



Protect
Defend
Heal

March 2010
Greetings from the Office of Respect Life!

I have appreciated the opportunity to attend the deanery meetings whenever possible. There has been a consistent welcome and invitation to share opportunities and concerns of the Respect Life Ministry. Also, in addition to getting to know better the activities, joys, and challenges of our diocese, the meetings have allowed me to become better acquainted with the priests and other leaders, most especially in the context of how they collaborate with one another. The trust and respect that allow for differences, while inviting discussion and encouraging cooperation, create an environment for sometimes rather candid remarks.

In one recent case a sincerely spoken challenge was made suggesting that the Respect Life Office is not really interested in the legal end of abortion, rather uses the issue more as a rallying topic. Though I disagreed with the assessment, I appreciated the honest exchange; it subsequently provoked in me serious reflection on the work and priorities of the office, and how to communicate both the intensity of concern for direct assaults against innocent human life, especially the unborn, and the broad-based need to promote life and dignity for all, as we work to share the gospel and build a “culture of life.” The “Updates” will be organized so as to reflect the pillars of Respect Life work, recognizing that they complement one another, rather than compete.

Now, for “News You Can Use” ☺ (be sure to get to the end for a new initiative!!):

ADVOCACY

Although *Catholics at the Capital* will soon be past, the issues on the legislative agenda for that day are still very much in play. Please continue to be informed and to take opportunities to speak directly to the issues in your parishes. [Click here](#) for a summary, followed by fact sheets on each issue. Alerts will be sent as needed during the legislative session.

In regards to *national health care reform*, please encourage people to not be weary, but continue to be informed and engaged, remembering to return to principles consistent with life and dignity. [Click here](#) for a health care reform prayer resource. Your support in communicating possible legislative alerts is appreciated!

Bulletin Announcement:

Please contact your state representatives about State House Bill 6205, the Reproductive Health and Access Act. A sample statement is: ***"House Bill 6205 seeks to publicly fund abortion, undermine the Health Care Right of Conscience and Parental Notification of Abortion Acts and impose comprehensive sex education on all students, K-12, in this state. It is extreme, unnecessary legislation. Please vote NO."*** For more information, go to www.respectlife.catholicweb.com.

EDUCATION

In light of the state legislative agenda, and to help clarify the rationale of the Church regarding *civil unions*, there are two recent resources that can be recommended. The Catholic Conference of Illinois released “Promoting Civil Unions to Undermine Marriage” last October ([click here](#)). Additionally, this past fall the USCCB released, “Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan.” The pastoral letter, a video introduction, study version with glossary, and shortened version are available ([click here](#)).

A resource that educators and youth leaders might want to consider incorporating in a discussion about Life and Dignity could be the short video released by the Department of Justice in support of the 2010 *National Crime Victims’ Rights Week* (April 18-24) ([click here](#)). The Theme is “Fairness, Dignity, Respect” and could be a good springboard for conversation about how Catholic principles about justice, life, and dignity are included. What might have been highlighted differently if it wasn’t necessarily directed to a secular audience? That abortion has victims can be a truth for serious reflection.

An opportunity a *medical ethics* conference to share in a bulletin announcement:

The St Louis Gateway Catholic Ethics Network will present a conference on “Quality, Ethics and the Continuum of Care” on March 26, 2010 at Our Lady of the Snows, in Belleville. Health Care professionals may be especially interested. To see the topics included in the program and for more information go to Events at www.respectlife.catholicweb.com.

PRAYER/PASTORAL

During one of the Fridays of Lent, you might consider using the “*Stations of the Cross for Life*” that was included in the Liturgy Guide of last year’s USCCB Respect Life parish kit. The meditations are also available on the USCCB website, [click here](#). (They may be copied for parish use.)



Click [here](#) to learn more! (And [here](#) for the local campaign in Granite City). Your parish or group is encouraged to find ways to participate, hopefully by finding a time to go to the abortion facility to pray, but if not to remember the efforts in your prayers! If even a couple of people plan to go you could modify the suggested bulletin announcement below to include when and perhaps others will join!

40 Days for Life began on February 17 and will continue through March 28. It is a community based national campaign of prayer, fasting and education with the goal of the end of abortion. Visit www.40daysforlife.com for more information.

Post-abortion bulletin announcement:

A Day of Healing with Dr Sandra Vicari, for post-abortive women and men, is scheduled for March 20, 2010, from 9 am to 3 pm, at the Chiara Center in Springfield, Illinois. Registration fee: \$15.00 includes lunch and can be paid at the door. For more information see Events at www.respectlife.catholicweb.com or call 1-877-722-4355.

Marriage enrichment opportunity:

“The Marriage Well: An Oasis for Couples” is a one day retreat for you to join other couples and Mary Jo Pederson, noted author and spiritual guide, for a day of refreshment for your marriage. It will take place at Our Lady of the Snows (OLS), Belleville, IL, on Saturday, April 24, 9:00am – 4:45pm. Cost is \$49 per couple and includes lunch. A program rate is available for couples who would like to stay at the Shrine Hotel. For a flyer see www.respectlife.catholicweb.com under Events or call OLS at 618-394-6294.

DIRECT SERVICE

Thank you for continuing your support of the Pregnancy Care Centers nearest you! Several of you have fundraisers of different kinds. I would like to highlight one that was creative, as well as student inspired and run, at Gibault Catholic High School to support their local center. They will be having a “**Basketball for Babies**” 3 on 3 tournament this month! Great Job! I’m sure you can contact Gibault for more information!

A new facility, Fontebella, is a **maternity shelter for women** in a crisis pregnancy, who otherwise have nowhere else to live and are at high risk of seeking an abortion. Please visit their [website](#) and get to know them through the testimonials and other information! Their First Annual Dinner Banquet/Auction with a "Window on the Womb" (Live Ultrasound!), takes place March 27 at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville. [Click here](#) for more information. Although this may not be “local” for your parish (it is located in O’Fallon) I highly encourage support as it meets a unique need that will reach well beyond their local area. Following is a bulletin insert for you to consider:

“Window into the Womb,” a live ultrasound, will be just one highlight of the First Annual Dinner/Auction for Fontebella, a new maternity shelter for women in a crisis pregnancy. It is scheduled for March 27 at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. A Sunset Buffet Dinner will be served at a cost of \$35 per person. Businesses are invited host a table of 8 for employees, family or friends, and/or be sponsors listed in the program as pro-life supporters of Fontebella. For more information or reservations please contact Angela Gibson at 618-971-0971. Donations can also be made directly to Fontebella at P.O. Box 137, O'Fallon IL 62269 or made through PayPal with a credit card at the website: www.fontebella.org, where you can also read testimonials. Your support is very appreciated!

Finally:



This is a new initiative for Respect Life...click on the button for a visit!

Thank you for all you do as a Witness to Life!

May God bless you and those you love and serve,

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