful expectation that shows in their eyes  
may inspire their parents to hope and conviction;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For all newly married couples:  
that their future children may draw them closer to Christ  
and to the love which is the purpose of our lives;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For all couples who prepare for marriage:  
that the thought of their first child  
may draw them closer to each other and to Christ;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For our Bishops, Priests and Deacons:  
that God might make them worthy shepherds,  
ever promoting and sustaining the Gospel of Life;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For all who have been scarred by the tragedy of abortion:  
for repentance, healing and peace;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For those who pray before abortion facilities, march before legislatures,  
circulate petitions and speak insistently for life:  
that God might reward them for their goodness;  
*We pray to the Lord:*



## REFLECTIONS ON THE MASS FOR GIVING THANKS TO GOD FOR THE GIFT OF HUMAN LIFE



The new prayers of the Mass “For Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life” (no. 48/1 of the *Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions*) were proposed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and approved by the Holy See in July of 2011.

Readings for the Mass “For Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life” may be chosen from the readings of the day or any readings from the *Lectionary for Ritual Masses* or the “Mass for Peace and Justice.”

The first of these Mass Sets begins with the following Collect (A):

*God our Creator,  
We give thanks to you,  
who alone have the power to impart the breath of life  
as you form each of us in our mother’s womb;  
grant, we pray,  
that we, whom you have made stewards of creation,  
may remain faithful to this sacred trust  
and constant in safeguarding the dignity  
of every human life.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the  
Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*

The prayer begins by acknowledging God’s sovereignty over all of his creation. He alone breathed the breath of life into the dust and created man (Cf. Genesis 2:7), just as he formed each of us in our mother’s womb. For while “Christian spouses ... cooperate wholeheartedly with the love of the Creator and Savior” in bringing forth children, it is

God alone “who through them increases and enriches his family from day to day” (*Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium*, 1991, no. 5).

Thus, with the Psalmist, we sing to God: “You formed my inmost being; / You knit me in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13). From Jeremiah 1:5, we recall the word of the Lord: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, / before you were born I dedicated you, / a prophet to the nations I appointed you,” as we make as our own the profession of Job:

*Your hands have formed me and fashioned me;  
will you then turn and destroy me?  
Oh, remember that you fashioned me from clay!  
Will you then bring me down to dust again?  
Did you not pour me out as milk,  
and thicken me like cheese?  
With skin and flesh you clothed me,  
with bones and sinews knit me together.  
Grace and favor you granted me,  
and your providence has preserved my spirit  
(Job 10:8-12).*

The second half of the prayer reminds us that God has made us “stewards of creation,” and asks him to give us the grace to “remain faithful to this sacred trust and constant in safeguarding the dignity of every human life.”

God made us stewards of his creation when he commanded Adam to name all the birds of the air and all the wild animals (Genesis 2:20), and that he is to have “dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground” (Genesis 1:26).

Responsibility for creation means responsibility for promoting the Gospel of Life. Indeed, in the words of Blessed Pope John Paul II: “Every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God



who was made flesh (cf. Jn 1:14), is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church. Therefore every threat to human dignity and life must necessarily be felt in the Church's very heart; it cannot but affect her at the core of her faith in the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God, and engage her in her mission of proclaiming the Gospel of life in all the world and to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15)."  
*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 3.

The second Collect (B) reads:

*O God, who adorn 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 human life.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.*

This prayer, too, begins by proclaiming God's sovereignty over all his creation, for he is the one who adorns creation "with splendor and beauty" and fashions human lives "in your image and likeness." This description of God employs the images of Psalm 104, who is "clothed with majesty and splendor" (Psalm 104:1) and spreads out the heavens "like a tent." (Psalm 104:2). He is the one who "fixed the earth on its foundation" (Psalm 104:5) and created all that is in wisdom (Cf. Psalm 104:24) and rejoices in his works (Psalm 104:31).

The prayer also reminds us that we have been made in the image and likeness of God (Cf. Genesis 1:26). Pope John Paul II reflects on this reality in his Encyclical letter, *Evangelium Vitae*:

"When a new person is born of the conjugal union of the two, he brings with him into the world a particular image and likeness of God himself: the genealogy of the person is inscribed in the very biology of generation. In affirming that the spouses, as parents, cooperate with God the Creator in conceiving and giving birth to a new human being, we are not speaking merely with reference to the laws of biology. Instead, we wish to emphasize that God himself is present in human fatherhood and motherhood quite differently than he is present in all other instances of begetting 'on earth.' Indeed, God alone is the source of that 'image and likeness' which is proper to the human being, as it was received at Creation. Begetting is the continuation of Creation." (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 43).

Aware of all this, the prayer then asks God to "awaken in every heart reverence for the work of your hands, and renew among your people readiness to nurture and sustain your precious gift of human life."

The prayer thus becomes a call to action to defend the "precious gift of human life." It is, in effect, a restatement of the call of Pope John Paul II: "In a special way, believers in Christ must defend and promote this right, aware as they are of the wonderful truth recalled by the Second Vatican Council: "By his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 2).

This call has been taken up by Pope Benedict XVI in his address to the Pontifical Academy for Life on February 26, 2011: "The whole of society must defend the right to life of the child conceived and the true good of the woman who will never, in any circumstance, be able to find fulfillment in the decision of abortion."

## *Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb*

A new Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb was developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for inclusion in the *Book of Blessings* (and *Bendicional*). The Holy See's Congregation for Divine Worship subsequently granted *recognitio* for its use in the United States.

The introduction to the rite explains its reasoning and value: "The Church welcomes with joy and compassion the mothers who, recognizing that all life is a gift from God, come to the Church seeking a blessing for their unborn child. Such a blessing sustains the parents by imparting grace and comfort in time of concern and need, unites the parish in prayer for the unborn child, and fosters respect for human life within society."

The blessing of a child in the womb may take place within Mass (after the Prayer of the Faithful), as an additional solemn blessing at the end of Mass, or within the context of a brief celebration of the Word of God, by a priest or deacon either in a church or another suitable location (for example, a hospital, the parents' home).

The text of the new *Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb/Rito de bendición de una criatura en el vientre materno* is being printed as a booklet by USCCB Communications and is available for sale from USCCB Publishing. It also will be included in future editions of the *Book of Blessings*. Following is an excerpt from the Rite:

### *Prayer of Blessing*

#### **Priest or Deacon:**

God, author of all life,  
bless, we pray, this unborn child;  
give constant protection  
and grant a healthy birth  
that is the sign of our rebirth one day  
into the eternal rejoicing of heaven.

#### *[For the mother:*

Lord, who have brought to this woman  
the wondrous joy of motherhood,  
grant her comfort in all anxiety  
and make her determined  
to lead her child along the ways of salvation.

#### *[For the father:*

Lord of the ages,  
who have singled out this man  
to know the grace and pride of fatherhood,  
grant him courage in this new responsibility,  
and make him an example of justice and truth for  
this child.]

#### *[For the family:*

Lord, endow this family  
with sincere and enduring love  
as they prepare to welcome this child into their  
midst.]

Lord, you have put into the hearts of all men and  
women of good will  
a great awe and wonder at the gift of new life;  
fill this (parish) community  
with faithfulness to the teachings of the Gospel  
and new resolve to share  
in the spiritual formation of this child in Christ our  
Savior, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
R/. Amen.

## *Order for the Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrims Before Their Journey<sup>1</sup>*

*Designed for use only by a priest or deacon.*

### **Gathering Song**

### **Introductory Rites**

**Celebrant:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Assembly:** Amen.

**Celebrant:** May God, our life, our strength, and our salvation be with you all.

**Assembly:** And with your spirit.

**Celebrant:** Brothers and sisters, as we (you) set out on this journey, let us reflect upon the reasons for this undertaking. Let our (your) desire for justice and dignity for all human life strengthen our (your) resolve. May we (you) be examples of faith, of hope, and of love, so that others may be strengthened and enriched by our (your) presence among them. May the Lord remain with us (you) and guide our (your) steps along right and peaceful ways during this journey.

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from the *Book of Blessings*, approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by National Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Apostolic See. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1989. Chapter 8: Order for the Blessing of Pilgrims on their Departure. "Intercessions" and "Prayer of Blessing," [602; 603], 262-263.

## Reading of the Word of God

**Lector:** A reading from the Book of Tobit.  
(5:4-8; 6:7)

Tobiah went to look for someone acquainted with the roads who would travel with him to Media. As soon as he went out, he found the angel Raphael standing before him, though he did not know that this was an angel of God. Tobiah said to him, "Who are you, young man?" He replied, "I am an Israelite, one of your kinsmen. I have come here to work." Tobiah said, "Do you know the way to Media?" The other replied, "Yes, I have been there many times. I know the place well and I know all the routes. I have often traveled to Media; I used to stay with our kinsman Gabael, who lives at Rages in Media. It is a good two days' travel from Ecbatana to Rages, for Rages is situated at the mountains, Ecbatana out on the plateau." Tobiah said to him, "Wait for me, young man, till I go back and tell my father; for I need you to make the journey with me. I will, of course, pay you. Raphael replied, "Very well, I will wait for you; but do not be long."

Afterward they traveled on together till they were near Media.

The Word of the Lord.

**Assembly:** Thanks be to God.

**Responsorial Psalm** (91:1-2, 3-4ab, 4c-6, 10-11)

**R/.** The Lord has put angels in charge of you, to guard you in all your ways.

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,  
Say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust."

**R/.** The Lord has put angels in charge of you, to guard you in all your ways.

For he will rescue you from the snare of the fowler,  
from the destroying pestilence.

With his pinions he will cover you,  
and under his wings you shall take refuge.

**R/.** The Lord has put angels in charge of you, to guard you in all your ways.

His faithfulness is a buckler and a shield.  
You shall not fear the terror of the night  
nor the arrow that flies by day;  
Nor the pestilence that roams in darkness,  
nor the devastating plague at noon.

**R/.** The Lord has put angels in charge of you, to guard you in all your ways.

No evil shall befall you,  
nor shall affliction come near your tent,  
For to his angels he has given command about you,  
that they guard you in all your ways.

**R/.** The Lord has put angels in charge of you, to guard you in all your ways.

## Intercessions

**Celebrant:** God is the beginning and end of every road we take. In confidence we call upon him, saying:

**Assembly:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Celebrant:** Father all-holy, of old you made yourself the guide and the way for your people as they wandered in the desert; be our protection as we begin this journey, so that we may return home again in safety. We pray to the Lord:

**R/.**

You have given us your only Son to be our way to you; make us follow him faithfully and unswervingly. We pray to the Lord:

**R/.**

You guide your pilgrim Church on earth through the Holy Spirit; may we seek you in all things and walk always in the way of your commandments. We pray to the Lord:

**R/.**

You lead us along right and peaceful paths; grant that we may one day see you face to face in heaven. We pray to the Lord:

**R/.**

You gave us Mary as the image and model for following Christ; grant that through her example we may live a new life. We pray to the Lord:

**R/.**

## FAITH OPENS OUR EYES TO HUMAN LIFE IN ALL ITS GRANDEUR AND BEAUTY

### *Prayer of Blessing*

*(The Celebrant and/or those of the parish community who are sending the group forth are invited to extend their hands in a gesture of blessing.)*

**Celebrant:** All powerful God,  
You always show mercy to those who love you  
and you are never far away for those who seek you.  
Remain with your servants on this journey  
and guide their way in accord with your will.  
Shelter them with your protection by day,  
give them the light of your grace by night,  
and, as their companion on the journey,  
bring them to their destination in safety.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Assembly:** Amen.

### *Concluding Rite*

**Celebrant:** May the Lord guide us (you) and direct our (your) journey in safety.

**Assembly:** Amen.

**Celebrant:** May the Lord be our (your) companion along the way.

**Assembly:** Amen.

**Celebrant:** May the Lord grant that the journey we (you) begin, will end happily through his protection.

**Assembly:** Amen.

*(It is preferable to conclude the celebration with an appropriate song.)*

## *Order for the Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrims As They Return from Their Journey<sup>2</sup>*

*Designed for use only by a priest or deacon.*

### **Introductory Rites**

**Celebrant:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Assembly:** Amen.

**Celebrant:** Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**Assembly:** Who made heaven and earth.

**Celebrant:** Our pilgrimage has been a privileged period of grace given us by God. As we return home, let us live up to the vocation God has given us: to be a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God claims for his own, everywhere proclaiming with charity, courage and conviction the inherent dignity and incomparable worth of every human life from conception till natural death.

### **Reading of the Word of God**

*(An appropriate text of sacred Scripture may be read here, e.g., Tobit 12:6-7; Acts 8:26-35; or Luke 24:28-35.)*

### **Responsorial Psalm**

*(An excerpt may be chosen from, for example, Psalm 15, 19, 23, 31, 34, 40 or other appropriate Psalm text.)*

### **Intercessions**

*(Intercessions may be taken or adapted from the Book of Blessings (pp. 268-269), or other appropriate intentions may be composed.)*

### *Prayer of Blessing*

**Celebrant:**

Blessed are you, O God,

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From all races of the earth

you have chosen a people dedicated to you,

eager to do what is right.

Your grace has moved the hearts of these, your friends,

to love you more deeply and to serve you more generously.

We ask you to bless them, so that they may tell of

your wondrous deeds

and give proof of them in their lives.<sup>2</sup>

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Assembly:** Amen.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 8: Order for the Blessing of Pilgrims before or after their Return. "Prayer of Blessing" [614], 265-270.

## A PRAYER SERVICE FOR FORGIVENESS AND HEALING

## Greeting

## Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, source of all life and holiness, just as you wiped the tears of Rachel who mourned for her children, may all who grieve the loss of children from abortion be assured of your tender mercy. Enable them to seek your forgiveness and entrust their children to you with hope in your infinite mercy and unconditional love. We ask you this through your Son, Christ our Lord, who has made all things new. Amen.

Gospel<sup>3</sup>

A reading from the holy Gospel according Matthew  
18:1-5, 10, 12-14

The disciples approached Jesus and said,  
“Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?”  
He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said,  
“Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children,  
you will not enter Kingdom of heaven.  
Whoever becomes humble like this child  
is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.  
And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones,  
for I say to you that their angels in heaven  
always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.  
What is your opinion?  
If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray,  
will he leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray?  
And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over  
it than the ninety-nine that did not stray.  
In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father  
that one of these little ones be lost.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

## Silent Prayer

## Homily

## Litany

V. Lord, have mercy  
R/. Lord, have mercy  
V. Christ, have mercy  
R/. Christ, have mercy  
V. Lord, have mercy  
R/. Lord, have mercy

## I.

*For women and men suffering from  
post-abortion grief*

The woman caught in adultery was humiliated  
by cruel men;  
Heal those who suffer of the shame reflected in  
the eyes of family or friends.  
All: Hail Mary....

The woman at the well encountered Christ and  
the truth about herself;  
Give those who suffer the courage to face  
what they have done and beg for God’s mercy.  
All: Hail Mary....

The rich young man walked away from the Lord  
for love of the world;  
Help those who suffer to renounce everything  
for the sake of the mercy of God.  
All: Hail Mary....

Saint Peter denied the Lord three times,  
despite his love;  
Give those who suffer the courage to  
repent as Peter did.  
All: Hail Mary....

The Blessed Virgin Mary wept at the foot of  
the cross of Jesus, her son;  
Help those who suffer in tears find God’s  
reconciling love in the sacrament of reconciliation.  
All: Hail Mary....

<sup>3</sup> The following passages could also be a basis for a homily on the merciful love of the Lord toward sinners:

Lk 13:11-13 (healing of the crippled woman); Lk 8:43-48, Mt 9:20-22 or Mk 5:25-34 (woman with a hemorrhage);

Lk 7:36-50 (woman who washes Jesus’ feet with her tears); Jn 4:7-42 (Samaritan woman at the well); and Jn 8:2-11 (the woman caught in adultery).

II.

*For doctors and nurses and all who have performed abortions*

Saint Luke sought to heal the sick and relieve their suffering;  
Form doctors in his image of compassion.

All: Hail Mary...

Jesus healed the man born blind in order to teach us how to see;  
Help nurses to see in each of their patients the image of Jesus upon the cross.

All: Hail Mary...

Jesus healed the paralytic, lowered through the roof by his friends;  
Inspire the families and friends of doctors to encourage them to recognize and love the unborn child.

All: Hail Mary...

Jesus forgave the repentant thief;  
Grant mercy to all who renounce the evil work of abortion.

All: Hail Mary...

When the man cried out to Jesus from the side of the road, the Lord healed him;  
Give doctors and nurses the courage to turn to God with all their hearts.

All: Hail Mary...

III.

*For the grace to accept God's love*

The prodigal son returned to his Father when he suffered for his sins;  
Give the grace of repentance to all who have cooperated in the abortion of a child.

All: Hail Mary...

King David repented at hearing Nathan's words;  
Grant wise words to preachers that they might move rebellious hearts.

All: Hail Mary...

The Lord taught us to pray that we be forgiven as we forgive;  
Remove all judgment from our hearts, even as he has forgiven us.

All: Hail Mary ...

Jonah put on sackcloth and ashes and called all to repentance;  
Give us effective prophets to call us back to God.

All: Hail Mary...

The Lord prayed for the forgiveness of those who nailed him to the cross;  
Give us the grace to love and intercede for even those who have taken the life of a little child.

All: Hail Mary...

**Petitions**

For the mother who awakens each morning with the memory of abortion fresh in her mind...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

For the father whose child died with his cooperation and consent...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

For the parents who influenced their child's choice to abort their grandchild...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

For the doctors and nurses who know they were wrong...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

For the counselors whose job is to sell abortions...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

For scientists and pharmaceutical employees who help manufacture abortifacient drugs...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

For those whose work involves promoting abortion and contraceptive use...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

For elected leaders who oppose any restriction on the abortion license...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

For an end to legal abortion in our nation and for the conversion of all hearts...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

For repentance, healing, and peace...

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

**Our Father...**

*Closing Prayer*

**Blessing**

*Departure in Silence*

# FAITH OPENS OUR EYES TO HUMAN LIFE IN ALL ITS GRANDEUR AND BEAUTY



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