



How Are We a People of Life?

A Reflection for the Parishes in the Diocese of Rockford

March 2022

Because we were created in God's image, all human life is sacred. As a people of God, we must witness to this sacredness. In a time when the Supreme Court is considering the legal protection of the unborn, the Church is redoubling efforts to accompany women and couples who are facing unexpected or difficult pregnancies, offering them loving and compassionate care.

The Rockford Diocese invites you to join a national initiative, "Walking with Moms in Need," sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This parish-based process encourages parishioners to connect with local mothers facing difficult or challenging pregnancies, identifying local resources and filling the gaps so that pregnant and parenting women receive necessary material, spiritual, and emotional support.



One important step of providing compassionate care to mothers in need as well as to all people is self-reflection. How well do we, as the people of God, fulfill this responsibility? Where can we do better as individuals and as communities of faith? We encourage everyone, individually and collectively, to complete this short discernment of the efforts of the Body of Christ to love and care for families in crisis.

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful,
and enkindle in us the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created,
and you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Encounter. *"The personal encounter is the key event in the life of every disciple that changes the direction of life, as we see happen so often in the lives of the disciples recounted in the Scriptures."*¹ Recall the times in your own life when you have been in great need. Who helped you move beyond this crisis? How was that help an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ? If you are still in the midst this crisis, how can you unite your suffering to that of Christ on the Cross – not to diminish the impact of the suffering but to make it holy?

Accompaniment. *“We need others to model lives of discipleship and accompany us as we grow in the spiritual life and experience ongoing conversion.”*ⁱⁱ How in the everyday moments of life do you walk alongside those in need? How, in particular, do you attend to the needs of pregnant mothers in crisis? How does your parish community walk with mothers and families in need? How can you do better individually and collectively to nurture and protect unborn life when it is in peril?

Community. *“The liturgical life of the Church is a natural source of accompaniment and comfort for the Christian faithful, which also builds community.”*ⁱⁱⁱ How well do I personally invite, welcome, and share God’s love with families and children in my day-to-day encounters and during prayer times in the parish? Do I lead with love in my interactions with expectant mothers, especially if I know they are in crisis? Do I assist in making my parish liturgies moments of encounter, comfort, and healing for all present?

Mission. *Pope Francis said, “the Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. ... Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent.”*^{iv} Do I personally and through my parish seek out opportunities to meet the needs of expectant mothers in crisis? How do my own experiences with the comfort that faith and community have brought me during crisis lead me to bring real help to families experiencing their own hardships?

How Can You Help? *Pope Francis has called the Church “a family of families.”*^v If this reflection has inspired you to dive deeper into your family of faith, visit the diocesan Life and Family Evangelization Office web page for practical steps to help love and care for families in crisis (www.rockforddiocese.org/life/parish/walking-with-moms). You too can be part of the national initiative of *Walking with Moms in Need*.

*Pray for guidance and inspiration.
You can help bringing healing to moms, dads, and babies in need!*

If you need additional guidance, contact the Life and Family Evangelization Office in the Diocese of Rockford at life@rockforddiocese.org.

ⁱ USCCB, Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, *Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization*, 2017, p. 10.

ⁱⁱ USCCB, 2017, p. 15.

ⁱⁱⁱ USCCB, 2017, p. 16.

^{iv} Pope Francis, Homily at Mass on the Occasion of the Twenty-Eighth World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, no. 1.

^v Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 87.