

DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY

MISSION STATEMENT

Respect Life Ministry is dedicated to transforming today's culture of death into a culture of life. Pope John Paul II's encyclical *The Gospel of Life* provides hope and inspiration in the promotion of respect for all life, from fertilization to natural death. The American Bishops' *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life* provides a framework for the ministry, following the Catholic tradition of prayer, study/education and action, including pastoral care and legislative advocacy. Respect Life Ministry focuses on life and death issues involving the beginning of life, end of life, capital punishment and legislative action on the parish, diocesan, state and national levels.

Persons with Disabilities Ministry seeks greater inclusion of persons with physical, sensory, cognitive and emotional disabilities in the life of the parish. The primary focus of the Older Catholics Ministry is helping the frail elderly and their caregivers. Natural Family Planning Ministry is an effective method of child spacing in keeping with Church teaching.

KEY CHURCH TEACHINGS

"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 find ourselves not only "faced with" but necessarily "in the midst of" this conflict: we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life." (#28) ... "It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop." (#101)

Pope John Paul II - The Gospel of Life

"Restoring respect for human life in our society is an essential task of the Church that extends through all its institutions, agencies, and organizations and embraces diverse tasks and goals...Actively promoting a renewed respect for human life is the responsibility of every Catholic."

*United States Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities:
A Campaign in Support of Life*

"The failure to protect and defend life in its most vulnerable stages renders suspect any claims to the 'rightness' of positions in other matters affecting the poorest and least powerful of the human community. If we understand the human person as the 'temple of the Holy Spirit' -- the living house of God -- then these latter issues fall logically into place as the crossbeams and walls of that house. ... All direct attacks on innocent human life, such as abortion and euthanasia, strike at the house's foundation. These directly and immediately violate the human person's most fundamental right -- the right to life. Neglect of these issues is the equivalent of building our house on sand."

*Living the Gospel of Life - A Challenge to American Catholics #23 -
A statement by the Catholic Bishops of the United States*