

CONTINUING TO WALK WITH MOMS IN NEED

As your parish works to implement its plans to serve pregnant and parenting women in need, additional ideas and opportunities will likely present themselves. We encourage you to continue being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and how the Lord may want you to continue building on and expanding the plans you have already committed to. While the official Year of Service may be coming to a close, your efforts to support mothers in your community are likely just beginning! The following sections provide suggestions for sustaining and even expanding your outreach to pregnant and parenting mothers in need in the months and years to come. The Walking with Moms in Need initiative may be reaching an end, but our efforts to provide assistance and support to mothers in need continue.



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SUSTAINING YOUR PARISH EFFORTS

Throughout the *Year of Service*, your parish has done an incredible amount of work to raise awareness in your community about the needs of pregnant and parenting moms facing difficulties. You have gone to great lengths to assess the resources available in your local area and identify gaps and opportunities to increase outreach and support. The impact of your efforts has the potential to be long-term, wide-ranging, and life-changing! We encourage you to take steps to allow your work throughout the past year to bear as much fruit as possible. Even though the *Year of Service* may be coming to an end, in many ways your work is just getting started!

As you begin to implement your parish plans, it is important to think about ways to sustain your parish efforts as you move forward, especially once the initial momentum and excitement have worn off. Depending on what plans your parish has undertaken, your parish efforts may unfold in a series of steps and phases, and you will want to maintain wide parish support for your new initiatives. And even if your parish plans seem simple and straightforward, your goal should be to continue to cultivate a spirit of outreach and support in your parish for pregnant and parenting mothers. Our efforts to provide assistance and support to mothers in need should continue, even after the *Walking with Moms in Need* initiative ends.

Establish Long-term Leadership

For the fruits of *Walking with Moms in Need* to continue flourishing in the weeks, months, and even years to come, you will need to create a plan to address long-term leadership. We encourage you to transition key leaders from the *Year of Service* into a permanent group, team, or committee that will continue addressing the needs of pregnant and parenting women in your community. While not all members of your core team will be able to commit to a long-term leadership role, many will still be able to continue

their service, bringing particular knowledge and experience to future plans and projects.

Transitioning into longer-term leadership roles can take many forms and will be heavily influenced by the initiatives your parish has undertaken. For example, if you have decided to launch a parish-based ministry, you will need a leadership team to head up those efforts. In this scenario, you could easily and organically transition your core team into this new ministry team. Or perhaps your parish has decided to incorporate pregnancy support into the efforts of an already-established outreach or service committee. In this case, the parish leader (or another member of the core team) for *Walking with Moms in Need* could be added to the outreach committee to coordinate specific efforts like a diaper drive or volunteer efforts at your local pregnancy center.

Transitioning into long-term leadership roles does not need to be complicated. No matter what efforts your parish has committed to, you will need to identify (a) leader(s) who will continue to carry the torch for mothers in need. Without a strong advocate, parish ministries and projects can easily stagnate and even disappear. It is important to have members of your parish who will continue to encourage parish outreach to pregnant and parenting mothers in need. As always, work closely with your pastor to determine the most appropriate means of transitioning leaders of the *Year of Service* into more permanent leadership roles.



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Sustain Your Parish Support Network

In addition to creating a leadership plan for the future, you will also want to make plans to continue to engage with your parish support network. Your team has worked so hard to build this network, and it needs to continue to be nurtured. Continue to provide your support network with news and updates on the progress of your parish plans. Solicit prayers and volunteer support as needed. When applicable, continue encouraging your support network to greater involvement in your parish efforts to support mothers in need. Some parishes serve highly transitory populations, and families in the parish may come and go frequently. As

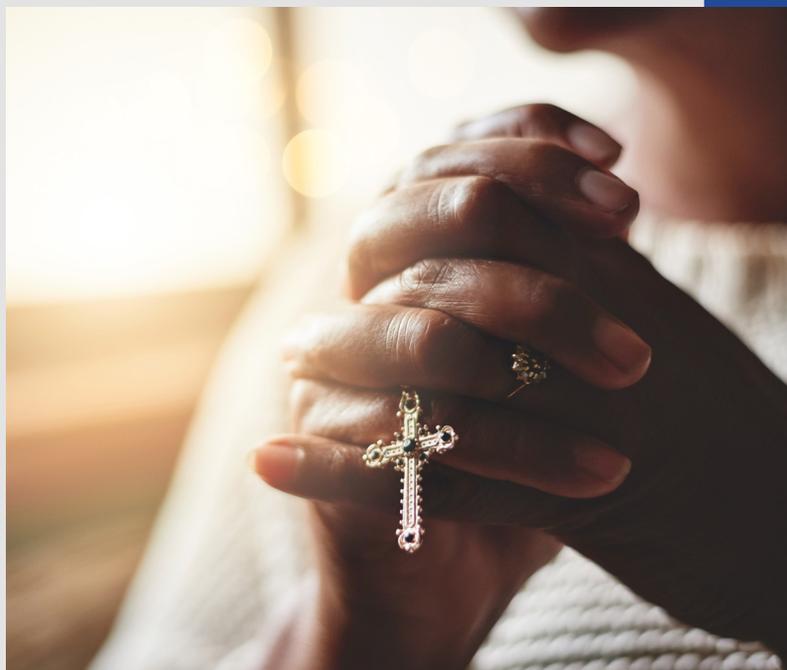
parishioners move away due to transitions in education or employment, you will need to be proactive about engaging new parishioners to sustain your support network.

While the ongoing cultivation of your parish network may look different based on your specific parish circumstances, it is important to take time to consider how you can continue to engage with these parishioners. If your parish has undertaken significant, multi-step efforts, you will likely need your parish support network to accomplish your goals. Even if your parish implementation process was accomplished very quickly, there may be opportunities in the future to expand your outreach efforts. If you fail to continue cultivating your support network, you may have to start from square one to support a new project or initiative.

EXPANDING YOUR PARISH EFFORTS

When evaluating the particular resources and gaps in your community, your core team took time to consider various possible parish responses. You were encouraged to take into consideration the resources and capacities of your parish and the needs of your local community. As you brainstormed together, you likely came up with several possibilities. In collaboration with your pastor, you determined the plans and efforts that your parish would undertake at this specific time. During this process you were also encouraged to not set limits on what the Holy Spirit wanted to accomplish through your parish. It is very possible that in the future, your parish will want to expand or build on the initial plans it committed to.

There are many reasons why your parish may desire to expand your outreach efforts to mothers in need. Once you have accomplished your initial goals, your parish may be filled with excitement and the confidence to take on larger projects or expand on smaller efforts. As your parish continues to build relationships with other parishes or organizations, you may be presented with opportunities for collaboration and partnership that did not exist before. Perhaps your parish has received an increase in resources (volunteers with specific skills, additional funding, etc.) that inspires you to take on additional initiatives to serve pregnant and parenting moms in your community. Maybe a new need has arisen in your local area that your parish has the ability to help address. Or, perhaps your parish decided to start small with the hopes of ultimately expanding your outreach efforts, and you now feel able to do so.



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No matter your inspiration for expanding your parish efforts, remember to ask and allow the Holy Spirit to guide you. Even after the close of the *Year of Service*, plan to meet periodically with your pastor—perhaps every six months or once a year—to assess your current efforts. Discuss challenges and obstacles in implementing your plans, successes, opportunities, and any changes in the needs of the community. Use this time to consider additional or expanded projects. In collaboration with your pastor, discern what new efforts the Lord may be calling your parish to.

One simple way to expand your parish outreach is to look for new opportunities to build on your current efforts. Using this approach, you can take things step-by-step to organically increase your outreach. For example, maybe you committed to hosting a quarterly diaper or food drive to support your local pregnancy center or food bank. After successfully completing a number of drives, your parish may discern that it would also like to host an annual “baby shower” to support the local pregnancy center with additional essential items. Following a successful “baby shower,” you may then be inspired to launch a new parish-based ministry.

Keep in mind that every parish and diocese is unique, and that the Lord calls us all to serve in different

ways. Your parish may be ready to expand its efforts in a number of months in response to parish and community feedback. Or, it may be several years before your parish efforts grow past your initial plans. Remain confident that, no matter how big or small your efforts may seem, the Lord can use all of these to transform the lives of pregnant and parenting mothers in your community.

As your parish efforts to serve pregnant and parenting women grow and expand, continue to update your diocese. We encourage you to stay in touch with your Diocesan Contact Person and share your parish's plans, progress, and successes. Your Diocesan Contact Person can also be a great resource for ongoing support and assistance in overcoming obstacles and challenges your parish may encounter. They may be aware of parishes with similar situations and possible solutions. Take advantage of the knowledge and experience they may have to offer.



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Walking with
Moms in Need
a year of service



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