[Arch/Diocesan) Letterhead]

Dear Father:

Feeling helplessly alone at a time of personal crisis can be overwhelming. Please take a moment to imagine yourself in any one of these scenarios, one at a time:

* Receiving some unexpected, life-changing medical news;
* Experience your spouse or significant other walking out on you;
* Seeing your career goals or educational dreams being stripped away;
* Watching your family and friends abandon you;
* Losing your housing or job;
* Feeling judged by others for past actions that have life-changing consequences.

As Catholics, we naturally feel compelled by our faith in Jesus Christ to reach out to our sisters and brothers who may be facing any one of these ordeals. Now imagine facing all the above scenarios at the same time. This is often the plight of a woman facing an unexpected or challenging pregnancy. What should normally be experienced as a joyful, new beginning is instead a time of immense fear, anxiety and confusion.

Place yourself in her situation for just a minute or two:

* Who could you talk to?
* Where would you find help?
* What are your options?

In the secular media, the Catholic Church is often portrayed as merely anti-abortion, offering no tangible help. Do pregnant women in need see us as safe to turn? Are we known for providing concrete help to those facing the many individual, challenging scenarios noted above?

The good news is that help is often readily available from many compassionate and dedicated people and organizations. But are we effective at communicating that help directly to women in desperate situations? Do parishioners know the places or resources to recommend if they encounter a pregnant or parenting woman in need of help?

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and our (arch)diocese have joined together in a nationwide effort called ***Walking with Moms in Need: A Year of Service****,*taking place from **March 25, 2020 through March 25, 2021.** A suggested timeline is attached. For this *Year of Service*, the USCCB is developing educational, pastoral, prayer, and action-oriented resources for parish use, such as the following:

* Tools for documenting an inventory of local resources for pregnant women in need;
* Ideas for improving parish responses;
* Prayers for building a culture of life and a civilization of love;
* Resources for reflecting on the teachings of *Evangelium Vitae*, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and *Laudato Si*.

These resources will include homily helps, suggested prayers, bulletin inserts, pulpit announcements, parish-based activities, and communications and outreach suggestions. All of these will be posted online (in English and Spanish). The goals are designed for **ease of use** at the parish level and will include suggestions for pastors on how to delegate efforts in this *Year of Service* to appropriate parish volunteers. Visit WalkingWithMoms.com to learn more.

Early feedback from stakeholders tells us that parish-led efforts to support pregnant and parenting mothers in need communicates and increases unity. It can initiate or improve upon the collaboration of those who work on social justice and pro-life efforts. Such an effort can also move the conversation from what sometimes seems like a partisan divide into pastoral unity. This *Year of Service* is a response to Pope Francis’ repeated challenge to go to the margins and bring hope and help to those in need.

Every region is different, every community is unique, and every parish is one-of-a-kind. Your parish is best positioned to identify the local pregnancy help resources that are currently available and to recognize potential gaps that may need to be addressed. The attached **“Inventory of Local Pregnancy Help Resources”** was created to assist a team of parish volunteers in identifying existing help for mothers in need at the local level. While there are great models of parishes already providing direct assistance to pregnant mothers, the inventory is also focused on helping parishes look to outside resources such as pregnancy help centers, maternity homes, social service agencies, hospitals, and especially Catholic programs and resources.

**I invite your parish to take the inventory** for your own local use and evaluation. The website noted above (www.WalkingWithMoms.com) provides simple instructions and suggestions. Our diocesan contact person for the *Year of Service* is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(name and title) at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(email address.) We will also be sharing a listing of potential resources for pregnant women in need that we have identified at the (arch)diocesan level. A number of these may be helpful contacts for your parish leaders in identifying local resources.

Thank you for joining parishes across our (arch)diocese, and across the county, in this nationwide effort to better support pregnant and parenting women in desperate need, and to better communicate the help that is available.

Sincerely in Christ,

[Name of Ordinary]