



HOMILY HELPS

HOMILY HELPS: MOVED BY MERCY RESPECT LIFE MONTH



WE ARE
CALLED
TO SHOW
MERCY
BECAUSE
MERCY HAS
FIRST BEEN
SHOWN TO
US.

POPE FRANCIS

The Respect Life Program, sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, started in 1972 and begins anew each October—the month set aside by the U.S. bishops as “Respect Life Month.”

The program promotes respect for human life in light of our intrinsic dignity as having been created in God’s image and likeness and called to an eternal destiny with him.

New materials are designed each year to assist those in various roles within the Church to help Catholics understand, value, and become engaged with supporting the dignity of every person, especially by cherishing God’s gift of life.

Download or order materials at www.usccb.org/respectlife!

SUGGESTED OBSERVANCE:

Respect Life Sunday, October 2, 2016
Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9
Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14
Gospel Acclamation: 1 Peter 1:25
Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

I. Our Troubled World

A. In today’s First Reading, we hear a voice crying out to God with questions many of us can relate to: “How long, O LORD? I cry for help but you do not listen! ...Why do you let me see ruin; why must I look at misery?” We see and experience suffering in our own lives and in the world.

- **Example A:** In 2015, 48% of those who died under Oregon’s assisted suicide law cited being a “burden” on family, friends, or caregivers as a reason for their suicide.¹
- **Example B:** “We often assume parenthood happens easily after ‘I do,’ but for many married couples, it does not. For some, the joy of conception never happens. Others suffer repeated miscarriages” or secondary infertility.²
- **Example C:** [Give examples from relevant news headlines.]

B. Sin also causes suffering. God creates us in his image and likeness and calls us to union with him now and for eternity. When we sin against others, we are treating them contrary to their God-given dignity and are also acting against our own nature.

II. Reason for Hope

- A. We have all sinned against each other. But God expresses his love for each of us through his limitless mercy, revealed in Jesus' death on the Cross.
- B. His mercy does not mean indifferently overlooking our sins, leaving us in our sinful ways and the misery they bear. Rather, he offers mercy that we must actively choose to receive by repenting and resolving to amend our lives.
- C. Though unworthy, we are shown forgiveness and love by God himself. This love moves our hearts with gratitude and joy.

III. Agents of Mercy

- A. Receiving God's mercy helps us draw closer to him and become more like him.
- B. Christ asks us to be his hands and feet in a world filled with pain and suffering, tragedy and injustice.
- C. We will face challenges, but the Lord equips those whom he calls. The Second Reading reminds us that "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love... So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord... but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God" (2 Timothy 1:6-8).
- D. The Lord has also given us a roadmap—the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy—noting, "whatever you [do] for one of these least brothers of mine, you [do] for me" (Matthew 25:40). During his visit to the U.S., Pope Francis reiterated this, saying, "your care for one another is care for Jesus himself."³

EXAMPLES

(The Works of Mercy and other quick reference information is provided in the section of this resource guide entitled "Simple Supplements.")

- **Example A:** Tens of millions of lives in this nation have been directly touched by abortion. If a friend shares a previous abortion experience, express your sympathy for their loss.

If they seem to need help, assure them of God's unconditional love, and encourage them to seek healing and peace. Explain that the Church's Project Rachel Ministry for post-abortion healing can help, and refer them to www.HopeAfterAbortion.org.

- **Example B:** In a society that emphasizes productivity, pleasure, and independence, it is all the more important to accompany those nearing the end of life. We need to remind them they are not alone, they are loved, and the value of their lives is not dependent upon anything transient.
- **Example C:** "Our distorted relationship with God has infected our relationship with the earth, evidenced by pollution, lack of clean water, toxic waste, and immense material waste. ... What the Holy Father often calls a 'culture of waste' or a 'throwaway culture' even goes so far as to see and treat human life as disposable."⁴

We need to cultivate within ourselves "an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next."⁵ With this attitude, as we draw closer to God and to each other, we will become more attuned to God's call.

¹ USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, Fact Sheet, "Assisted Suicide Laws in Oregon and Washington: What Safeguards?" www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/assisted-suicide/to-live-each-day/upload/Oregon-and-Washing-euthanasia-2013.pdf, accessed April 15, 2016.

² USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, *Seven Considerations While Navigating Infertility*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016).

³ Pope Francis, *Greeting to the Organizers, Volunteers and Benefactors of the World Meeting of Families*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015).

⁴ USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, *Serene Attentiveness to God's Creation*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016).

⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), no. 226.

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