

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 in October.

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
we may recommit ourselves
to upholding the dignity
of every human life;
We pray to the Lord:

That during this Respect Life Month
our hope in Christ's resurrection
will strengthen us in protecting
the gift of human life;
We pray to the Lord:

That the life of every human person,
from conception to natural death,
might 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
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

These homily notes are provided to help priests and deacons illustrate the Gospel of Life through the Lectionary readings for Respect Life Sunday (October 6, 2019).

Any of these sections can be used individually to supplement a reflection on a particular reading. Or, these notes can also be utilized together as a complete homily to help unpack the 2019-2020 Respect Life theme (***"Christ Our Hope: In Every Season of Life"***), employing the readings of the day.

Other ministry leaders can also use these reflections to highlight Respect Life connections elsewhere, such as in a Bible study on the weekly Sunday readings, in a small group or a faith formation setting, or as part of another ministry gathering.

October 6, 2019 | Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Respect Life Sunday)

First Reading: Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Gospel Acclamation: 1 Peter 1:25

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

First Reading: Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

In the First Reading we hear a voice crying out to God in anguish:

*How long, O LORD? I cry for help
but you do not listen!*

How often do we feel that God does not hear our pleas for help? How often do we fear that our prayers will not be answered in the manner we desire? The voice again cries out:

*I cry out to you, "Violence!"
but you do not intervene.
Why do you let me see ruin;
why must I look at misery?
Destruction and violence are before me;
there is strife, and clamorous discord.*

We can relate all too well to this feeling today. When we watch the news or scroll through social media, we are inundated by stories of violence against human life. The tone of public debate and discourse disrespects the very

dignity of the human person. We can often feel that misery surrounds us as abortion, assisted suicide, the death penalty, and other affronts to the dignity of the person find wide public support.

But God responds with a message of *hope*. We are assured that the Lord, “*will not disappoint.*” And that, “*the just one, because of his faith, shall live.*” While God does not promise to answer our prayers on our schedule or according to our plans, we know He does not abandon us. While suffering is indeed a part of our earthly life, our destiny is to share eternal life with Christ.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

In his encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, Pope St. John Paul II wrote that “the Gospel of life is not for believers alone: it is for everyone.”¹ Although faith allows us to more deeply understand the sacred value of human life, the light of reason naturally endows the human conscience with the ability to recognize the dignity of each and every person.

The psalmist writes, “*If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*” It seems that many in our world have indeed hardened their hearts to the truth. They are unable to see the humanity of the child growing in his or her mother’s womb. They incorrectly believe that a person’s value is determined by his or her abilities. They fail to comprehend that one’s worth is not dependent on one’s age or circumstance. And perhaps, if we’re honest with ourselves, we’ve allowed our own hearts to be hardened to attacks against human life. Maybe we’ve allowed the pain of loss to make our hearts numb.

In a world that seems to have lost sight of the value of human life, we must pray that those whose hearts have been hardened would hear the voice of God and come to see the invaluable dignity of every person they meet. We must pray that our own hearts would be pierced by the suffering of the most vulnerable among us.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Because the world in which we live is so often hostile to the Truth, proclaiming the Gospel of Life can be difficult. In many arenas, defense of infants’ lives, the lives of those who are disabled or dying, or the lives of any vulnerable human population is met with resistance. Proclaiming the Church’s teaching on topics like abortion, assisted suicide, and the death penalty can provoke challenging and emotional responses from



those who disagree. Sometimes we may find ourselves afraid to speak up about these issues in our families, among our coworkers, or with students in our school community.

We may fear disagreement, judgement, confrontation, or misunderstanding. But in the Second Reading, St. Paul tells us that “*God did not give us a spirit of cowardice.*” Rather, God has given us a spirit of “*power and love*”—and this should cast out our fear.

St. Paul encourages us to “*not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord.*” He urges us to “*bear your share of hardship for the gospel,*” and reminds us of our “*strength that comes from God.*” Through our faith in Jesus Christ, we know that sin and death have been defeated. We know that our identity can only be found in our Savior. The sufferings and persecutions that we endure in our earthly life glorify God; and we are given the strength and grace to persevere in hope.

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

Faith gives us this ability to hope. The example of the apostles in the Gospel encourages us to ask God Himself to “*increase our faith.*” If we struggle to find the courage to speak boldly about human life, we shouldn’t be ashamed. The apostles—who themselves lived, ate, and prayed with Christ—needed God’s grace to carry out Christ’s saving mission. We needn’t be afraid to ask God to increase our faith. For if we have but “*faith the size of a mustard seed,*” Christ can give us the power to do incredible things in service of the Gospel.

So today, as we recommit ourselves to upholding the teachings of the Church on the inviolability of human life, may we recall that we have merely “*done what we were obliged to do*” as followers of Christ. Christ is our hope, in every season of our lives.

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), no. 101.

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