

Peaceful Pro-Life Activism

This outline is available for download at www.RespectLifeMissouri.org

Welcome & Opening Prayer for Life

Facilitator opens meeting with a “thank you” to all who have attended, introduction of new members, and a prayer. It is important that all participants feel welcomed and participate within their own comfort level.

Opening Prayer

Prayer for Soldier

*Father, all life is in Your care.
You have entrusted us to one another,
that we may show our brothers and sisters
the same love You have for us.
We pray, then, for the least among us,
the children in the womb.
Protect them from the violence of abortion.
We pray for those that are scheduled to die today.
Save them from death.
Give new hope to their parents,
that they may turn away from the desperate act of abortion.
Grant conversion to the abortionist and to the staff.
Show us how we are to respond to the bloodshed in our midst,
And lead us to the day when these places of death
will be transformed into a haven of life.*

*Guard us with your joy and your peace,
For in You, life is victorious.*

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Email us at prolife@uscgb.org

Pro-Life Activities | 3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington DC 20017-1194 | (202) 541-3000 © USCCB. All rights reserved.

Presentation – Peaceful Pro-Life Activism

NOTE: The Powerpoint presentation is available online for download.

- ❖ The presentation file has been updated into the same PDF format as this session outline so it should be just as easy to access. If no laptop/projector is available, a printout of individual slides can also be copied/printed and used as both a presentation and as a handout for participant notes.
- ❖ The content in the slide presentation is designed to be straight-forward but also to allow flexibility.
- ❖ The comprehensive nature of the written facilitator notes below has been provided to allow for diversity among groups, for an extended and on-going education, and for later reference on the topic. **Therefore, it is possible that all the content included in the facilitator notes will *not* be covered in a single session. Please review the information below for each slide and then create a presentation that is your own based on the needs of your particular group.**
- ❖ If necessary, the Respect Life Office can answer any questions or provide guidance on any topics in the slide deck. Please contact the Respect Life Office at (816) 756-1850 or francis@dioceskcjsj.org if you cannot access the on-line files.

PLEASE READ OUT LOUD TO THE GROUP:

It is important that everyone in the group understands why this presentation uses the military as a theme for pro-life activism. It would be very easy to shy away from the relevance or to immediately assume this approach conveys violence and the exact opposite message we want. It cannot be over-emphasized that because we are called by God to work to

eliminate the violence against our unborn brothers and sisters throughout our land, we must also oppose the use of violence in any form to achieve this objective. As for those misguided individuals who might perpetrate acts of violence in the name of ending abortion, they must understand the decision to take a human life to solve a problem is a choice that can never be "pro-life".

In today's global environment, it is easy to assume that talk about our military is synonymous with talk about war and violence but we must never forget that these brave individuals proudly promote peace and courageously provide humanitarian support in a world that is often either violently opposed to or apathetically indifferent to their efforts. Our men and women in uniform represent courage, respect, commitment, knowledge, pride, discipline, and teamwork. They will be the first to acknowledge that peace is always the ultimate goal.

When we consider the cost of any war, whether in dollars or in trauma to the participants or in the loss of innocent lives, it is no different in the current war on the unborn. It is precisely the billion-dollar abortion business, the exploitation of the poor and vulnerable, the tragedy and pain for the survivors of abortion, and ultimately the killing of thousands of innocent Americans every day that we all need to work together to end and in so doing, we too must always hold peace as our ultimate goal.

Basic training at boot camp includes physical fitness, instruction in rules of engagement, military tradition and history, and pride in appearance. Teen Pro-Life Boot Camp includes spiritual fitness, instruction in effective peaceful pro-life activism, Church tradition and teaching on the sanctity of all human life, and the importance of presenting the right image.

Every Sunday at Mass we hear, "For peace and justice around the world and for the safety of our troops, we pray to the Lord." Our annual Summer teen pro-life camp is directed at training our youth to safely defend peace and justice right here at home as faithful pro-life Catholics in a nation that is absolutely at war against the unborn.

Slide 1 Introduction Peaceful Pro-Life Activism

Slide 2 Mission

- Commit to peaceful and prayerful pro-life activism
- Understand key strategic, logistical, and tactical offenses
- Defend against counter-insurgencies
- Receive debrief from top brass (Catechism, USCCB, etc.)
- Deploy!

Slide 3 No Violence

It cannot be over-emphasized that although the goal must be to eliminate violence against unborn children and their mothers, we must oppose the use of violence in any form to achieve this objective. Such violence against human beings is indefensible. The decision to take a human life to solve a problem is by definition...not pro-life.

Slide 4 War History

We have been here before...

"I personally would never have slaves but I cannot impose my views on another."

"Slavery is legal so I must not infringe upon another person's rights."

"I have never been in that situation so what right do I have to speak out."

"Some people in our society have more intrinsic value than others."

"What we want, and all we want, is to have with us the men who think slavery wrong. But those who say they hate slavery, and are opposed to it, but yet act with the party where they are. Let us apply a few tests. You say that you think slavery is wrong, but you denounce all attempts to restrain it. Is there anything else that you think wrong, that you are not willing to deal with as a wrong? Why are you so careful, so tender of this one wrong and no other? You will not let us do a single thing as if it was wrong; there is no place where you will allow slavery to be even called wrong! We must not call it wrong in the Free States, because it is not there, and we must not call it wrong in the Slave States, because it is there; we must not call it wrong in politics because that is bringing morality into politics, and we must not call it wrong in the pulpit because that is bringing politics into religion; we must not bring it into the Tract Society or the other societies, because those are such unsuitable places, and there is no single place, according to you, where this wrong thing can properly be called wrong!"

Abraham Lincoln Speech at New Haven Connecticut, March 6, 1860

Slide 5 Peaceful & Prayerful Strategies

Prayer and worship directed to participation in the sacramental life of the Church and in programs of communal and individual prayer, that the culture of death that surrounds us today will be replaced by a culture of life and love. Participation in the sacramental life of the Church sustains each of us.

We ask priests and deacons to preach the truth about the dignity of all human life, born and unborn, and about the moral evil of the purposeful destruction of innocent human life, including abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and infanticide. The readings of the Church's liturgy give ample opportunity to proclaim respect for the dignity of human life throughout the year.

Slide 6 Provide Basic Training

The most comprehensive overview of the Church's teaching with regard to the sanctity and dignity of human life is found in Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter *The Gospel of Life*. This inspiring document applies the teaching in many areas and provides strong and powerful motivation to Catholics to proclaim the Gospel of life. *Living the Gospel of Life*, a statement adopted by the U.S. Catholic bishops in 1998, applies this teaching to our particular situation in the United States.

By developing a public information program, the parish Respect Life ministry creates awareness of the threats to human life and human dignity inherent in abortion, research that destroys human embryos, euthanasia, assisted suicide, infanticide, and capital punishment. It allows people to see more readily the need to correct the situation by establishing legal safeguards for the right to life.

In November 1975, the U.S. Catholic bishops approved for publication the *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*, activating the Church, its people, and its institutions in a program in defense of human life. In 1985 the Plan was updated and the revised *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Reaffirmation* was adopted by the bishops and approved for publication in November of that year. In 2001, the *Plan* was again updated and submitted by the Committee for Pro-Life Activities to the full body of bishops for approval. At their meeting in November 2001, the U.S. Catholic bishops reaffirmed and approved for publication the *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life*" <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml> . The program is founded on four pillars--education, pastoral care, prayer, and public policy.

Slide 7 ...and Special Forces Training

Any program that takes place in the public square should affirm the value of human life in the manner of its expression as well as the content, seeking to explain and persuade, while showing respect to all who disagree. It will take a variety of forms: for example, public statements and press releases; accurate reporting of newsworthy events and speaking with media representatives when such events occur; conferences and seminars on pro-life issues; development and distribution of educational materials; public relations and advertising campaigns; newspaper advertising; posters in local stores and community centers. (USCCB Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, p.19)

Slide 8 Peaceful Rallies & Marches

The Life Chain

First Sunday in October every year in locations all over the diocese. Talk to the respect life coordinator for your parish.

Annual March for Life

Every January 22nd (or the following Monday if on a weekend), The National Mall , Washington D.C.

Annual Prayer Vigil for March for Life

January 22, 2014, Federal Courthouse, Downtown K.C. *More information at the end of the presentation.*

Slide 9 Prayerful Sidewalk Counseling

Prayer is the foundation of all that we do in defense of human life. Our efforts—whether educational, pastoral, or legislative—will be less than fully fruitful if we do not change hearts and if we do not ourselves overcome our own spiritual blindness. Only with prayer—prayer that storms the heavens for justice and mercy, prayer that cleanses our hearts and our souls—will the culture of death that surrounds us today be replaced with a culture of life. (USCCB Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, p.31)

Slide 10 Proudly Display Your Medals and Awards

All Catholics can show their support for the sanctity of all human life by proudly displaying pro-life bookmarks, bumper stickers, buttons, yard signs, jewelry, magnets, address labels, etc. This is an easy way to educate because sometimes all it takes is awareness.

Slide 11 Defend Against Chemical Warfare & WMD's

It is noteworthy that as acceptance and use of contraception have increased in our society, so have acceptance and use of abortion. Couples who unintentionally conceive a child while using contraception are far more likely to resort to abortion than others. Tragically, our society has fallen into a mentality that views children as a burden and invites many to consider abortion as a "backup" to contraceptive failure. This is most obvious in efforts to promote as "emergency contraception" drugs that really act as early abortifacients.

With Pope John Paul II we affirm that contraception and abortion are "specifically different evils," because only "the latter destroys the life of a human being," but that they are also related (*The Gospel of Life*, no. 13). It is important to remember that means that are referred to as "contraceptive" are, in reality, sometimes also abortifacient. In the 1960's promoters of the Pill and IUD redefined "conception" as "implantation" of the embryo in order to hide the fact that these chemicals effectively destroy new human life. An end to abortion will not come from contraceptive campaigns but from a deeper understanding of

our human sexuality, and of human life, as sacred gifts deserving our careful stewardship. (USCCB Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, p.9)

Slide 12 Use Reconnaissance & Counter Intelligence

The best offense is a good defense.

- Get on Planned Parenthood mailing list
- Read pro-choice books
- Know more about Planned Parenthood than the opposition does
- Research public court records for abortion clinics
- Study drug company reports
- Identify and educate political donors to the campaigns of pro-abortion candidates
- Replace abortion advertisements with pro-life advertisements
- Educate businesses that service abortion clinics (painters, plumbers, electricians, *and especially garbage collectors*, etc)
- Know your constitutional rights so you stay within the law and so you are aware when your rights have been violated.

Slide 13 More Tactical Maneuvers

Regardless of whether touched by the Holy Spirit to participate in meetings and prayer vigils or to lead fundraisers and small groups, or to counsel those in need one person at a time, there are opportunities to learn, to provide pastoral care, to participate in public policy and legislation. All can celebrate the gift of life through prayer and worship by getting involved with the parish Respect Life ministry. Fundraisers, educational events, and social activities occur throughout the year and prayer vigils and pro-life demonstrations are scheduled regularly for those touched to take a more active and visible public roll. Here are a few ideas...

- **Lay persons and volunteers**, who through their charisma and unique responsibilities impact individuals and the broader community in a profound way when they assume roles of leadership in their parishes and in society
- **Priests, deacons, and religious**, who exercise their responsibility to preach the word "in season and out of season" (cf. 2 Tm 4:2) in the pulpit, in other teaching roles, through parish programs, or through public support for pro-life projects
- All church-sponsored or identifiably **Catholic organizations** involved in adult education and sacramental preparation, whether national, regional, diocesan, or parish-based
- **Teachers in schools, religious education programs, campus ministries, and church-sponsored educational agencies** who provide factual information, moral teaching, and motivation to young people
- **Seminaries and houses of religious formation** through their academic and pastoral ministry programs
- Catholic **social service and health care agencies** through their educational seminars and other appropriate programs, including efforts to publicize programs and services providing alternatives to abortion, post-abortion reconciliation and healing, and care for those who are terminally ill or disabled
- Catholic **health care professionals** through their provision of prenatal and postnatal care, genetic counseling, and other services in ways that witness to the sanctity of each human life
- Catholic **publications and periodicals** through their articles, editorials, and advertising space promoting the Gospel of Life
- **Parents** who, through discussion of critical life issues within the family and by their example and guidance, teach and help to mold their children in faith and respect for all human life from conception to natural death.

Slide 14 Dishonorable Discharge

All in the Catholic community are invited in a special way to be leaders in the campaign to build a culture of life. Being active in the pro-life movement does not necessarily mean just standing outside abortion mills with graphic pictures. Please understand, we must use the right tool for the specific task at hand and there are times when a "hammer" is not the right tool, especially when the task requires "a piece of fine sandpaper". As with completing any home improvement project, if the only tool you have is a hammer, you will ultimately cause more damage than good. *However, it is imperative that we use a hammer when the task requires a hammer. We will never end abortion until those in a position of influence, including those with the power to vote, understand what abortion is.*

Slide 15 Activism & Public Policy...and the Church's Position

Protecting and promoting the inviolable rights of persons is the most solemn responsibility of civil authority. As Americans and as religious leaders we are committed to governance by a system of law that protects human rights and maintains the common good.

The Declaration of Independence, written more than two hundred years ago, speaks of the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" before making this historic assertion: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*" Today we see the tensions increasing between these founding principles and political reality. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the continuing effort to ignore the right to life of unborn children, as well as in efforts to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide.

It is imperative to restore legal protection to the lives of unborn children and to ensure that the lives of others, especially those who are disabled, elderly, or dying, are not further jeopardized. (USCCB Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, p.27). A public policy program requires well-planned and coordinated advocacy by citizens at the national, state, and local levels. Through the hard work, prayers, and generosity of Catholics over the past 38 years, especially on the part of those in parishes across the nation, much has been accomplished:

- The numbers and rates of abortions have steadily declined.
- More Americans identified themselves as pro-life, while the number of those who said they are "pro-choice" declined; polls showed that Americans are far more opposed to abortion than our law reflects.
- Despite opposition from powerful and well-funded sources, the pro-life movement continues to be one of the largest and most effective grassroots movements in the nation.
- The moral argument concerning the humanity of the unborn and the sanctity of all human life has been advanced, and even those who advocate abortion have had to acknowledge that it destroys a human life.
- Services for those facing difficult pregnancies, as well as services for women and men suffering because of abortion, were established and expanded, aiding many thousands in need of help.
- Most state legislatures enacted measures to restrict abortion and reduce its incidence.
- Assisted suicide initiatives were defeated time and again in many states; some adopted new laws against assisted suicide.
- Medical societies, hospice groups, and other organizations worked with Catholic health professionals to provide the best care to those who are terminally ill and to oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Yet the federal law on abortion has changed very little. *Roe v. Wade* continues to make impossible any meaningful protection for the lives of human beings from the time they are conceived until after they are fully born. The abortion decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court must be reversed. (USCCB Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, p.43) For it is impossible, as our Holy Father reminds us, to further the common good "without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop" (*The Gospel of Life*, no. 101).

Slide 16 The Catechism Tells Us

"It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person...As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no.1913-1915)

Slide 17 Warriors For the Victory of Life

Warriors for the Victory of Life

Key Note Address for the 2009 Gospel of Life Convention

April 18, 2009 – St. Thomas Aquinas High School

Most Reverend Robert W. Finn

Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph

Evangelization/Catechesis

Discuss the following information among the group to make sure everyone understands...

Our Catholic Church was founded, and has been built from the very beginning, on the fundamental principle that all human life is sacred. From the stressful and unexpected pregnancy of our Blessed Mother at Christ's conception as the "Word made flesh" to the wrongful conviction, death row sentencing, and execution of our Lord and Savior...we as Christians are a people of and for life.

Jesus Christ is the "Word of Life", the "Bread of Life", and the "Resurrection and the Life". The word "life" is used more times than any other in the Bible and we are blessed with references to the gift of life and the need to defend all human life throughout Holy Scripture...

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." Jeremiah 1:5

"All the days of his life have been planned out by God before any have come to be." Psalm 139:16

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." Deut. 30:15-20

"Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book were all written the days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them." Ps. 139:16

"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:56-58

To focus on the evil of deliberate killing in abortion and euthanasia is not to ignore the many other urgent conditions that demean human dignity and threaten human rights. (USCCB Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, p.3) Opposing abortion and euthanasia "does not excuse indifference to those who suffer from poverty, violence and injustice. Any politics of human life must work to resist the violence of war and the scandal of capital punishment. Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing and health care" (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 23).

In its *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops help us understand the wide spectrum of issues that touch on the protection of human life and the promotion of human dignity. Although we must never diminish our concern for those issues that pose the greatest threat to human life [abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research and cloning, and capital punishment] we must also not equate all issues touching on the dignity of human life. (USCCB Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, p.4) "Indeed, the failure to protect and defend life in its most vulnerable stages renders suspect any claims to the 'rightness' of positions in other matters affecting the poorest and least powerful of the human community" (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 23). A consistent ethic of life, which explains the Church's teaching at the level of moral principle recognizes instead the distinctive character of each issue while giving each its proper place within a coherent moral vision.

Outreach Planning

Slide 18 Support Our Troops!!

- Sign up to join the next March for Life Pilgrimage to Washington DC!
- If you are available, and if you are not already planning to participate in the next March for Life Pilgrimage, please consider attending the local prayer vigil at the Federal Courthouse in downtown K.C. (Missouri Right to Life sponsors this)
- Get the word out to others who may want to participate in one of these events
- For more info, contact the Respect Life Office

Slide 19 Summary

- Commit to peaceful and prayerful pro-life activism
- Understand key strategic, logistical, and tactical offenses
- Defend against counter-insurgencies
- Receive debrief from top brass (Catechism, USCCB, etc.)
- Deploy!

Closing Prayer

Slide 20 Prayer to End Abortion (Priests for Life)

*Lord God, I thank you today for the gift of my life,
And for the lives of all my brothers and sisters.*

*I know there is nothing that destroys more life than abortion,
Yet I rejoice that you have conquered death
by the Resurrection of Your Son.*

*I am ready to do my part in ending abortion.
Today I commit myself
Never to be silent,
Never to be passive,
Never to be forgetful of the unborn.*

*I commit myself to be active in the pro-life movement,
And never to stop defending life
Until all my brothers and sisters are protected,
And our nation once again becomes
A nation with liberty and justice
Not just for some, but for all.*

Through Christ our Lord. Amen!