

9 DAYS FOR LIFE: THURSDAY, JANUARY 18 – FRIDAY, JANUARY 26
www.9daysforlife.com

Day One: Thursday, January 18, 2018

Intercession: May a culture of life grow ever stronger in our communities.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: From each tiny child waiting to be born, to people nearing death, all are precious and deserve our care and protection. Women and men suffering after abortion, individuals tempted to end their lives, expectant mothers facing challenging pregnancies, people pushed to the margins of society by a “throwaway culture,” and every other person—each “has a place in God’s heart from all eternity” (*Amoris laetitia*, 168).

As Pope Saint John Paul II reminds us in *The Gospel of Life*, we are asked not only to love and honor human life, but also “to work with perseverance and courage” to establish “a new culture of life, the fruit of the culture of truth and of love” (no 77).

Acts of Reparation (choose one):

- “Unplug” for some time praying in silence with a short reflection on this year’s Respect Life theme, “Be Not Afraid” (www.usccb.org/be-not-afraid).
- Use one of our Respect Life social media toolkits (www.usccb.org/prolifetools) to build up a culture of life on social media.
- Do you love your cup of tea or coffee? Fast from caffeine today, or try your coffee black.

One Step Further: Watching the news and reading the headlines, we may sometimes feel helpless seeing the heartbreaking lack of respect for human life. How do we respond to Pope Saint John Paul II’s invitation when our efforts to make a difference feel small? “**How to Build a Culture of Life**” (www.usccb.org/culture-of-life) briefly explains where to start.

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Day Two: Friday, January 19, 2018

Intercession: For the end to abortion.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: More women and girls consider abortion than we may realize. They are our relatives and friends, people who work with us or for us, married or unmarried. Even if someone identifies as being pro-life, the shock of an unexpected pregnancy, the devastation of a difficult prenatal diagnosis, shame, pressures, or fears may influence her to consider abortion.

If someone shared with you she was pregnant and hadn’t ruled out having an abortion, would you know how to respond in a loving way that is life-affirming for both her and her baby?

Learn about the four steps of the L.O.V.E. Approach™*: *Listen and Learn, Open Options, Vision and Value, and Extend and Empower* (www.usccb.org/l-o-v-e).

Acts of Reparation (choose one):

- Go to an abortion clinic and pray, or set aside an hour today to pray for those who are struggling with a decision of life or death for their unborn child.

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- Read “**What to Do When a Friend Is Considering Abortion**” (www.usccb.org/l-o-v-e), and spend some time reflecting on it. Would someone in a difficult pregnancy situation know she could turn to you for loving support?
- Donate needed items to a pregnancy care center, or volunteer an hour of your time at one. Find a center near you at www.heartbeatinternational.org/worldwide-directory.

One Step Further: Find out other simple tips on how to provide loving, life-affirming support for a friend who is unexpectedly pregnant: “**10 Ways to Support Her When She’s Unexpectedly Expecting**” (www.usccb.org/support-her).

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Day Three: Saturday, January 20, 2018

Intercession: For victims and survivors of human trafficking.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: Pope Francis calls for a renewed commitment to end human trafficking, which he aptly describes as “deplorable...cruel...criminal” (Angelus, 7/30/2017). International Labor Organization’s 2014 estimate placed the number of traffic victims — men, women, and children — at 21 million worldwide.

Those who are vulnerable are most at risk for being lured into situations where they are trafficked, particularly migrants and refugees. They face significant barriers such as language and adapting to a new culture, lack of support systems, and the burden of poverty. Easily tempted by false promises of traffickers, they often find themselves in forced labor situations with no means of escape.

When we meet others in our daily lives who have come from other lands, are we extending them the simple warmth of a smile and a welcome? Are we in tune to the red flags that might indicate trafficking in our own communities? Learn more about how you can fight trafficking under “One Step Further.”

Acts of Reparation (choose one):

- Contact a local service provider who assists victims and survivors of human trafficking to learn more about human trafficking in your community and how you can support their efforts. (If you don’t know who the local service provider is, ask your local Catholic Charities office.)
- Spend some time reflecting upon the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 2414.
- Use the USCCB Migration and Refugee Service’s National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month & Day of Prayer Toolkit www.usccb.org/about/anti-trafficking-program/upload/Anti-Trafficking-Toolkit-Final-2018-2.pdf to raise awareness about and encourage prayer and action to fight human trafficking.

One Step Further:

Would you know how to identify a potential trafficking situation? Learn more about human trafficking and the red flags through the USCCB’s Anti-Trafficking Program at <http://www.usccb.org/about/anti-trafficking-program/index.cfm>

Almost half of the reported victims of human trafficking in the U.S. in 2016 were foreign nationals. Consider bringing the Amistad Movement to your parish to help raise awareness about human trafficking among immigrant populations. www.usccb.org/about/anti-trafficking-program/amistad.cfm

If you suspect someone is a victim of human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline (888-3737-888) for immediate assistance. They can communicate in over 200 languages and provide immediate information, assistance, and local referrals for potential human trafficking situations.

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Day Four: Sunday, January 21, 2018

Intercession: May all people embrace the truth that every life is a good and perfect gift, and is worth living.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: Our culture is obsessed with perfection—a superficial perfection. Photos are edited, and social media sites depict seemingly perfect lives. God calls us to seek perfection, too. He does not call us, however, to perfection of appearance or abilities, but to perfection in love.

In “**A Perfect Gift**” (www.usccb.org/perfect-gift) one parent shares about the experience of raising a child with Down syndrome, contrasting it with what onlookers might perceive: “It’s like looking at a stained-glass window from the outside: The colors look dark, and you can’t quite make out the figures. From the inside, however, with the sun shining through it, the effect can be brilliant. From inside our family, love illuminates our life with Charlie.* What may seem dreary to others, perhaps even unbearable, is actually filled with beauty and color.”

May each of us experience the power of God’s transforming love, that our eyes may be opened to the incredible beauty of the people the Lord places in our lives.

Acts of Reparation (choose one):

- Pray the short prayer “**Every Life is Worth Living**” (www.usccb.org/worth-living), reflecting on how you can bring Christ’s love to others today.
- Read “**Supporting Families Who Receive a Prenatal Diagnosis**” (www.usccb.org/prenatal-diagnosis), then spend some time praying for babies who have been given an adverse prenatal diagnosis and for their families.
- We can sometimes forget how blessed we are to have many of our daily comforts. Give up sleeping on your pillow tonight.

One Step Further: Charlie’s mother shares in “A Perfect Gift” that when people say, “I could never handle a child with a disability,” she explains to them, “[Y]ou aren’t given *a* child with a disability. You are given *your* child with a disability. ... You are not called to ‘handle’ a disability. You are called to love a particular person, and caring for him or her grows out of that love. ... Our [family’s] hearts... have become larger [by caring for Charlie].”

She also talks about the “secret” that is the fundamental truth of our existence, which she and other parents of children with Down syndrome share. Find out what it is in “A Perfect Gift” (www.usccb.org/perfect-gift).

**Name changed for privacy.*

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Day Five: Monday, January 22, 2018

If you or someone you know is suffering after abortion, confidential non-judgmental help is available. Visit www.hopeafterabortion.org.

Intercession: May each person suffering from the loss of a child through abortion find hope & healing in Christ.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: Today, on this 45th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we consider the past four decades in which our society has legally permitted abortion. Since that tragic decision, many children’s lives have been lost, and many suffer that loss—often in silence. Yet God’s greatest desire is to forgive. No matter how far we have each strayed from his side, he says to us, “Don’t be afraid. Draw close to my heart.”

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*“In the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, also called confession, we meet the Lord, who wants to grant forgiveness and the grace to live a renewed life in him. ... We bishops and priests are eager to help you if you experience difficulty, hesitation, or uncertainty about approaching the Lord in this sacrament. ...we are ready to welcome you.”**

Let us run into the arms of Jesus, who is love and mercy.

Acts of Reparation (choose one):

- Go to confession today or this week. Before you go, look up St. Faustina and learn a little about the message of Divine Mercy that she shared during her life (www.usccb.org/divine-mercy).
- Do you know how to help women and men suffering after abortion? Consider the suggestions in “Bridges of Mercy for Post-Abortion Healing” (www.usccb.org/bridges-of-mercy).
- Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy (www.usccb.org/divine-mercy-chaplet) for those who are suffering the loss of a child through abortion, asking that they find healing and peace.

One Step Further:

If a friend confided in you tomorrow that she had an abortion, would you be able to respond in a way that brings her closer to healing? Learn what to do and say in “How to Talk to a Friend Who’s Had an Abortion” (www.usccb.org/friend-had-abortion).

Did You Know?

In the Catholic Church in the United States, January 22nd is designated as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the “Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children.” As Catholics, we are called to observe this day through the penitential practices of prayer, fasting, and/or giving alms.

More Information: www.usccb.org/january-22

*“God’s Gift of Forgiveness: Pastoral Exhortation on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation,” www.usccb.org/forgiveness.

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Day Six: Tuesday, January 23, 2018

Intercession: May those near the end of their lives receive medical care that respects their dignity and protects their lives.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: When Maggie’s active father suffered an accident that eventually led to his passing, he taught her that pain and loss of autonomy doesn’t diminish our human dignity, and that life—however much is left—is worth living.

As a 50-year-old wife and mother of three, Maggie needed this message when she was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Instead of giving up hope, she embraced her father’s legacy: “[M]y life is, always has been, and always will be, worth living.”

Meet Maggie in a **3-minute video** (www.goo.gl/SGF7rP), and read the brief article it inspired: “**Maggie’s Story: Living like Dad**” (www.usccb.org/maggies-story).

Acts of Reparation (choose one):

- Pray a decade of the Rosary (www.usccb.org/rosary) for your deceased friends and family, as well as those who have no one to pray for them.
- We look forward to eternal life by preparing now, in hope, for our passage from this life to the next. Spend some time prayerfully reflecting on “**Catholic Considerations for Our Earthly Passing**”

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(www.usccb.org/end-of-life-considerations). Several considerations are given as starting points for understanding and preparing for our earthly passing in a way that respects God's gift of human life.

- Read and reflect upon “Caring for Loved Ones at Life’s End” (www.usccb.org/endoflifecare). Ten suggestions anchored in unconditional respect for human life help readers know how to provide authentically compassionate care. (Supplemental information: www.goo.gl/Ji3n35)

One Step Further: Proponents of doctor-assisted suicide try to draw a sharp (and tragic) distinction between those with a mental illness who want to end their lives and those already nearing death who express the same wish. Although polls indicate the public is receptive to the general concept of assisted suicide, when people understand the associated dangers, they are less likely to support the practice.

Learn seven compelling reasons you can share for opposing assisted suicide: “**Top Reasons to Oppose Assisted Suicide**” (www.usccb.org/reasons-against-assisted-suicide).

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Day Seven: Wednesday, January 24, 2018

Intercession: May those who long for a child of their own be filled with trust in God’s loving plan.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: It can be very difficult and painful when the Lord doesn’t answer our prayers the way we hope. We may have many doubts and questions, wondering why we face the challenges that we do. Yet even though our suffering is often shrouded in a sense of mystery, we believe that the Lord loves us with great tenderness and compassion that is beyond our imagination. Knowing this, we can trust that “all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).

Acts of Reparation (choose one):

- Give up your favorite form (or all forms) of social media for the day. Spend some of the extra time meditating upon Romans 8:28 or another Scripture verse or passage.
- Learn how to pray the Angelus prayer and consider saying it every day for the next week— on awakening, at noon, or at 6 p.m. (or all three times). www.usccb.org/angelus
- Spend quality time with a family member or friend; offer to help them in some way.

One Step Further: “**Seven Considerations While Navigating Infertility**” (www.usccb.org/navigating-infertility) seeks to provide compassionate guidance that is both practical and informative for married couples who are walking on this road. Although geared to such couples, the article is also helpful for anyone to read, offering insight into the experience of infertility and giving awareness of the need for sensitivity in our relationships with those who may be affected.

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Day Eight: Thursday, January 25, 2018

Intercession: For an end to the use of the death penalty in our country.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: As Catholics, we believe and put our hope in a merciful and loving God. We are conscious of our own brokenness and need for redemption. Our Lord calls us to imitate him more perfectly by witnessing to the inherent dignity of every person, including those whose actions have been despicable. Our faith and hope is in the mercy of God who says to us, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Mt 5:7) and “I desire

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mercy, not sacrifice” (Mt 9:13). As Christians, we are called to oppose the culture of death by witnessing to something greater and more perfect: a gospel of life, hope and mercy.

Acts of Reparation (choose one):

- Do something kind for someone else without being asked or telling anyone. Pray for him or her while you do so.
- Smile. Ask God today for the grace to be extra joyful and share Christ’s love with those who need encouragement the most today.
- Read about the life of a modern saint. You might be surprised by how much you have in common with him or her.

One Step Further: For some people who are committed to upholding the sanctity of human life, the death penalty can present a challenge. Properly understood, however, Catholic teaching against the death penalty is both persuasive and eminently pro-life. Learn about the death penalty within the context of respect for God’s gift of human life in **“Death Penalty: Catholic Q & A”** (www.usccb.org/death-penalty-faq).

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Day Nine: Friday, January 26, 2018

Intercession: For God’s peace to fill the hearts of all who travel upon the path of adoption.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us to “hold fast to the hope that lies before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm” (Heb 6:18-19). We pray that all who are involved in the adoption process would be filled with the hope of Christ and “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7). We also remember that we too can cling fast to this anchor of hope, for we have received “a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:15). May our loving Father envelop each of us in his love today and open our eyes in faith that we may see and rejoice in his love.

Acts of Reparation (choose one):

- Make an act of faith, hope, or love (www.usccb.org/faith-hope-love).
- Fast from snacking today. Eat three meals only.
- In **“An Adoption Love Story,”** Jenny* shares her and her husband’s story of adopting their son, Andrew. Read about some of the challenges, concerns, and joys on their journey at www.usccb.org/adoption-love-story, and spend some extra time in prayer for all who are involved in the adoption process.

One Step Further:

“Accompanying Expectant Mothers Considering Adoption” suggests nine ways to offer ongoing support to a woman who is considering placing her unborn child for adoption (www.usccb.org/women-considering-adoption). Many of the tips given are also helpful for supporting a friend who is experiencing a challenging unexpected pregnancy, even if adoption has not been brought up.

Supplemental reference information regarding adoption can be found at www.usccb.org/adoption-resources.

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