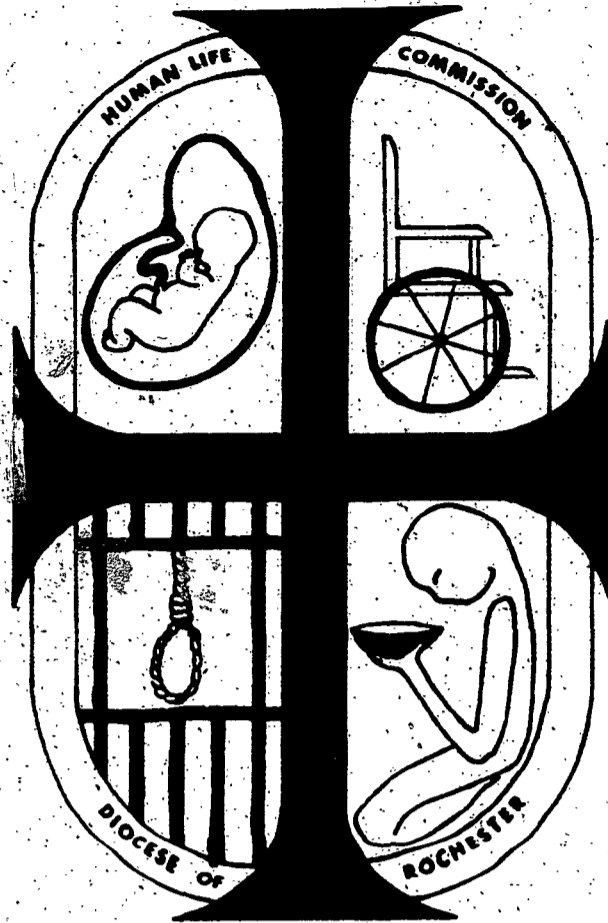


The Diocesan Human Life Program



The Diocesan Human Life Program is designed to raise consciousness of the sacredness of life at every stage of development from conception until death. It is in response to the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Plan on Pro-Life Activities issued in 1975. The Pastoral Plan called for a three-pronged effort in facing the issues of abortion, the elderly, the handicapped, poverty, the death penalty, euthanasia, etc.

1. EDUCATIONAL: There is a need to raise the awareness in the Church that all of these issues have as their core question the degree to which we value life itself; there is a need to address this central issue in such a way that we affirm life at every stage and do so consistently.

2. PASTORAL: Respect for human life must

ultimately be expressed in action — responding to people with particular needs. Initially this program focuses on support and publicity for existing organizations, primarily those which offer positive counseling and alternatives to abortion.

3. LEGISLATIVE: The voice of the Church people must be heard by those who hold office. This effort brings particular legislative issues to the attention of parishes in order to urge response of the people to their legislators.

The program is financially supported solely by proceeds from each fall's Respect Life Sunday. It is coordinated by Frank and Sue Staropoli, created by the Human Life Commission (chaired by Father Jim Hewes) and staffed by Ange and Peg Turiano.

Cooperating Organizations

Office of Human Development
 Judicial Process Commission of Genesee Ecumenical Ministries
 Diocesan Commission on Aging
 General Education Department
 Religious Education Department
 Catholic Family Center

Cephas-Attica
 Pro-Life Activities Office - Diocese of Buffalo
 Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministries
 Diocesan Association of Health Care Chaplains
 Rochester Area Right to Life Education Fund, Inc.
 International Justice and Peace Commission
 Birthright of Rochester

Statement of Theological Foundation

For a Catholic Christian, the understanding of the sacredness of life comes from his/her relationship to God (Gen. 1:27 and Ps. 139). The dignity of a person lies not in what one will become or do, but in the fact that God is his/her origin and destiny (Jer. 1:5). This fact, alone, makes us priceless. From this point of view, biological information becomes relatively unimportant in talking about the value of human

life. Our dignity, from the beginning until the end (Rom. 14:7-8), comes from our relationship to our Creator which gives life infinite worth (Matt. 10:30).

God's ultimate revelation of this was Jesus becoming human. For Jesus Christ becoming human is the infinite affirmation of each person's worth (Jn. 1:1-4). In Jesus, God has given an absolute yes to the dignity and value of all human life (Matt.

3:16). The Incarnation of Jesus tells us that life at every stage has dignity. Dignity doesn't depend on what we do, or on our capabilities. Thus, the human at conception, the unborn within the womb, the handicapped or mentally retarded, the elderly, all these are seen through God's eyes as His Sons and Daughters.

The life of Jesus teaches us the value of human life even in the midst of our greatest sinfulness. His compassion and forgiveness as the Good Shepherd were unbounded (Matt. 18:10-14), always including those who were in any way unwanted or outcasts (Matt. 9:12-13). His life manifested an unconditional and total respect for every life (Jn. 10:14-16). His strongest admonitions were directed at the self-righteous (Matt. 18:33). Thus we learn that imprisonment should not signal the end of dignity and that capital punishment is the epitome of self-righteousness. We also learn that the "unwanted child" syndrome is an abomination.

The death and resurrection of Jesus teach

us the extent to which we must commit ourselves — that we be willing to lay down our lives for one another. All people are called to share in the Kingdom, a reality which we as the Body of Christ must strive to create here on earth, a reality which must encompass the poor and the oppressed. We are to effect a resurrection for those living in death situations.

If this is the message of Christ's Incarnation, life, death and resurrection, then we as the Body of Christ must continue His message through our actions (Matt. 5:16). We, as the Church, are to oppose whatever wounds, weakens, dishonors or destroys the precious gift of life (Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World No. 27, 51). We, the people of God, have as our vocation to continue Christ's ministry in the service of life by protecting, healing and promoting human life in all its fullness (Jn. 10:10).

And so it is the purpose of this committee to actively affirm respect for life as stated in the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral



We as Catholic Christians are called to value human life at all stages. This includes recognizing and calling forth the wisdom of our elders.

Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, addressed to all mankind:

"For God, the Lord of life, has conferred on men the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life — a ministry which must be fulfilled in a manner which is worthy of man. Therefore from the moment of its conception, life must be guarded with the greatest care, while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes" (no. 51).

"Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia... whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, degrading working conditions... all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator" (no. 27).



Our voices must be heard in the medical community in urging the use of technology to support and sustain life whenever possible.