



## PARISH ACTION GUIDE SUMMARY

Pregnant and parenting moms in need are in our parishes and our neighborhoods. As Pope Francis reminds us, our parishes need to be “islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference.” Everyone in the parish community should know where to refer a pregnant woman in need. Inspired by St. John Paul II’s to assess our efforts in building a culture of life, the intention of *Walking with Moms in Need* is to increase our outreach to pregnant and parenting women facing difficulties.

On March 25, 2020, the Church celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the papal encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*). This anniversary has provided a wonderful opportunity for the Church to assess, expand, and communicate resources to pregnant moms and families in need. Parishes across the country, through the support of their bishops and pastors, are invited to join a nationwide initiative entitled, *Walking with Moms in Need*.

Through a yearlong process, parishes are asked to complete a simple inventory of the resources currently available in their local area, assess the results and identify gaps, and plan and implement a parish response based on their findings. *Walking with Moms* is broken up into five phases of parish action. The five phases include:

- **Phase 1:** Introduce *Walking with Moms* and Begin Building a Core Team
- **Phase 2:** Launch Parish Inventory Process
- **Phase 3:** Share Inventory Results and Begin Assessment and Planning
- **Phase 4:** Announce and Commit to Parish Response
- **Phase 5:** Celebrate and Implement Parish Plans

This Parish Action Guide Summary is provided to assist parishes in participating in *Walking with Moms in Need*. This Action Guide Summary provides simple, one-page instructions for completing each phase of the initiative. (For additional materials, including sample timelines, announcements, prayers, activities, homily notes, and more detailed instructions, please see the full [Parish Action Guide](#).)

While each parish will participate in its own unique way, this Action Guide Summary provides a basic framework and structure that can be adapted to each local Church’s needs. Through the combined efforts of parishes nationwide, we hope to move closer to the day when every pregnant woman in need knows where to turn for help, and abortion is simply unthinkable.

# PHASE 1

## Introduce *Walking with Moms* & Begin Building a Core Team

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*Follow these simple steps to get Walking with Moms in Need started in your parish. Feel free to adjust and adapt as needed! During Phase 1 pastors are asked to select a parish leader for the initiative who will then begin assembling a parish core team to help complete the parish inventory and related tasks. Parishes are encouraged to educate their community on Evangelium vitae (The Gospel of Life), highlighting its call to serve pregnant and parenting moms in need.*

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### 1. **Appoint a parish leader.**

The pastor of each participating parish is asked to appoint a parish leader for *Walking with Moms in Need*. The parish leader acts as a main point of contact and coordinator. Pastors can find tips and suggestions for filling this important role in “Selecting a Parish Leader” on page 13 of the [Parish Action Guide](#).

### 2. **Begin assembling a parish core team.**

Once a parish leader has been selected, he or she, with the guidance of the pastor, can begin assembling a parish core team. The core team will meet throughout the year and complete various steps in the process, including the parish inventory, assessment, and response planning and implementation. More detailed instructions and tips can be found in “Building a Parish Core Team” on page 15 of the [Parish Action Guide](#).

### 3. **Establish a parish support network.**

In addition to assembling a core team, you will also want to begin establishing a broader group to help support *Walking with Moms*. In the beginning stages of this project, you will likely only need assistance from your core team. However, as the project continues, grows, and develops, you will likely need wider parish support. Establishing a simple support network allows you to inspire broader parish involvement and enlist assistance during later phases. (See page 18 in the [Parish Action Guide](#) for details.)

### 4. **Introduce *Walking with Moms in Need* and educate on *Evangelium vitae*.**

Use the provided sample announcements to introduce *Walking with Moms in Need* to your parish community. Encourage your priests and deacons to include this exciting news in the weekend homily using the provided “Homily Helps” (page 10 of the [Parish Action Guide](#)). If possible, include one of the provided [educational resources](#) in your bulletin.

### 5. **Pray for pregnant mothers in need as a parish community.**

When introducing *Walking with Moms*, use this opportunity to pray the “[Prayer for Pregnant Mothers](#)” together as a community and to encourage regular use of the prayer. Include intercessions for pregnant mothers in the Prayer of the Faithful during Sunday Masses. (Sample intercessions are available on page 10 in the [Parish Action Guide](#).)

### 6. **Begin planning your first core team meeting.**

Even if your core team is not fully assembled, begin thinking about when your team can gather for the first time. Consult current members of the core team about their availability and what days and times generally work best with their schedules. Begin thinking about your [agenda](#) and what you might hope to accomplish in this initial gathering.

# PHASE 2

## Launch Parish Inventory Process



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*These simple steps offer ideas on how to use the provided materials to begin the inventory process in your parish community—feel free to adjust and adapt as needed! During Phase 2 parishes will continue to assemble their core teams through personal invitations and expand their parish support network. Phase 2 also launches the parish inventory process and once again invites the parish to pray for pregnant and parenting women in need.*

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### **1. Host the first meeting with your core team.**

Once your core team has been assembled, begin thinking about when your team can gather for the first time. Consult members about their availability and what days and times generally work best with their schedules. Begin thinking about your [agenda](#) and what you might hope to accomplish in this initial gathering. (See “Hosting a Meeting” on page 25 of the [Parish Action Guide](#) for ideas and tips for planning your first gathering.)

### **2. Gather resources and information from your diocese.**

Before beginning your parish inventory, we recommend contacting your local diocesan Respect Life [office](#). Many pregnancy resources are appropriately coordinated at the diocesan or regional level. Your diocesan office may already have completed its own diocesan inventory and be able to provide you with a list of resources within the diocese. This list will be a great resource for you as you complete your parish inventory.

### **3. Review the inventory tool.**

The [inventory tool](#) provides a framework and structure to help your parish think about the various resources that a mother in need may find helpful. Using the inventory tool, each parish is asked to identify the local pregnancy help resources in their community that are currently available to a woman facing a difficult pregnancy. The needs of pregnant and parenting moms can be overwhelming, and the sources for help may not be apparent to those most needing support. Take time to familiarize yourself with the inventory tool.

### **4. Announce the start of the inventory process and pray for mothers in need.**

Choose a weekend during Phase 2 to update the parish community on the start of the inventory process. Also utilize this opportunity to pray for pregnant and parenting mothers in need. Sample announcements, intercessions, and homily notes are provided to help you share this important update with your parish. (See pages 21-23 in the [Parish Action Guide](#).)

### **5. Begin the inventory process.**

The purpose of the inventory process is to find out what resources are currently available and allow you to assess these resources and identify possible gaps. Through site visits, phone calls, and research, begin filling out the parish inventory. You may want to divide up different sections and assign them to core team members to research and report back to the group. Once the information has been gathered, both individually and as a group, compile everything into the inventory form. (See “Completing the Parish Inventory” on page 27 of the [Parish Action Guide](#) for more detailed instructions on getting started.)

# PHASE 3

## Share Inventory Results and Begin Assessment and Planning

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*These simple steps are provided to guide you through Phase 3 of Walking with Moms in Need. They offer ideas on how to use the provided materials to assess your inventory results, identify gaps, and begin planning how the parish can respond. During Phase 3 parishes are also encouraged to share the results of the inventory with their community in a parish-wide meeting and invite parishioner feedback and involvement in the parish response.*

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### **1. Review the inventory results and evaluate your findings.**

Gather with your core team to review and assess the results of your completed parish inventory. During this time, you will evaluate the current resources, identify gaps, and discuss how help is currently communicated to women in need. Depending on the amount of information you gathered, it may take multiple meetings to review the inventory. Begin creating a concise overview that can be shared with your pastor and larger parish community. (See “Reviewing and Assessing Inventory Results” on page 38 of the [Parish Action Guide](#) for detailed instructions and sample criteria for completing this step.)

### **2. Review sample ideas and models and begin planning your parish response.**

Once your core team has evaluated the inventory results, take time to consider ideas and models for a parish response. Think about the gaps you identified and consider ways your parish might decide to address them. Generate a list of ideas that you could propose to your pastor and parish community to better serve mothers in need. (See “Planning a Parish Response” on page 43 of the [Parish Action Guide](#) for detailed instructions and sample models to get you started.)

### **3. Announce inventory completion and invite parishioners to parish-wide meeting.**

In collaboration with your pastor, plan to share the inventory results with the broader community in a parish-wide meeting on a specified date. On the weekends prior, announce the completion of the inventory, and invite parishioners to the parish-wide meeting in the coming weeks to review the findings and get their input. Encourage your priests and deacons to include this exciting news in their weekend homilies. (Sample announcements and homily notes are available in Phase 3 of the [Parish Action Guide](#).)

### **4. Plan for and host the parish-wide meeting.**

Meet with your pastor to review the inventory results and proposed parish responses that you’re planning to present. Discuss plans for facilitating this larger gathering and collecting parishioner feedback. At the parish-wide meeting, share inventory findings, highlight identified gaps, and discuss possible parish responses. Use this gathering to also invite greater volunteer assistance. (See “Hosting a Parish-Wide Meeting” on page 48 of the [Parish Action Guide](#) for instructions, sample agendas, discussion tips, and more.)

### **5. Determine plans for offering and communicating help to mothers in need.**

With your pastor and core team, review your inventory results and the feedback from the broader parish community. Work together to determine a plan for an appropriate parish response. Share your inventory results and plans with your Diocesan Contact Person. (See “Determining Your Parish Response” on page 52 of the [Parish Action Guide](#).)

# PHASE 4

## Announce and Commit to Parish Response



*Use the following simple steps to guide you through Phase 4 of Walking with Moms in Need. They offer ideas on how to use the provided materials to announce your parish response to the larger parish community. Parishes are again encouraged to host a parish-wide meeting and invite parishioner involvement in efforts to offer and communicate help to mothers in need.*

### **1. Share the plans for your parish response with the parish community.**

Announce the plans for your parish response, and invite all parishioners to a parish-wide meeting. In collaboration with your pastor, use the meeting to inform parishioners about your plans to assist mothers in need and invite them to get involved. Encourage your priests and deacons to include this exciting news in their weekend homilies. (Announcements and homily notes are available on pages 56 and 58 in the [Parish Action Guide](#).)

### **2. Continue to pray for pregnant mothers in need as a parish community.**

When announcing the upcoming parish-wide meeting, use this opportunity to pray the “[Prayer for Pregnant Mothers](#)” together as a community and to encourage regular use of the prayer. Include intercessions for pregnant mothers and your parish efforts in the Prayer of the Faithful during Sunday Masses. (Sample intercessions are available in the [Parish Action Guide](#) on page 57.)

### **3. Plan for and host the parish-wide meeting.**

Work with your pastor and core team to finalize the parish-wide meeting agenda. Consider fun and creative ways to engage your parish community, increase attendance, and encourage involvement in your parish plans. During the parish-wide meeting, review the needs of pregnant mothers and unveil the proposed parish plans to offer help and increase outreach. Invite parishioner support, share a proposed schedule for implementing the plans, and seek additional volunteers from the meeting attendees. (See “Committing to and Implementing a Parish Response” on page 59 of the [Parish Action Guide](#).)

### **4. Develop a communications plan to share your efforts with those in need.**

Once your parish plans have been determined, gather with your core team to discuss how you can communicate your ongoing efforts to parishioners and those most in need of assistance. It is essential that the community knows the ways your parish is working to serve mothers in need. (See “Communicating Help for Mothers in Need” on page 62 of the [Parish Action Guide](#) for tips on getting the word out to your community.)

### **5. Begin implementation of the parish plans.**

In collaboration with your pastor, begin implementing your parish plans. Engage the help of the core team, parish support network members, and new volunteers. A parish response could range from listing the local pregnancy help center in the parish bulletin to a more substantial commitment to launch a new ministry or effort. Some plans will require additional meetings and volunteer trainings. (See “Committing to and Implementing a Parish Response” on page 59 of the [Parish Action Guide](#) for ideas on implementing your parish plans.)

# PHASE 5

## Celebrate and Implement Parish Plans

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*These simple steps will guide you through Phase 5 of Walking with Moms in Need. They offer ideas on how to use the provided materials to celebrate the close of the yearlong process and the launch of your plans for offering and communicating help to mothers in need.*

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### 1. Plan a parish-wide celebration.

Plan to host a parish-wide celebration to recognize your parish's progress in serving pregnant women in need. Ideas can range from hosting a "baby shower" for a local ministry to planning a gala event to support a new, parish-based initiative. Work with your pastor and core team to finalize the parish-wide celebration plans. (See "Hosting a Parish Celebration" on page 72 of the [Parish Action Guide](#) for ideas on how your parish can celebrate the fruits of *Walking with Moms in Need* and the gift of life.)

### 2. Celebrate your parish efforts to serve pregnant women in need.

In collaboration with your pastor, share an encouraging update on parish plans with the broader parish community. Highlight the progress your parish has made in serving mothers in need through the *Walking with Moms* process. Invite all parishioners to a parish-wide celebration. Encourage your priests and deacons to include this exciting news in their weekend homilies. (Sample announcements and homily notes are available in the [Parish Action Guide](#) on pages 68 and 70.)

### 3. Continue praying for pregnant mothers in need as a parish community.

When celebrating the progress on parish plans, use this opportunity to pray the "[Prayer for Pregnant Mothers](#)" together as a community and to encourage continued regular use of the prayer. Include intercessions for pregnant mothers and your parish efforts in the Prayer of the Faithful during Sunday Masses. (Sample intercessions are available in the [Parish Action Guide](#) on page 69.)

### 4. Host the parish-wide celebration.

In collaboration with your pastor, use the celebration to share and recognize exciting updates with your parish community. Explain all the great work that has taken place over the past year and share all that the parish is currently working to accomplish. Continue to invite parishioner engagement and seek additional volunteers from the event attendees to help implement and sustain your parish efforts.

### 5. Continue the implementation of the parish plans.

Continue to engage the help of the core team, parish support network, and new volunteers in offering and communicating help to mothers in need. As you implement your plans, more ideas and opportunities may present themselves. Continue to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and how the Lord may want to continue building on and expanding the plans you have already committed to. (See "[Continuing to Walk with Moms in Need](#)" on page 75 of the [Parish Action Guide](#) for tips on sustaining and expanding your outreach in the months and years to come.)