

THE MEANING OF LIFE

“We must all care for life, cherish life, with tenderness, warmth ... caring for life from the beginning to the end.” -Pope Francis

OVERVIEW

We are created to know, love, and serve God, our Heavenly Father, and to love each human being on a deep level. We encounter the Lord through his Word, the Sacraments, and through a life of community.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Sacredness of Life

Respect for human life, the unborn, the elderly, the poor, the disabled, and the marginalized, is often lost and forgotten amid the selfish desires of today's society where “it's all about me.”

- How do we turn selfishness to selflessness?
- How do we cherish and demonstrate respect for human life in all its stages?
- What leads people to fail to cherish the lives of other human beings?
- What can we do as individuals, as a family, and as a Church to help society value human life in all its stages?

The death penalty ends an offender's opportunity for conversion and using violence to discourage violence serves no good purpose and contributes to a culture of death. God can and does transform their lives.

- How do we get past feelings of anger, hurt and wanting retribution in the form of the death penalty to embrace forgiveness?
- How can we influence and change the hearts of those who espouse a philosophy of an “eye for an eye”?

A new human being comes into existence at conception and in the Gospel of Life, Blessed John Paul II writes “Life is always good...”

- How do we respond to those who defend and support abortion using slogans such as “keep your laws off my body” and “mind your own uterus”?
- How could a Catholic Christian respond when a friend or family member is experiencing an unwanted pregnancy?
- How could we respond as a community?, as a ministry?, as a church?

“To trust in God's timing for our passing into eternity requires courage, humility, and sometimes great spiritual strength.” Euthanasia is the hastening of death for those who are terminally ill.

- What are ways we can help those who are suffering from terminal illness or a chronic condition to recover their joy of life and appreciate the gift of each day?
- How can we address those who proclaim “death with dignity” with the message that life is dignity?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Life of the Church

In Scripture God speaks to us. "The words of Sacred Scripture are unlike any other texts we will ever hear, for they not only give us information, they are the vehicle God uses to reveal himself to us, the means by which we come to know the depth of God's love for us and the responsibilities entailed by being Christ's followers, members of his Body." (USCCB)

- Do we take the time to truly savor the Living Word of God? In what ways do we do this? How can we improve our efforts?
- How do we listen so that we are open to hearing the voice of God?

If people truly understood and believed that God was present at Mass in in the form of the Eucharist one would think that the pews would be full at every service. Yet they are not.

- What do people see as barriers to or more important priorities than attending Mass?
- What can be done to engage those who have fallen away from attending Mass to come back?
- How do we experience the Real Presence in the form of Holy Eucharist?
- How do we experience this through the other Sacraments of the Church?

A Life of Faith

Those who are single are called into service, answering the call "Whom shall I send?" with "Send me!" God gives each person in their unique vocation the opportunity to live a full and God centered life, fulfilling the call to pray, to love God, to live Gospel values and to serve others.

- What opportunities are available for those called to single life to serve the Church?

Marriage is a blessing and a gift from God.

- How can the grace of the Sacrament of Marriage help to nourish and sustain couples in difficult times?
- In what ways can Marriage be a gift to other people and a benefit to society?

In order to pass on to our children the riches and understanding of our Catholic faith, parents are called to be evangelizers to their children and to be involved in teaching the faith to them.

- How is this accomplished?
- What examples do/should parents set for children for attending Mass, for being engaged and involved in the faith and sacramental life of their children?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A Life of Faith

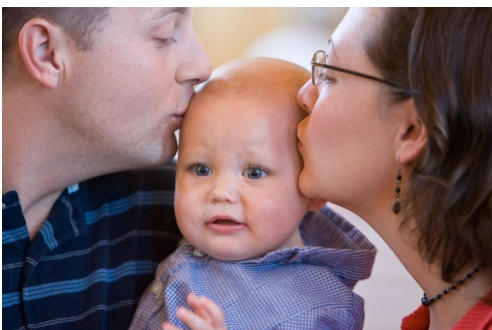
St. Francis said “Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words.”

- How do we demonstrate that we are living Gospel values and that we are created to know, love, and serve God?
- What actions demonstrate that we love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul?
- In what ways do we show that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life?
- What attitudes and practices show that our lives are in harmony with God? In harmony with other people?

A Life of Community

- What does it mean to live in community with others? How do we do this?
- Why is it important that we live in community with one another?
- What does it feel like to be separated from community?
- In what ways can we/do we show opposition to racism, bigotry, and injustice?
- What message do we send when we don’t say something, take a stand, or take action?
- What can you do to affirm the sacredness of all persons, especially the unborn?
- How does the Church help us lead a good and responsible life?
- What is it in life that matters most to me?
- Name a quality in yourself that is of God’s image.
- How do we learn the difference between right and wrong?

*“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment”
Matthew 22: 37-38*



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FROM BISHOP NOONAN

All Human Life is Precious, January 22, 2013

I write as a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church in the role of teacher. In that role, I discuss the Roe v. Wade decision by the United States Supreme Court. On this decision, the conversation for the Catholic Church does not start with rights but with belief. We believe in God, the creator of all life, and because of this, life is sacred from conception to natural death. Mary, the mother of Jesus, showed us the sacredness of life when she accepted the Gift of Jesus. We believe that Christ came not so that life would be taken away but so that life would be restored through, with and in God. As the mother in 2 Maccabees 7:1,22,23 eloquently speaks: “It was not I who gave you the breath of life, nor was it I who set in order the elements of which each of you is composed...it is the Creator of the universe Who shapes each man’s beginning, as He brings about the origin of everything.

Belief in the sacredness of human life was disregarded forty years ago with the Roe v Wade decision by the United States Supreme Court. With this decision, the popular view of human life was changed leaving behind an erosion in the respect for life. Human life became a throw-away of our society. All life, including the life of an unborn child, is devalued, less important.

We have witnessed this erosion in the commercialization and promotion of abortion; when the consent of fathers and of parents of minors is ignored or outlawed; with the rising demand for hastening the deaths of those who are ill, mentally or physically challenged, or aged who require our care and attention; in an alarming culture of death promoted through the plethora of technological options, such as television and radio programs and games; in the increase of human trafficking where Florida now ranks #3 in this horrendous disregard of the human person; and in the effects of cyber-bullying, where its human destruction scars our Central Florida community.

“The Law of God, written on the heart of every person, continues to demand of us the highest regard for human life and human dignity.”

It saddens me that during these last forty years, we have wandered in the desert, turning away from God. We have discarded God’s infinite love by discarding each other, even the most vulnerable among us, the unborn. I pray that we will get rid of all bitterness, all passion and anger, harsh words, slander, and malice of every kind. In place of these, may we return to God, the Source of all patience and encouragement, the Source of forgiveness. Human dignity, then, is the issue. It is not a matter of one religious body imposing its morality on another person. Nor is it an issue of a person’s right to choose. The Law of God, written on the heart of every person, continues to demand of us the highest regard for human life and human dignity.

These conditions demand that all people of good will rise in concerted action to defend the right of each person to his/her life; a right that is God-given and therefore a right that is both inalienable and inviolable. Abortion, sterilization, euthanasia, criminal violence, private and public plundering, individual and general lawlessness, are but the responses of a society which is unable to face the demands of an advanced and secularized civilization and which is unwilling to turn once again to God.

You are a precious gift of God. How deficit our world would be without you. How deficit our world is without those unborn who have been denied life at our hands.

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FROM BISHOP NOONAN

Death Penalty Robs Dignity, June 2013

*Bless those who persecute you,
bless and do not curse them.
Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep.
Have the same regard for one another;
do not be haughty but associate with the lowly;
do not be wise in your own estimation.
Romans 12:14-16*

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Last week we held a prayer service to pray for victims and the perpetrators of an horrific act, the killing of another human person. We took the opportunity to pray on the eve of the execution of Mr. Elmer Carroll, a perpetrator of the crime of murder. We also came to pray for Christine McGowan, the 10 year old girl, who lived in Apopka, whom Mr. Carroll murdered.

We gathered to pray for two families, first the victims' families and for the victims, those whose lives were tragically taken. We prayed for their parents, brothers, sisters and friends who have been left behind at the death of their loved ones. Nothing we can do can return their loved ones, but we pray that God may bring healing and forgiveness to them. We came together to pray for the perpetrator, Mr. Elmer Carroll, and for his family. We prayed that Mr. Carroll may seek God's forgiveness and compassion. We prayed for his family, who in a very real way, have already lost a loved one.

We also gathered to pray for an end to the death penalty. Blessed Pope John Paul II wrote, "The Gospel of Life" in 1995. In that encyclical, he affirms that direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral. He also states that the punishment should offer the offender an incentive and help to change his or her behavior and be rehabilitated. If society is able to contain a person who has committed a crime, then there is really no need to put this person to death. This is especially true if the person is able to convert while his time in prison. When I visited the prison to speak with those convicted of crime, I remember a young man convicted of murder say to me that he was, "ever so grateful to be able to allow the grace of God into his life; rather than die an unrepentant sinner."

When I was a principal, one of our students, a young girl, was killed. It was senseless. It was tragic and shocking. The child's family, friends, children of the school, faculty, staff, the parish community and so many others were filled with sorrow and pain. Yet in the midst of all of this suffering, we garnered enough strength in the Lord to forgive. In our turning to God, our broken hearts began to mend in true and lasting healing.

Finally, we prayed for our legislators, our governor and our judges that they may see the death penalty as a destructive tool robbing individuals and their families of their God-given dignity.

During the month of June, two more executions are scheduled in the state of Florida. May we extend the same regard to one another. May we be instruments of conversion and forgiveness in our communities.

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FROM BISHOP NOONAN

Respect Life, January 2012

A child is born to us; a son is given us. We have just concluded our Christmas season and the Good News of the angels heralded to the shepherds is still ringing in our ears. This precious gift of life, human in flesh, divine in nature, is given to us so that we might have everlasting life. Not one of us would deny the coming of Jesus. Not one of us would advocate for any law that might prevent His coming.

So, we find ourselves in January, a month where the number 22 seems to stand out as a red flag day for me. January 22 is the thirty-eighth anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, the landmark decision of the United States Supreme Court which legally allowed abortions to occur. Since 1973, we have advocated for the death of the unborn. The lives of these children of God would be spared because of economic difficulty, despair, suffering, self-pride or greed. I wonder how we have come to this and I think about it in the context of the birth of Jesus. What would we have missed if Mary had chosen against the pregnancy of the precious Child for which we just celebrated His birth and have done so for 2011 years?

Some of you may say, “Well, that was different.” How so? The life of a child is God-given. Each child born is a gift to us and a blessing in whatever way he/she develops and brings forth the power of God. I grieve over even one untimely death of one of God’s creations, a unique and irreplaceable human being.

“The life of a child is God-given. Each child born is a gift to us and a blessing in whatever way he/she develops and brings forth the power of God.”

There are people, both men and women, who suffer from guilt and separation from the Church because of participation in an abortion at some point in their life. Healing and God’s love, mercy and compassion are there for those who seek reconciliation for what one may feel is an “unforgiveable sin.” Our Diocesan Office of Advocacy and Justice offers Project Rachel and Rachel’s Vineyard, a confidential process for healing and reconciliation through nationally recognized post-abortion programs approved by the Catholic Church.

Pope Benedict XVI said, “The fundamental human right, the presupposition of every other right, is the right to life itself. This is true of life from the moment of conception until its natural end. Abortion, consequently, cannot be a human right—it is the very opposite.”

I ask that you pray for each of us as we lead others to advocate for life in all stages. For information on Project Rachel, Rachel’s Vineyard call the Office of Advocacy and Justice at 407-246-4819. My sisters and brothers, during this new year, may we remain joyous as God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.

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SUNDAY MASS HOMILY POINTS - CYCLE C

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 1-4; 4:14-21: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor... proclaim liberty to captives...recovery of sight to the blind...let the oppressed go free.”

- Life finds its meaning in recognizing our share in Christ’s mission; a mission rooted in love for God and neighbor.

Fifth Sunday of Easter

John 13:31-33a, 34-35: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”

- The gift of new life given to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus, when truly lived well, is exemplified by the love we show one another.

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 10:25-37: “You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart...being...strength...and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

- Love is defined in the realm of relationship. Embracing our common humanity and connecting with each other; recognizing “who is my neighbor?” and living in service provides purpose and meaning.

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MEDIA RESOURCES FROM THE BISHOP GRADY MEMORIAL LIBRARY

To reserve resources from the Bishop Grady Memorial Library, contact BGML@orlandodiocese.org, call 407-246-4895, or visit the website at: www.orlandodiocese.org/ministries-offices/bishop-grady-memorial-library

Respect for Life

- DVD-0444 Live from the Womb: Baby Steps
- CD-0133 The Earth Is the Lord's: Catholic Theology of Creation, Ecology and the Environment

Eucharist

- DVD-0676 Feeding Hungry Hearts: Celebrating the Eucharist
- DVD-0613 Eucharist (Fr. Robert Barron)

Sacraments

- DVD-0345 The Sacrament of ..., Past and Present (DVD for each Sacrament)
- DVD-0389 Understanding the Sacraments

Bible

- DVD-039 Threshold to God's Word, an Invitation to Experience the Bible
- DVD-0672A-I The Great Adventure Bible Study series

Jesus

- DVD-0299 Jesus the Christ, a Visual Meditation
- DVD-0469 Portrait of a Radical-the Jesus Movement

Vocation

- DVD-0423 Vocaré
- DVD-0160 Fishers of Men

Marriage/Family

- DVD-0664A & B Marriage: Unique for a Reason series
- DVD-0797 Blessed Is Marriage: A Guide to the Beatitudes for Catholic Couples

Community

- DVD-0546 Questions of the Soul
- DVD-0795 Incarnation: Keeping God in the Flesh

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SAINTS AND PRAYERS

St. Catherine of Sweden (patron saint of protection against abortion and miscarriage) Feast day March 22

St. Catherine is the fourth child of Saint Bridget of Sweden. At the time of her death St. Catherine was head of the convent of Wadstena, founded by her mother; hence the name, Catherine Vastanensis, by which she is occasionally called.

At the age of seven she was sent to the abbess of the convent of Riseberg to be educated and soon showed, like her mother, a desire for a life of self-mortification and devotion to spiritual things.

At the command of her father, when about thirteen or fourteen years old, she married a noble of German descent, Eggart von K rnen. She at once persuaded her husband, who was a very religious man, to join her in a vow of chastity. Both lived in a state of virginity and devoted themselves to the exercise of Christian perfection and active charity.

In spite of her deep love for her husband, Catherine accompanied her mother to Rome, where St. Bridget went in 1349. Soon after her arrival in that city Catherine received news of the death of her husband in Sweden. She now lived constantly with her mother, took an active part in St. Bridget's fruitful labors, and zealously imitated her mother's ascetic life.

Although the distinguished and beautiful young widow was surrounded by suitors, she steadily refused all offers of marriage. In 1372 St. Catherine and her brother, Birger, accompanied their mother on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; after their return to Rome St. Catherine was with her mother in the latter's last illness and death.

Catherine died on March 24, 1381, mourned like her mother by the whole of Sweden. In 1484 Innocent VIII gave permission for her veneration as a saint and her feast was assigned to March 22 in the Roman martyrology.

Catherine wrote a devotional work entitled "Consolation of the Soul" (Sielinna Troest), largely composed of citations from the Scriptures and from early religious books; no copy is known to exist. Generally she is represented with a hind at her side, which is said to have come to her aid when unchaste youths sought to ensnare her.

(source: *New Advent Website*)

Blessed Laura Vicuna (patron saint of abuse victims, Argentina, incest victims, loss of parents, and martyrs) Feast day: January 22

Laura was the first child born on April 5, 1891 to Senora Mercedes Pino and Jose Domingo Vicuna, a soldier who belonged to a noble Chilean family. A civil war broke out and Senor Vicuna had to flee his country. A few days after the birth of the second child Julia Amanda, Senor Vicun, worn out physically and mentally, died, leaving his wife and children alone. Seeing that she could not survive, she decided to leave the country.

She finally found work at a large "hacienda" owned by Senor Manuel Mora. He was a typical Argentine "gaucho", a dreamy Latin lover and a shady character. Senora Mercedes let her be won over by his promises of help, and accepted his protection. His financial support would allow her to enroll her two girls as pupils in the Salesian Sisters' school in Junin, but at what price!



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SAINTS AND PRAYERS

Blessed Laura Vicuna continued

Laura was very happy living under the serene guidance of the young missionary Sisters. She discovered God, His love, and allowed herself to be surrounded by it. God's love stimulates her to love in return. Thus Laura made herself all to all, helping them in any way she could. She was a leader and everyone's friend. Laura accepted God's love. Laura was fascinated by the ideal of the Sisters and secretly hoped to consecrate herself to God in the service of her brothers and sisters. "I wish Mamma would know you better and be happy", she often prayed before the tabernacle.

Laura was distressed about her mother's situation with Senor Mora; her mother was indeed far away from God and Senor Mora was the cause. The struggle for living and providing for her daughters had wearied her. In a moment of stress and discouragement, she had given in to his demands. But Laura would do her best to give her mamma God's friendship once again. Love is stronger than death, love creates and maintains life. Deeply believing this, Laura said to the Lord: "I offer you my life for that of my mother". The winter of 1903 at Junin was extremely severe, with persistent rain and dampness. Laura became weaker with each passing day; she was wasting away. Although her mother took her home to Quilquihue where the climate was more pleasant and helpful, there was no improvement in her health. Laura knew she would not recover.

God had accepted her offering-her self-immolation. Senora Mercedes remained day and night at her bedside, surrounding her with every care and attention. Laura kept looking at her tenderly. Now it was time to reveal her secret. "Mamma, I'm dying, but I'm happy to offer my life for you. I asked Our Lord for this". Senora Mercedes was appalled. She fell on her knees sobbing. She understood everything in a flash. "Laura, my daughter, please forgive me...O dear God, please forgive my life of sin... Yes, I will start again." Laura's face was serene and at peace.

St. Raymond Nonnatus (patron saint of childbirth, midwives, children and pregnant women) Feast day: August 31

St. Raymond was born in 1200 or 1204 at Portello in the Diocese of Urgel in Catalonia and died at Cardona, August 31, 1240. He was delivered by caesarean operation when his mother died in childbirth, hence his name non natus (not born). Of noble but poor family, he showed early traits of piety and great talent. His father ordered him to tend a farm, but later gave him permission to take the habit with the Mercedarians at Barcelona, at the hands of the founder, St. Peter Nolasco.

Raymond made such progress in the religious life that he was soon considered worthy to succeed his master in the office of ransomer. He was sent to Algiers and liberated many captives. When money failed he gave himself as hostage. He was zealous in teaching the Christian religion and made many converts, which embittered the Mohammedan authorities. Raymond was subjected to all kinds of indignities and cruelty, was made to run the gauntlet, and was at last sentenced to impalement.

The hope of a greater sum of money as ransom caused the governor to commute the sentence into imprisonment. To prevent him from preaching Christ, his lips were pierced with a redhot iron and closed with a padlock. After his arrival in Spain, in 1239, he was made a cardinal by Gregory IX. In the next year he was called to Rome by the pope, but came only as far as Cardona about six miles from Barcelona, where he died.

His body was brought to the chapel of St. Nicholas near his old farm. In 1657 his name was placed in the Roman martyrology by Alexander VII. He is invoked by women in labor and by persons falsely accused.



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SAINTS AND PRAYERS

Respect Life Prayers

Loving God, Creator of all, we recognize that life is a gift from you.
Open our hearts to your Holy Spirit
and renew in us a deep respect for all persons:
the family, the unborn, the young, the adult,
the sick, the disabled, the abused, the imprisoned,
the aged, the dying, the homeless, the unemployed
and the oppressed in any way.

Bless all of us and instill in us a deep
love for your gifts of life.

Through the intercession of Mary, Mother and Virgin,
may all our words and actions foster
reverence for human life.

May we be true witnesses to the truth that all life is
precious and has sublime dignity.
Lead our nation and our world to this understanding
so that we may be a people dedicated to the protection
of all your sons and daughters.

We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ,
the Word who became flesh and lived among us.

Amen.

Written by Father Eamon Tobin

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SAINTS AND PRAYERS

Respect Life Prayers

In the circumstances of my conception and birth,
of my parents, of my family,
of all whosoever care for me or did me
harm in all the years that began the journey of my life.
God who calls by name works all together for my good.
I choose life.

I accept God's gift of life around me,
the sacred treasure of each human life
whether sister, brother, friend or stranger;
however whole or broken, small or great,
saint or sinner, rich or poor, ill or well, ally or enemy, or indifferent.
Each is crafted in God's image, to each is offered
Christ's redemption, in each moves the spirits blessing.
I choose life.

I accept God's gift of life in my times,
in infant's cry, in childhood's wonder
in trials of teen years and embrace of youth,
in maturity's accomplishments and failures,
in waning day's and night's negotiations.
Among the creatures with the breath of life within them,
God has placed the timeless in the human heart,
but not the reach to grasp or measure it.
I choose life.

I accept God's gift of life in my dying,
in God's hands the shaping of the manner
by God's clock the counting of the hour.
May God who lays me down uphold me.
May Christ along the way companion me.
May spirit lift, and light billow me into the Resurrection.
God is life, and this I choose.

In the name of the One God, ever living and life giving,
faithful and true, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

By Fr. Richard Meredith, Diocese of Owensboro, Life Promise Prayer © 2010 Parish Social Ministry Department of Catholic Charities Diocese of Owensboro. Used with permission.

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DOCUMENTS AND WEBSITES

USCCB [Search for these titles at www.usccb.org.](http://www.usccb.org)

- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Living the Gospel: A Challenge to American Catholics, A Statement of the Catholic Bishops of the United States (also available in Spanish)
- Made in the Image of God
- USCCB Respect Life Program (resources available in Spanish)
- Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching (also available in Spanish)
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Teaching the Spirit of Mission Ad Gentes
- Human Life and Dignity
- Catholic Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty
- Human Life and Dignity, Abortion
- Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life
- Propositions on the Dignity and Rights of the Human Person (also available in Spanish)
- Fact Sheet: Respect for Unborn Human Life: The Church’s Constant Teaching (also available in Spanish)
- Abortion and Catholic Social Teaching by Rev. Thomas D. Williams, L.C., 2007
- Abortion and Breast Cancer: The Link that won’t Go Away by Angela Lanfranchi, M.D., 2007 (also available in Spanish)
- Human Life and Dignity, End of Life Issues
- Human Life and Dignity, Assisted Suicide
- Euthanasia
- Evangelization and Social Sin
- Documentation on the Right to Life and Abortion
- Go and Make Disciples, A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States (also available in Spanish)

Other Resources

End of Life Healthcare, Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops

www.flaccb.org/healthcare/endoflife/index.php

Catholic Living Will and Other End of Life Resources, Office of Advocacy and Justice

www.orlandodiocese.org/images/stories/advocacy_justice/downloads/life/livingwillformENGLISH.pdf

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VATICAN DOCUMENTS

Search for these titles at www.vatican.va

- Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (also available in Spanish)
- Pope John Paul II’s Encyclical Gospel of Life
- Humanae Vitae (On Human Life, Pope Paul VI) (also available in Spanish)
- Centesimus Annus (On the Hundredth Year of Rerum Novarum, Pope John Paul II) (also available in Spanish)
- On Social Concern (Pope John Paul II) (also available in Spanish)
- Charity in Truth (Pope Benedict XVI) (also available in Spanish)
- Deus Caritas Est (Pope Benedict XVI) (also available in Spanish)
- Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (also available in Spanish)

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THE MEANING OF LIFE: SCRIPT

“We must all care for life, cherish life, with tenderness, warmth ... caring for life from the beginning to the end. --Pope Francis

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.”
Jeremiah 1:5*

God created life. Human life is sacred because it comes from God. It is sacred from the first moment of existence. Human life begins at conception and continues until natural death. Starting with the tiniest embryo to our last moment of life, all life is equal in the eyes of God. This is life, developing, growing, always changing and always loved by God.

You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. _Matthew, 22:37-38

We are created to know, love and serve God our heavenly father and to love each human being on a deep level. Do you know God? Do you want to know God better? Seek God in his Living Word – the Bible and ask God for guidance and for the faith to believe in him and trust in him. Also seek God in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Through the Eucharist those who live from the life of Christ are fed and strengthened.

“for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” Matthew 26:28

This covenant is based on God’s great love for his people and we are called to love others in the same way. When we open our hearts to God’s love, God shows us the way. In fact, God is the Way... the Way, the Truth and the Life.

“Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:5-6

Sin is losing our way because it separates us from God and separates us from the source of life. Sin brings disharmony and disunity into our lives. Jesus Christ reconciles us to our creator. His death and resurrection redeemed us. Whatever we have done in our past and however we might feel that we don’t measure up to other people, God loves us as we are. We are all God’s children.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew, 22: 39

A life in harmony with God is also in harmony with other people. Each of us is unique and unrepeatable in our individuality. Created to have a social nature, the good of each individual is related to the common good. God exists in community – the Holy Trinity, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are created by God to be physical and spiritual. The journey of life is a search for harmony and wholeness which leads us to community.

Families are a community, a Domestic Church. The love in a family mirrors the loving relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It’s where children learn about God. Those who are single are also called into community by developing friendships for the purpose of helping others and supporting each other in faith. We are also called to be one human family since we all have the same origin in the one creative love of God. Christians are called to love all people and oppose racism, and all forms of bigotry and injustice.

The Church, in Christ, is like a sacrament - a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all men. The Church gathers people from every nation, from all cultures and languages; the Church is the sign and instrument of the full realization of the unity yet to come.