

# ST. BRIDGET CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

**BAPTISM OF THE LORD**  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 9

**SECOND SUNDAY OF  
ORDINARY TIME**  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 16  
2022



## From the pastor...

This church bulletin covers the weekends of January 9, the Baptism of the Lord, and January 16, the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time.

**The Baptism of the Lord** is not like our baptism that cleanse us of original sin. Jesus never sinned. His baptism was one of commitment to begin and complete his mission - to preach the good news.

**On the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time** the gospel is the Wedding at Cana. After college, University of Michigan quarterback and Heisman Trophy Tom Harmon became a pilot. One day his plane crashed deep in a South American jungle. Miraculously, he survived. Describing his experience, he wrote, "I said at least a million 'Hail Mary's' during my trek out. In fact, as I walked through the jungle, trying to find my way out, I used to yell 'Hail Mary's' at the top of my voice, hoping that someone would hear me and at the same time I would be praying."

How important a role does Mary, Jesus' mother, play in my spiritual life? God could not be everywhere, so he made mothers. JEWISH PROVERB

ACTION 2000, Mark Link, S.J.

## January Prayer Requests

CLIP AND SAVE

(As a parish we join our prayers together for the following requests throughout January)

- + For continued strength for our exhausted healthcare workers and that we can all work together to get control of this pandemic.
- + That the Holy Spirit go before us to prepare the hearts of our youth who will be preparing for and receiving the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation this spring.
- + That we may resume fully to Jail Ministry to bring the Good News to those who desperately need to hear it.

## Personal THANK YOU!

Please accept my public THANK YOU for all that you shared with me this Christmas season. Your well wishes, cards, food, and personal greetings given to me are deeply appreciated. I am blessed beyond measure. God bless you. Fr. Jerry Harris

## Fr. Harris away...

I will be away from January 6 and returning the evening of January 11. Getting a little rest and relaxation in. Fr. Harris

### Church Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Friday: 9:00 a.m. - Noon  
Closed Saturday and Sunday

**Phone** 715.425.1870

**Pastoral Emergency**

715.869.6122

[www.saintbridgets.org](http://www.saintbridgets.org)

### Church Building hours:

Monday - Thursday: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Friday: 9:00 a.m. - Noon.  
Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Sunday: 9:00 a.m. - Noon

**WEEKLY MASSES AND MASS INTENTIONS  
JANUARY 9 - JANUARY 15**

<b>Sunday, Jan. 9</b>	<b>9:30 a.m.</b> <i>Jim Deiss +</i> <b>11:00 a.m.</b> <i>Churches of St. Bridget and St. Mary's</i>
<b>Monday, Jan. 10</b>	<b>8:00 a.m.</b> Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion
<b>Tuesday, Jan. 11</b>	<b>5:15 p.m.</b> <i>Joe, Gene and Irene Huppert +</i>
<b>Wednesday, Jan. 12</b>	<b>9:00 a.m.</b> <i>Dolores Pechacek +</i>
<b>Thursday, Jan. 13</b>	<b>5:15 p.m.</b> Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion
<b>Friday, Jan. 14</b>	<b>8:00 a.m.</b> <i>John Moelter +</i>
<b>*Saturday, Jan. 15</b>	<b>5:00 p.m.</b> <i>Joe and Rose Cobian +</i>

\*Mass is live-streamed on our YouTube Channel. Links can be found on our Facebook page and website.

**WEEKLY MASSES AND MASS INTENTIONS  
JANUARY 16 - JANUARY 22**

<b>Sunday, Jan. 16</b>	<b>9:30 a.m.</b> <i>Roman and Dolores Pechacek +</i> <b>11:00 a.m.</b> <i>Roger Bruggeman +</i>
<b>Monday, Jan. 17</b>	<b>8:00 a.m.</b> Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion
<b>Tuesday, Jan. 18</b>	<b>5:15 p.m.</b> <i>Don Schneider +</i>
<b>Wednesday, Jan. 19</b>	<b>9:00 a.m.</b> <i>John Fitzenberger +</i>
<b>Thursday, Jan. 20</b>	<b>5:15 p.m.</b> Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion
<b>Friday, Jan. 21</b>	<b>8:00 a.m.</b> <i>Jim Schmidt +</i>
<b>*Saturday, Jan. 22</b>	<b>4:00 - 4:30 p.m.</b> Confession (or by appointment) <b>5:00 p.m.</b> <i>Sylvester and Joan Glisczinski +</i>

\*Mass is live-streamed on our YouTube Channel. Links can be found on our Facebook page and website.

**Death of Fr. Rich Rhinehart's Father**

Fr. Rich notified us that his father, Robert, died on December 27, 2021. He requests prayers for his dad, his mother and himself. May his father rest in peace. AMEN!

Fr. Rich Rhinehart's Address:  
PO Box 8, Three Lakes, WI 54562

**DAILY WORD FOR  
JANUARY 10 - JANUARY 16**

Monday, Jan. 10	1 Sm 1:1-8/Mk 1:14-20
Tuesday, Jan. 11	1 Sm 1:9-20/Mk 1:21-28
Wednesday, Jan. 12	1 Sm 3:1-10, 19-20/Mk 1:29-39
Thursday, Jan. 13	1 Sm 4:1-11/Mk 1:40-45
Friday, Jan. 14	1 Sm 8:4-7, 10-22a/Mk 2:1-12
Saturday, Jan. 15	1 Sm 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1a/ Mk 2:13-17
Sunday, Jan. 16	Is 62:1-5/1 Cor 12:4-11/ Jn 2:1-11

**DAILY WORD FOR  
JANUARY 17 - JANUARY 23**

Monday, Jan. 17	1 Sm 15:16-23/Mk 2:18-22
Tuesday, Jan. 18	1 Sm 16:1-13/Mk 2:23-28
Wednesday, Jan. 19	1 Sm 17:32-33, 37, 40-51/ Mk 3:1-6
Thursday, Jan. 20	1 Sm 18:6-9; 19:1-7/Mk 3:7-12
Friday, Jan. 21	1 Sm 24:3-21/Mk 3:13-19
Saturday, Jan. 22	2 Sm 1:1-4, 11-12, 19, 23-27/ Mk 3:20-21
Sunday, Jan. 23	Neh 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10/ 1 Cor 12:12-30 or 12:12-14, 27/ Lk 1:1-4; 4:14-21

***Rest In Peace***

**Denise Rezutek**

Sister of Cynthia (Joe) Schufman

**Jim Langer**

Brother of Sharon (Dennis) Getzie

**Maxine Nielsen**

Sister-in-law of Bernita Weinke

**Robert Rhinehart**

Father of Fr. Rich Rhinehart

**Jerry Goser**

Father of Julie Vanderwagen

## PRAYER LIST

Let us know if someone would like to be prayed for in church or be listed in the bulletin prayer list. To be included in the prayer line, contact Pat Purfeerst, at 715-222-9533 or [pjpurfeerst@gmail.com](mailto:pjpurfeerst@gmail.com).

Laura Bowman	Linda Jourdeans
Linda Giardina	Walter Domeracki
Judy Pechacek Harri	Bernadine Bechel
Barb Ickler	Pat Pollard
Michelle Radtke	Boyd Huppert
Izabella Thompson	Cherie Kelly
Sonia Steiner	Meg Byram
Grace Radtke	Jeff Raethke
Katy Morris	Dawn Huberty
Gwen Paulson	Karen Engel
Linda Radtke	Tim Engel
Tony Jilek	Ronna Linroth
Irene Anderson	Ron Zignego
Rod Cina	Dorie Deiss
Eric King	Florence Bauer
Julie Wilson	Sandy DeCoux
Ellen Heiman	Kristiana Huberty
Tricia Hanson	
Edna Early	

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is on Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Each hour has a dedicated prayer intention.**

9:00 a.m.	Peace in world and end to violence
10:00 a.m.	End to racism and hate groups
11:00 a.m.	Law enforcement and those in the service to our country
12:00 p.m.	Teachers and school administrators
1:00 p.m.	Health care workers
2:00 p.m.	Youth and all students
3:00 p.m.	Care for the earth
4:00 p.m.	Mental health
5:00 p.m.	Hunger and access to safe drinking water



Come in anytime or sign up for a particular hour by calling the church office.

## TITHES AND OFFERING

### December 19, 2021

Adult Contributions	\$12,065
Future Parish Needs	\$1,600
Loose Collection	\$810
Scrip Rebates (40 orders)	\$456

### December 24, 25 & 26, 2021

Adult Contributions	\$49,2075
Future Parish Needs	\$290
Loose Collection	\$566
Christmas Offering	\$24,021
Scrip Rebates (19 orders)	\$240

### January 3, 2022

Adult Contributions	\$9,144
Loose Collection	\$708
Future Parish Needs (ACH)	\$2,381
Scrip Rebates (16 orders)	\$257

### New St. Bridget Website



A new, upgraded, and refreshed St Bridget website will launch on January 27, 2022. Watch for more details in the next bulletin and online. Overviews and training sessions will be provided. Contact Kelly at [webmaster@stbparish.com](mailto:webmaster@stbparish.com) with any questions.

# HAPPY New Year

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make His face  
shine upon you, And be gracious to you...



## Life in the Spirit Seminar Saturday January 29 8:00 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.

- Brochures with registration form are at the information desk.
- Cost is \$8, lunch will be provided
- New attendees invited to an overview of the seminar on Sunday, January 9 at 12:00 p.m.
- Seminar Talks will be presented by Fr. Jerry and Peter Yurek. Guitarist, Mary Donahue, will provide praise and worship.

## 2021 MARTHA QUILT GROUP

### This year over 400 quilts were distributed:

Adoray/Hospice  
Angels on Earth Giving Tree Families  
Catholic Charities, St. Paul  
Comforts of Home  
Grace Place, New Richmond  
Hastings Lewis House, Hastings  
Kinnic Long Term Care  
Mayo Clinic/Children's Hospital  
Options for Women  
Our House Nursing Home  
Our Neighbor's Place  
Truly Humble Under God (T.H.U.G.)  
Turning Point  
Cruising for a Cause Benefit  
Our Neighbor's Place Benefit  
Pierce County Veteran's Benefit  
St Bridget's School Gala

Thank you to all who have supported Martha Quilt Group in any way!

## 2022 St. Bridget Donut Schedule & Pricing

January 9, 16, 23, 30	Single \$1.00
February 6, 20, 27	1/2 Dozen \$3.00
March 6, 13, 20, 27	1 Dozen \$5.00
April 3	1 1/2 Dozen \$8.00
May 1	2 Dozen \$10.00



## Men's Retreat at St. Bridget Saturday, March 5 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

- All men invited • Cost is free
- Call the office to register

The speaker/facilitator is Pat Millea (pat.millea.com). He is a husband and father who truly enjoys sharing his love for God and the Catholic Church with people of all ages. This will be a great opportunity to gather as men of faith.

## Calling all High School Seniors!

Our River Falls Knights of Columbus Council 4902 will be awarding a \$1,000 scholarship to two 2022 graduating high school seniors. Applications are available in the River Falls High School Counselor's Office (also available from Doug Weiss). Applications must be completed and returned to the Counselor's Office, or Doug Weiss (715-425-2355), no later than mid-February. (Final date TBD). Refer to the application for instructions and qualifications.

## Thank You!

To the everyone who remembered me this Christmas season, Thank you. You have helped make this Christmas special. Your generosity overwhelms me as it is much appreciated. May God continue to pour out his grace upon you throughout the New Year. Merry Christmas and Happy New year, Fr. Joe Stefancin

## WELCOME TO ST. BRIDGET!

### Baptisms

**Keaton William Bitterman**

Son of Kelsey and Ben Bitterman

**Amelia Elise Heinecke**

Daughter of Chloe and Kyle Heinecke

### New Members

Ray and Janice Matzek

Garret and Kelly Wenzel and family

Jeff and LeAnn Nielsen

Amy Denver



## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

### Parish Council Candidates Needed

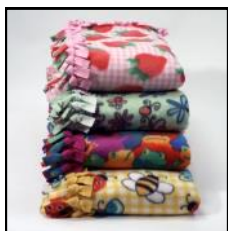
We have 5 parish council members whose terms are expiring this spring. God bless them for their service to the parish. Ideally, we need 2 candidates for each open position. If you are interested or know of someone who would be interested in serving, please contact John Hueg, parish administrator, Fr. Joe or me.

To serve on the Parish Council, you must be a member of the parish and active in the Catholic faith. The Parish Council meets once a month virtually, eight times a year. It is a great opportunity for bringing new ideas built on our faith tradition and as we continue our strategic planning for the future with prayer. The parish council is studying "Start With Jesus" by Julianne Stanz. ~ Fr. Harris

## YOUTH MINISTRY

### Youth Ministry Project - Fleece Needed!

The Youth Group will be making and donating fleece blankets as an on going service project. They will be collecting fleece donations through January. A marked donation box will be by the information desk.



### Sanctus Schedule

Change in date Sanctus (open gym) being hosted by Immaculate Conception in New Richmond, will now be on **Saturday, January 22.**

#### Scheduled Dates

January 22 - Immaculate Conception  
February 19 - St. Bridget School  
March 19 - Immaculate Conception  
April 16 - St. Bridget School  
Summer Months TBD

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH

### Adult Formation Opportunities

#### Bible Study beginning January 26

*Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life*



This study will be offered twice:

- Wednesday evenings 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
- Friday mornings 8:45 – 10 :00 a.m.
- Limited books available - cost is \$10.
- Sign up at information desk or email

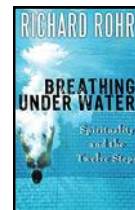
Jodie at [jrubenzer@stbparish.com](mailto:jrubenzer@stbparish.com)

#### Book Discussion - *Breathing under Water*

Beginning February 17

- Thursday mornings 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.
- Participants purchase their own books.
- Sign up at information desk or email

Jodie at [jrubenzer@stbparish.com](mailto:jrubenzer@stbparish.com).



### Prayer and Poses

Christian yoga will begin a new virtual session January 18 – March 8. Join others in the privacy of your own home using Google Meets conferencing service. Cost is \$72.00 for eight sessions. Sign up at the information desk or email Erica at [jafra4erica@yahoo.com](mailto:jafra4erica@yahoo.com).

## FAITH FORMATION

### First Communion Information and Registration Meeting

Sunday, January 30 at 1:00 p.m.

All students in grades 2 or beyond are welcome to prepare for First Communion. Register using our standard Faith Formation registration form, available on our [website](#), on the information rack or in the church office.



## The Saint Bridget Mission Statement

After three months of prayer, study, and discussion, the St Bridget Parish Council during their December meeting moved to update the Parish Mission Statement to,

**“We awaken faith, build community, and make disciples.”**

As a parish, we are very familiar with these phrases. Through the work of many previously, these phrases have been with us for over five years, appearing on our offering envelopes and as part of many media images used throughout the parish. With this change, these phrases move to the forefront of our minds.

The New Mission Statement:

- Speaks universally to the primary mission of us as “church,” the people of God.
- Simplifies and creates proactive actions for us to embrace, live, and share. It will help lead and guide us on our individual and collective faith journeys.
- Aligns well with the Strategic Planning work which started in 2015.
- Gives tremendous room for growth and reimagining how we can best be the church we are being called to be.

The previous Mission Statement captured many of the same aspirations, yet it was quite long for a mission statement and not easily recalled thus lacking true inspiration. It read,

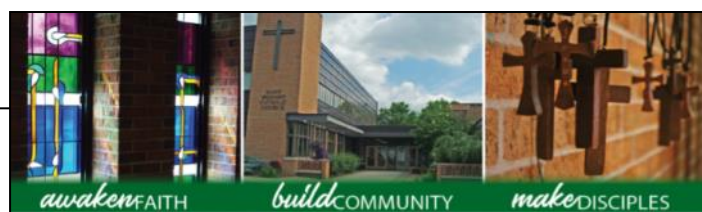
“St. Bridget Catholic Church is a Christian Community that exists to continue the mission of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are committed to working for the coming of God's Kingdom and we accomplish this through worship, community life, Christian education and service to those who are in need.”

All of the aspects the previous mission statement remain important and are encapsulated within the three elements of the new statement.

So what comes next? We invite everyone to individually take time in prayer and reflection focusing on how these phrases resonate within your life and the life of St Bridget Parish. As a staff across the entire parish, both church and school, we will explore ways that we can bring to life each of the three elements and integrate them into our daily routines and activities. As a parish, we are reengaging the work started within the strategic plan and will align that great work to the new Mission Statement then chart a course to become the future parish we are called to be.

Over the next several months, we will continue to discuss each element more deeply. We invite you to join the conversation and action. Please feel free to email your thoughts to Father Jerry or John. John will be happy to set up time to chat if preferred. If you are interested in participating in the parish planning work, please let Father Jerry or John Hueg know.

If you are looking for a great resource book, which is part of what the Parish Council used in their work, we recommend reading *Start with Jesus*, by Julianne Stanz. Copies are available for check out from the parish. Please contact John for more information.



## PRO-LIFE CORNER

### Why is abortion unacceptable at any phase in the development of an embryo?

God-given human life is God's own property; it is sacred from the first moment of its existence and not under the control of any human being. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. (Jeremiah 1:5)

God alone is Lord over life and death. Not even "my" life belongs to me. (YOUCAT)

The issues of pro-life call on all of us to be compassionate. "Compassion holds both beauty and challenge. It is based on the belief that we are united with all beings. Their joy and sorrow is our joy and sorrow because of this deep and intimate connection. To be truly compassionate means to approach another with the nonjudgement and the unconditional love that Jesus had when he met those who were suffering."

As we continue to address the issues of pro-life as a church and nation may we always be mindful of all children throughout the world who are hurting or in danger.

"Dear God, I pray for the children of my world today and I pray for each man and woman of this world, including myself, that we will do our part to create better living conditions for these children. Show us the way and prod us into action, God of justice and compassion." Amen.

(Excerpts taken from, "Out of the Ordinary," Joyce Rupp)

### Hope After Abortion

There is hope after abortion with groups like Project Rachel (<http://hopeafterabortion.com/>) Their focus is healing. Please check them out. "Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled." John 14:1 When she was 17, her mother told her the abortion would only hurt for a little while. But 40 years, 2 sons, and 3 grandkids later, it still hurts. If you or someone you love is grieving the loss of a child or children to abortion, come and experience the compassionate mercy of Jesus Christ on our weekend retreat. Rachel's Vineyard Twin Cities' retreats are open to anyone impacted by abortion - women, men, grandparents, siblings, and health care professionals. For more information contact Nancy at [rachels@vineyardmn.org](mailto:rachels@vineyardmn.org), call 763-250-9313 or see [www.rvineyardmn.org](http://www.rvineyardmn.org). The next Rachel's Vineyard retreat is April 1-3, 2022. <https://www.rvineyardmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-11> .

PRAY TO  
PROTECT  
HUMAN LIFE!

9DAYS FOR  
JANUARY 19 - 27, 2022



WWW.9DAYSFORLIFE.COM

Please join thousands of Catholics nationwide in the annual Respect Life novena, *9 Days for Life*, Wednesday, January 19, 2022 – Thursday, January 27, 2022.

We will gather at St. Bridget to pray the Novena together after Mass or Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion. See the flyers at the entrances to the church or contact Paul Boespflug at [pdboespflug@gmail.com](mailto:pdboespflug@gmail.com). Daily intentions, brief reflections, and more will be sent via email.

If you are not able to join us at church, you can participate online at [www.9daysforlife.com](http://www.9daysforlife.com).

### Pray the Novena at St. Bridget

Wed. Jan. 19 - after 9:00 a.m. Mass  
Thurs. Jan. 20 - after 5:15 p.m. LWHC  
Fri. Jan. 21 - after 8:00 a.m. Mass  
Sat. Jan. 22 - after 5:00 p.m. Mass  
Sun. Jan. 23 - after 9:30 a.m. Mass  
Mon. Jan. 24 - after 8:00 a.m. LWHC  
Tues. Jan. 25 - after 5:30 p.m. Mass  
Wed. Jan. 26 - after 9:00 a.m. Mass  
Thurs. Jan. 27 - after 5:15 p.m. LWHC

## St. Bridget Catholic Church Contact Information



Fr. Gerald Harris, Pastor  
715-425-1879 ext. 103, [pastor@stbparish.com](mailto:pastor@stbparish.com)



Fr. Joe Stefancin, Associate Pastor  
Office (715) 796-2244 ext. 7  
Emergency: 715-370-5650  
[frjoe@stbparish.com](mailto:frjoe@stbparish.com)



John Hueg, Parish Administrator  
715-425-1879 ext. 102, [parishadmin@stbparish.com](mailto:parishadmin@stbparish.com)



Tammy Pitzen, Office Assistant  
715-425-1879 ext. 101, [recept@stbparish.com](mailto:recept@stbparish.com)



Susan Landry, Accountant  
715-425-1879 ext. 104, [accountant@stbparish.com](mailto:accountant@stbparish.com)



Diane Wengelski, Elementary Faith Formation  
715-425-1879 ext. 105, [childrensFF@stbparish.com](mailto:childrensFF@stbparish.com)



Tessa Schuermann, Teen Faith Formation  
715-425-1879 ext. 106, [teenFF@stbparish.com](mailto:teenFF@stbparish.com)



Amy Burns, Youth Minister  
715-425-1879 ext. 107, [youthminister@stbparish.com](mailto:youthminister@stbparish.com)



Barrett Grove, Coordinator of Liturgical Ministries  
715-425-1879 ext. 108, [liturgy@stbparish.com](mailto:liturgy@stbparish.com)



Jodie Rubenzer, Discipleship and Spiritual Growth  
715-307-2524, [spiritualgrowth@stbparish.com](mailto:spiritualgrowth@stbparish.com)



Meg Andrea, Website and Communications  
715-425-1879 ext. 111, [media@stbparish.com](mailto:media@stbparish.com)



Randy Koller, Maintenance  
715-425-1879 ext. 112, [facilities@stbparish.com](mailto:facilities@stbparish.com)

[www.saintbridgets.org](http://www.saintbridgets.org)

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211 EAST DIVISION STREET PO BOX 86  
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN 54022  
Address Service Requested





# DIOCESAN GATHERING FOR

# LIFE

**ST. JOSEPH, RICE LAKE, WI  
SATURDAY, JANUARY 22, 2022**

- 10:00 AM Mass with Bishop  
11:00 AM "Why is the Church Pro-Life?"  
Deacon Tim Mika  
12:00 PM Break for Lunch\*\*\*  
1:00 PM "Supporting Life in Your Community"  
Danielle Hendricks  
2:00 PM Holy Hour and Rosary

\*\*\*please bring a bag lunch or plan on eating at a local restaurant

THIS PUBLIC EVENT IS OPEN TO  
PEOPLE OF ALL AGES!

**PLEASE CONSIDER BRINGING A  
DONATION ITEM**

- New or gently used clothes 3T and smaller.
- Larger sized diapers (size 5 and 6)
- Any size pull-ups
- Winter coats 4T or smaller



## DANIELLE HENDRICKS

Danielle is passionately Catholic and pro-life. She lives in Rice Lake, WI, with her wonderful husband Aaron, and four beautiful children. Danielle has lived and served in multiple cities in the US, mainly with FOCUS and for the Diocese of Syracuse, NY. Currently, she is the CEO of the Pregnancy Help Center in Rice Lake.

## DEACON TIM MIKA

Deacon Tim Mika was ordained to the permanent diaconate in 2020 for the Diocese of Superior. He and his wife Becky live on a farm outside of Ashland with their five children.



OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION & MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR

## 9 Days for Life

### Wednesday, January 19 – Thursday, January 27

Pray one Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and one Glory Be each day with the daily intentions and reflections listed below. The full novena, including suggested actions and additional information can be found at [www.9daysforlife.com](http://www.9daysforlife.com).

#### **DAY ONE: May the tragic practice of abortion end.**

**Reflection:** At every stage and in every circumstance, we are held in existence by God's love. The presence of an illness, disability, or other challenging situation never diminishes the value of a human life. God does not call us to perfection of appearance or abilities, but to perfection in *love*. Christ invites us to embrace our own lives and the lives of others as true *gifts*.

Abortion tragically rejects the truth that every life is a good and perfect gift, deserving protection. This violent practice ends the life of a human being at its very beginning and horribly wounds all those involved. But Christ came that we "might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10), taking on human flesh for the sake of our redemption. May our culture experience the power of God's transforming love, that all eyes may be opened to the incredible beauty of every human life.

#### **DAY TWO: May each person suffering from participation in abortion find forgiveness, hope, and healing in Christ.**

**Reflection:** Countless children's lives have been ended by abortion, and countless parents and family members suffer guilt, grief, and regret—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." Be assured that it is never too late to seek God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Consider the parable of the Prodigal Son. After repenting of sinning against his father, he returns from far away to seek forgiveness and work as a servant. But his father sees him approaching, runs to warmly embrace him, and hosts a banquet to celebrate his return. So, too, does God welcome all His children who come to Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation with contrite hearts, no matter how serious the sin. Let us turn confidently to Our Lord, Who is love and mercy.

#### **DAY THREE: May all who defend life find strength and renewal in the Holy Spirit.**

**Reflection:** God has carefully, tenderly created every person in His own image and likeness, to be in a loving relationship with Himself. From each tiny child knit within a mother's womb, to every person approaching death, all are loved perfectly and completely by God: "It is therefore a service of love which we are all committed to ensure to our neighbor, that his or her life may be always defended and promoted, especially when it is weak or threatened [emphasis added]" (Evangelium vitae 77).

In a world in which those who are most vulnerable are so often overlooked and disregarded, Christ calls us to embrace and uphold the unconditional dignity of every human life. In answering this call, we help to build "a new culture of life, the fruit of the culture of truth and of love" (EV 77). May the Holy Spirit continually renew us as we strive to faithfully defend God's gift of life.

#### **DAY FOUR: May all unborn children be protected in law and welcomed in love. (49<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Roe v Wade)**

**Reflection:** Today, we mourn the many children's lives ended by abortion and remember in prayer those who suffer the aftermath. We pray that children in their mothers' wombs would again be protected in law and do penance in reparation for abortions that have been committed in our world.

In his encyclical Evangelium vitae (The Gospel of Life), Pope John Paul II said, "may an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and lover of life, from every Christian community, from every group and association, from every family and from the heart of every believer" (EV 100). May that prayer arise in our hearts today and each day forward until every human being is protected in law and welcomed in love.

#### **DAY FIVE: May all who support or participate in abortion experience a conversion of heart to seek and receive the Lord's boundless mercy.**

**Reflection:** When God fashioned the human person in His own image and likeness, He destined us for eternal life with Him. Yet because of the sin of our first parents, death entered the world. The book of Genesis recounts the first occasion in which a person takes the life of another, as Cain violently kills his brother Abel. This instance of brother rising up against brother "at the very dawn of history is thus a sad witness of how evil spreads with amazing speed" (Evangelium vitae 8). From the time of creation, disregard for human life has continued to spread. When we, like Cain, allow sin to find a place in our hearts, we become blinded to the truth. Sometimes this blindness might be so deep that we fail to recognize the undeniable humanity of unborn children. We may even tragically believe the lie that abortion is an act of compassion. But we know that "life, especially human life, belongs only to God: for this reason whoever attacks human life, in some way

attacks God himself” (EV 9). Let us pray that all who support abortion will encounter the transforming love of the Father and, with repentant hearts, seek His mercy.

**DAY SIX: May every expectant mother receive compassionate care and support as she nurtures the life in her womb**

**Reflection:** When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she opened her heart to receive his message that she would conceive the Son of God in her womb. As a young, betrothed, but unmarried, woman, Mary knew that her pregnancy presented many challenges. Despite this knowledge, she faithfully responded, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Like the Blessed Mother, women who unexpectedly become pregnant often face significant challenges. They, too, are called to place their trust in God and faithfully respond to His *gift* of new life. And we are called to walk with them in their time of need. As Jesus taught us, when we love and serve others, we are loving and serving Him.

May all expectant mothers be encouraged by Mary’s example and receive support and grace in lovingly welcoming their children into the world.

**DAY SEVEN: May expectant fathers lovingly support the mothers of their children in welcoming new life.**

**Reflection:** Fatherhood has its origins in God, who chose to reveal Himself to us as Our Father, sending his only Son for the sake of our salvation. Fathers therefore have a special role “in revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God” (Familiaris consortio 25). Fathers are called to exhibit “generous responsibility for the life conceived under the heart of the mother” (FC 25). They are uniquely entrusted with the protection and defense of both mother and child and, in this way, in safeguarding the sanctity of human life.

As evidenced in our world today, the role of the father “is of unique and irreplaceable importance” (FC 25). Often women choose abortion because they do not have the support of the child’s father, or—even worse—the father of the child pressures her to make the decision to abort. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge with compassion that men can also be overwhelmed by an unexpected pregnancy and that society increasingly tells them that they should have no say in their children’s lives. In the face of these false messages, we pray that expectant fathers will find courage in the example of Saint Joseph—who embraced the role of father amid difficult circumstances—and offer loving, life-affirming support to the mothers of their children.

**DAY EIGHT: May expectant mothers choosing adoption receive grace and support in embracing this loving option.**

**Reflection:** Mothers placing their children for adoption often face many challenges along the way. One of the greatest obstacles can be inaccurately perceiving adoption as abandonment. But mothers who make an adoption plan for their children are not abandoning their children. Rather, they are exemplifying the sacrificial love of Christ on the Cross in choosing to do what is best for their children, even at great cost to themselves. Like Christ, they pour out their bodies and souls for the sake of another. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that, in the face of fears and trials, we can “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 each expectant mother choosing adoption will be filled with “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7) as she makes a loving choice for her child. Let us all cling fast to the anchor of hope, for we have received “a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:15).

**DAY NINE: May civic leaders work for the protection of all human life, in every stage and circumstance.**

**Reflection:** The Declaration of Independence boldly affirms that first among our inalienable rights is the right to life, given to us by the Creator. Yet despite being so solemnly proclaimed, the right to life is today threatened and often denied, particularly at the moments when life is most fragile. Our laws should—first and foremost—protect life. But “our highest Court does not recognize children in their mothers’ wombs as persons and claims that abortion is a constitutional right. Further, many political leaders work actively to increase access to abortion. Some falsely describe it as health care and even as a basic human right” (*Priorities at the Polls*). Laws and policies that legalize or promote an intrinsic evil like abortion violate the virtue of justice.

Those who work as public officials and civic leaders have a duty to serve the common good, and therefore have a profound obligation to safeguard this most fundamental right to life. Through our own prayer, witness, and civic participation, we can encourage our leaders to truly answer their call to protect the rights of all people. For “there can be no true democracy without a recognition of every person’s dignity and without respect for his or her rights” (*Evangelium vitae* 101).