

Each October, the Catholic Church in the United States celebrates Respect Life Month, and the first Sunday of October is designated as Respect Life Sunday. To support these annual observances, the USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities provides materials for parishes to help Catholics understand and value the gift of human life and help build a culture that cherishes and protects it (respectlife.org/respect-life-month).

The following "homily connections" are brief bullet points illustrating connections between the readings for each Sunday in October and the Church's teachings on the sanctity of human life. As Pope St. John Paul II said in *Evangelium vitae*, "The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message. … The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel."

*Please note that every homily that mentions or alludes to abortion should include the message that there is hope and healing after involvement with an abortion. (For more information, please see "Homily Considerations for Healing after Abortion.")

Additional resources for clergy and ideas for using them can be found at <u>respectlife.org/priests-and-deacons</u>.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2024: ☐ Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Respect Life Sunday)

Readings (Lectionary: 140) • •

- First Reading: Gn 2:18-24

 The LORD God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him."
- Responsorial Psalm: Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6 May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives. May you see your children's children.
- Second Reading: Heb 2:9-11

 He "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
- Gospel Acclamation: 1 Jn 4:12

 If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is brought to perfection in us.
- Gospel: Mk 10:2-16 or 10:2-12

 "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Connection Points •

*Please note that every homily that mentions or alludes to abortion should include the message that there is hope and healing after involvement with an abortion. (For more information, please see "Homily Considerations for Healing after Abortion.")

- **First Reading:** We are created by God for relationship—relationship with him and with one another. We are created to be interdependent and care for one another, especially those who are most vulnerable or going through difficult times. Examples: A woman who is pregnant in difficult circumstances and doesn't have a support network. A person who has a terminal illness and fears being abandoned in his or her time of suffering. Aging parents or grandparents who need increased help and reassurance of loving support.
- **Responsorial Psalm:** Children and old age are blessings.
- **Second Reading:** Jesus knows what it is like to suffer. In times of difficulty, when we may be tempted to reject God's gift of life, we can unite our suffering to Jesus and lean on him for strength.
- **Gospel Acclamation:** We are called to put our love for one another into action, and doing so can become a path to holiness and closeness with God. The ways we can do this are limitless, but examples could include donating diapers to the local pregnancy care center or visiting patients in nursing homes who have no one to visit them.
- **Gospel:** Jesus said, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." In doing so, he showed that children are to be welcomed with love and that we, ourselves, are called to receive the kingdom of God like children.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2024: ☐ Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (Lectionary 143) • •

- First Reading: Wis 7:7-11

 I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I preferred her to scepter and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her.
- Ps 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17

 Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy! ...may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us!
- Second Reading: Heb 4:12-13

 No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.
- Gospel Acclamation: Mt 5:3

 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Gospel: Mk 10:17-30 or 10:17-27 "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."

Connection Points • •

Responsorial Psalm:

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- **First Reading:** Some of God's greatest gifts are intangible, but more important than wealth, health, or good looks—for example the gift of life and the gift of wisdom.
- **Responsorial Psalm:** Although the Lord calls us to be his hands and feet in the world, building a culture that welcomes and defends human life, he does not leave us alone in our mission. He is with us, and we can call upon him to make our efforts fruitful, if he wills it.
- **Second Reading:** The Lord knows all our thoughts, words, and actions. So, let us pursue good and avoid evil. Let us defend human life and care for those who are struggling to welcome it. Let us not condone or participate in actions that disrespect or reject this gift of life. And if we have, let us repent and turn with trust to the Lord, seeking his mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. No matter how serious the sin, God longs to forgive us.
- **Gospel Acclamation:** God is everything we need. Let us recognize and embrace our dependence on him. Let us lean on him and receive his love through others, like when we are ill or aging. Let us ask him to give us generous hearts to serve others, like the pregnant mom who feels hopeless and unsure how she will care for her child.
- **Gospel:** Are we open to hearing the voice of the Lord? Are we willing to go where he leads? Sometimes, he calls us to follow him in ways that are beyond our comfort zone. These moments of radical trust and leaps of faith lead us closer to him and can become lifesaving blessings for others. For example:
 - Jessica (name changed for privacy) made a last-ditch call for help from a bus in Washington DC. She was pregnant and homeless, and she was using the bus for a place to keep warm. Jessica had just scheduled an abortion because she didn't want to have her child on the streets in winter. Jessica, homeless and pregnant, called from a bus and reached a church-based ministry that provided free housing, case management, and the support of caring volunteers. With this help, Jessica's natural drive could shine through. She found a job with benefits near her new home and was promoted three times before her son was born. She established new, healthy life habits, and was blessed with her very own car from the generosity of a local Catholic parishioner. Jessica and her son are now thriving in their own apartment and are confidently building a new life together.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20: ☐ Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (Lectionary 146) •

- First Reading: Is 53:10-11

 Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days; through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear.
- Responsorial Psalm: Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22 Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.
- Second Reading: Heb 4:14-16
 So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

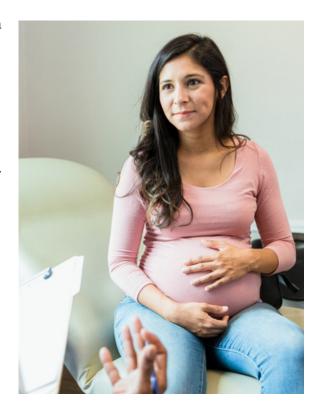
- Gospel Acclamation: Mk 10:45

 The Son of Man came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.
- Gospel: Mk 10:35-45 or 10:42-45 Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all.

Connection Points • •

*Please note that every homily that mentions or alludes to abortion should include the message that there is hope and healing after involvement with an abortion. (For more information, please see "Homily Considerations for Healing after Abortion.")

- **First and Second Reading:** Experiencing suffering—or watching another suffer—is one of the most difficult human experiences. But we are not alone. Christ experienced suffering more deeply than we can comprehend, and our own suffering can be meaningful when we unite it with his. An elderly man whose health is quickly deteriorating; a mother facing terminal cancer—each may have great difficulties and need assistance, but each of their lives is a good and perfect gift. Jesus is with us every step of the way, giving us the grace we need. God calls us to embrace the lives we have been given, and the lives of others, for as long as they are given. Every life is worth living.
- **Responsorial Psalm:** No sin is unforgiveable, including the taking of human life. No one is beyond redemption. We have all failed and we are all in need of God's mercy. It is for this very reason that Christ suffered, died, and rose again. Jesus came to offer us his infinite love and mercy, and we can receive it in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (See also: Homily Considerations for Healing after Abortion.)
- **Gospel Acclamation** / **Gospel:** Jesus came to serve and calls us to do the same. Many need support in choosing life or in finding healing after participating in abortion. How can we serve them? For example:
 - If a woman shares she had an abortion, listen patiently, thank her for trusting you, and express your sympathy for her loss. Assure her of God's unconditional love and encourage her to seek healing. If appropriate, and you think she might welcome it, assure her of God's desire to forgive and encourage her to seek his forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You can also explain that the U.S. Catholic Church's Project Rachel Ministry for healing after abortion offers confidential, compassionate help (www.HopeAfterAbortion.org). (See also: How to Talk to a Friend Who's Had an Abortion & Bridges of Mercy for Healing after Abortion.)
 - Amanda (name changed for privacy) was estranged from her husband, had a 12-year-old son, and was pregnant. When she called the Gabriel Project for help, she had just lost her job and her health insurance because she could not do the heavy lifting required of a nurse's aide. Amanda had a part-time job that allowed her to pay her half of the rent, since her husband would only pay his half. And then the eviction notice arrived, and Amanda found out that her husband had not been paying his half of the rent. Amanda, her unborn child, and her 12-yearold son would soon be homeless. When Amanda called for help, the parish volunteers connected her with legal help to block the eviction, and raised funds to show the landlord that she was making headway in paying the back rent. Other parishioners provided furniture and baby items and, more importantly, friendship and moral support. Thanks to the help, Amanda now has a beautiful daughter, has a new apartment with her children, has the furniture and baby items that she needs, and has returned to her job.



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27: ☑ Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (Lectionary 149) • •

- First Reading: Jer 31:7-9

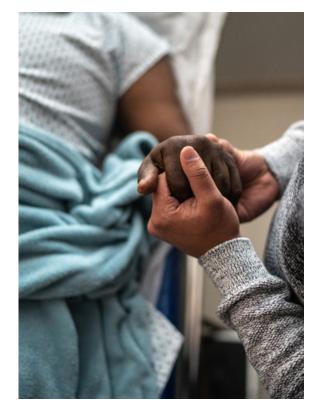
 The LORD has delivered his people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them back
- Responsorial Psalm: Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6 The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy. Those that sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.
- Second Reading: Heb 5:1-6
 It was not Christ who glorified himself in

- becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: You are my son: this day I have begotten you...
- Gospel Acclamation: Cf. 2 Tm 1:10
 Our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life to light through the Gospel.
- Gospel: Mk 10:46-52 "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."

Connection Points

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- **First Reading** / **Responsorial Psalm:** The Lord our God is our deliverer. He is with us and will guide us in times of trouble (e.g. unexpected pregnancy, loss, serious illness).
- Second Reading: God calls us each to follow him on our own unique journeys, not for our own glory, but to draw closer to him and help others do the same. We each have unique gifts and talents that are not meant to be kept for ourselves. How is God calling you to build a culture that welcomes and defends human life in your unique way?
- Gospel Acclamation: Jesus came that we might have life, and he has won the victory over death. He calls us to bring his light to break through the darkness—to be his disciples, continually transformed by our encounter with him and sharing in his mission.



• **Gospel:** Much of our society lives in darkness, blind or unwilling to recognize the sanctity of life at all stages and in all circumstances. We live in a society in which some states have declared it lawful to take the lives of their most vulnerable members through practices such as abortion and physician-assisted suicide. As Pope St. John Paul II wrote, "we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the 'culture of death' and the 'culture of life'. …we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life." In the face of such challenges, we may feel that we are not equal to the task of overcoming the darkness. Yet, we are

not alone. The message to the blind man is for us and to share with others: "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." Example:

- Melissa, a North Carolina mom³ with young children and a busy job, attended a parish informational session for Walking with Moms in Need, thinking she might help out here and there. But she felt the Lord's call and "by the end of the session she had volunteered to be the ministry's coordinator." Her parish now holds "Hand Up Days" once a month during which families can "shop" free of charge for baby and toddler items they need that have been donated by parishioners.
- Melissa shared some powerful words of encouragement: "I think for too long we have been comfortable leaving the work of accompanying women in crisis situations pregnant or parenting—to others in the nonprofit and government sectors. It is very clear in the Gospel that this is our job - all of us! A woman in a pregnancy center once told me that most women considering abortion are wrestling with a financial matter less than \$250 and that has really stuck with me. If we can lighten



the burden just a little, what a difference we can make—it is literally life or death."

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¹ Pope John Paul II, Evangelium vitae, nos. 1, 2.

² Pope John Paul II, Evangelium vitae, no. 28.

³ Elizabeth Ascik, "One of the Best Ways to Walk with Moms in Need," Aleteia, March 23, 2023, https://aleteia.org/2023/03/22/ one-of-the-best-ways-to-walk-with-moms-in-need/.