

## Novena for a Nation that Respects Life

*Use this complete prayer service with the Chapter 4, section 2 of Your Christian Vocation. You may also choose to use only individual parts of the prayer service.*

Needs:

- copies of the novena for each day or projection
- master list of ideas for reparation if desired
- “How to Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy” found at <https://www.thedivinemercy.org/message/devotions/praythechaplet.php>

### *Prayer Introduction*

**Leader:** Our prayer time today is a bit different from what we have done before in this class. You have been studying in this chapter about why all life should be respected. One particularly tragic aspect of society is the legal and social acceptance of abortion. There are many reasons that you have studied why the Church proclaims the truth that every life is sacred. Over the next nine days we will be praying together a novena for an end to abortion and the killing of innocent life in our country. You will pray for particular circumstances that lead to abortion in our country—abuse, poverty, fear, lack of resources—that these needs might be fulfilled for individual mothers, fathers, and their unborn children. You will also be invited to offer up a specific type of reparation (penitential act offered up as a sacrifice for an intention) each day.

### *Day 1*

**Leader:** Today we pray for a greater awareness that every life is a good and perfect gift worth living.

**All:** (Pray an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

### *Reflection*

**Reader 1:** God has carefully, lovingly created every person—in His own image and likeness—to be in a loving relationship with him. 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," Pope Saint John Paul II explains, "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" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 77).

### *Learn*

**Reader 2:** Many people don't realize that *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion through all nine months of pregnancy. *Roe* says abortions may not be restricted at all during the first three months and in the second three months may be regulated only for the mother's health. After "viability" *Roe* allows abortion to be prohibited but must make an exception for the woman's life or health.

But in *Roe's* companion case, *Doe v. Bolton*, the Court defined "health" to include "all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age—relevant to the well-being" of the mother. In most states, that is broad enough to permit virtually any abortion in the seventh, eighth, or ninth months of pregnancy if any of these reasons is invoked.<sup>1</sup>

### *Act of Reparation*

**Leader:** Today I encourage you to fast from your favorite beverage—coffee, soda, Gatorade, sparkling water—for our intention. You will probably find yourself missing this drink, in that moment offer up that feeling for a greater awareness that every life is a good and perfect gift worth living.

### *Day 2*

**Leader:** Today we pray for a greater awareness that people with disabilities and mental, emotional, and physical limitations are loved children of God, with gifts, talents, and abilities to give to the world.

**All:** (Pray an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

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<sup>1</sup> Information in the "Learn" section was taken from the USCCB's "Novena for the Legal Protection of Human Life." <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/take-action-now/call-to-prayer/legal-protection-of-human-life.cfm>

### *Reflection*

**Reader 1:** 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 circumstances 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 the lives we have been given, for as long as they are given, as true gifts. Our relationships on this earth are meant to help us grow in God's perfect love. Everyone we encounter is a gift, not because of what they can do or accomplish, but because of who they are—a beloved child of God. May each of us experience the power of God's transforming love, that our eyes may be opened to the incredible beauty of the people the Lord places in our lives.

### *Learn*

**Reader 2:** **If *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, the democratic process—not the courts—will determine abortion policy.** Before *Roe*, all states permitted abortion if necessary to save the mother's life, and some permitted abortion in additional circumstances. But *Roe* deemed any prohibition on abortion as unconstitutional. If *Roe* is overturned, policy decisions about abortion will be made by the citizens of each state through the democratic process, rather than by courts. Some states will place limits on abortion, in others there will likely be few limits.

### *Act of Reparation*

**Leader:** Today, fast from TV shows, movies, and social media. Spend this time instead reflecting on today's reflection and learn section.

### *Day 3*

**Leader:** Today we pray for all who have experienced sexual abuse to receive justice, healing, and God's peace.

**All:** (Pray an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

### *Reflection*

**Reader 1:** The connection between sexual abuse and abortion is real and tragic. Many who have suffered abuse and rape suffer the additional trauma of also going through

the process of having an abortion. Instead of being offered healing, recovery, and compassion, the crimes that were committed against the person are papered over with an abortion. Our hearts ache for the grave harm inflicted by abuse on our brothers and sisters. Words alone cannot express our sorrow, shame and disappointment that such affronts to human dignity exist in the world. It is our prayer and hope that all who have experienced abuse will find the healing and justice they so rightly deserve, knowing that they are never alone.

### *Learn*

**Reader 2:** Abortion is often portrayed as essential for women to achieve freedom and equality with men, yet many women report feeling some degree of pressure or aborting to please someone else—often their partner. Further, after the abortion, many women report feelings of depression, suicidal or self-harm inclinations, sadness, shame, and regret. For example, Cynthia Carney, in an amicus brief submitted to the Supreme Court, described the aftermath of her abortion saying, "For 23 years, I went into crying spells, depression, suicidal thoughts. Emotionally it devastated me." Camelia Murphy explained, "I have suffered with low self-esteem, self-hatred, suicidal impulses, and constant anxiety (especially about sex and about making decisions)." Donna Razin said that her abortion caused her "[d]eep regret—initially I was suicidal— as the years have progressed I have developed a heightened level of bitterness and anger and self-hate." Women would be better served if society tried to creatively answer the needs of single mothers, mothers trying to get through school, mothers needing higher or more stable finances, etc. rather than telling them that the death of their children is the best answer. We can and should do better for all women.

### *Act of Reparation*

**Leader:** Today, fast from a meal for victims of rape and abuse to have access to truly healing therapies.

### *Day 4*

**Leader:** Today we pray for birth parents, children, and adoptive parents going through the process of adoption that they may find ongoing support in our communities and legal system.

**All:** (Pray an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

*Reflection*

**Reader 1:** The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us to, “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). Families hoping to adopt children and mothers considering placing their children up for adoption often face many challenges along the way. We pray that all who are involved in the adoption process be filled with the hope of Christ and, “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7). We also remember that we too can cling fast to this anchor of hope, for we have received “a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:15). May our loving Father envelop each of us in his love today and open our eyes of faith that we may see and rejoice in his love.

*Learn*

**Reader 2:** Women facing an unplanned pregnancy can be under enormous pressure. Often abortion is seen as a quick and easier option over adoption. Yet, abortion is a final decision, the child being gone forever afterward. Many women who have had abortions regret the permanency of never getting to meet their child. Adoption also does not carry long term health risks for women like abortion does, and many abortions do not include continued mental and emotional support. However, the process of adoption often includes counseling, possible financial aid, and the opportunity to be connected with long-term life-coaching. Adoption truly cares for mother and child.

*Reparation*

**Leader:** Do you have a sweet tooth? Or do you prefer salty snacks? Pick your favorite kind of treat, and give it up for the day as an offering for those going through the adoption process.

*Day 5*

**Leader:** Today we pray that each person suffering from the loss of a child through abortion find hope and healing in Christ.

**All:** (Pray an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

## *Reflection*

**Reader 1:** After more than four decades of legalized abortion, many children's lives have been ended, and many parents and family members suffer that loss—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 the father sees him approaching from far away, runs to warmly embrace him, and hosts a banquet to celebrate his return. So, too, does God welcome all repentant sinners, no matter how serious the sin. Let us run into the arms of our Lord, who is love and mercy. If you or someone you know is suffering after abortion, confidential, non-judgmental help is available. Visit [www.hopeafterabortion.org](http://www.hopeafterabortion.org).

## *Learn*

**Reader 2:** Abortion advocates usually refer to the human being growing in her/his mother's womb in dehumanizing terms like "product of conception" or "the fetus," and suggest that most abortions are done before fetal organs are functioning. Actually, the vast majority are done after the fetal heart has begun beating. A baby's heart begins to beat at about 21 or 22 days after fertilization, about three weeks of development. The vast majority of abortions in the United States are done after this point.

## *Reparation*

**Leader:** Abstain from meat today for those who are suffering the loss of a child through abortion, that they find healing and peace.

## *Day 6*

**Leader:** Today we pray that all victims and survivors of human trafficking find freedom, refuge, and healing.

**All:** (Pray an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

## *Reflection*

**Reader 1:** Those who are vulnerable are most at risk for being lured into situations where they are trafficked. Migrants and refugees often face increased risk factors like changes to language and culture, lack of support systems, and the burden of poverty. Young people on the margins, especially runaway and homeless youth, are targeted for sex trafficking and may subsequently be forced to have abortions. Easily tempted by the false promises of traffickers, victims often find themselves enslaved with no means of escape. Christ came, "to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives" (Is 61:1, cf. Luke 4:18). May all who are trapped in situations of slavery be released from their chains of captivity and find freedom, refuge, safety, and healing in Christ and his Church.

*Learn*

**Reader 2:** Often, claims for the legalization of abortion say that we must have abortion available or many thousands of women will die seeking them out illegally, especially women in dire straits such as victims of sex trafficking. These were the claims made by abortion advocates during *Roe v. Wade*. However it is now known that claims that thousands of women were dying from illegal abortions at the time of *Roe* were fabricated for political purposes. The late Dr. Bernard Nathanson, a chief strategist for legalizing abortion, said he and his associates invented the "nice, round shocking figure" of "5,000 to 10,000 deaths a year" from illegal abortions:

*I confess that I knew the figures were totally false, and I suppose the others did too if they stopped to think of it. But in the "morality" of our revolution, it was a useful figure, widely accepted, so why go out of our way to correct it with honest statistics?*

Research confirms that the actual number of maternal deaths resulting from abortion in the 25 years prior to 1973 averaged 250 a year, with a high of 388 in 1948. In 1966, before the first state legalized abortion, 120 mothers died from abortion. While any death is a tragedy, by 1972, when abortion was still illegal in 80 percent of the country, the number dropped to 39 maternal deaths from abortion.

Furthermore, a groundbreaking 2012 study of abortion in Chile published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal found that Chile's abortion prohibition in 1989 did not cause an increase in the maternal mortality rate (MMR). On the contrary, after abortion was prohibited, the MMR decreased by 69.2% in the following fourteen years.

### *Reparation*

**Leader:** Give up sleeping on your pillow tonight. Allow this small sacrifice to remind you of the sufferings endured by those in our world who are enslaved.

### *Day 7*

**Leader:** Today we pray for the establishment of pro-life laws in our country.

**All:** (Pray an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

### *Reflection*

**Reader 1:** In the Catholic Church in the United States, January 22nd is designated as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children." As Catholics, we are called to observe this day through the penitential practices of prayer, fasting, and/or giving alms. After over 46 years of legalized abortion, we mourn the many children's lives ended by abortion and remember in prayer those who suffer the aftermath. The Church comes together to pray for the protection of all unborn children and to make reparation for abortion, trusting that the Lord hears our prayers.

### *Learn*

**Reader 2:** Most people on both sides of the abortion debate agree that reducing the number of abortions is a desirable outcome. While some argue that contraception is the key to reducing the abortion rate, real-world evidence does not back that up. Instead, research shows that even when women were provided with free "emergency contraception" ahead of time, the pregnancy and abortion rate remained statistically equivalent with those who were not provided with it. In fact, the availability of contraception and abortion can increase the rate of unintended pregnancies (as well as sexually transmitted infections) as studies show that people engage in more frequent and riskier behavior if they believe their risk has been lowered.

On the other hand, evidence suggests that laws restricting the funding of abortion (like the *Hyde Amendment* preventing Medicaid funds from going to abortion) or limiting its availability, involving parents, and providing women with more information lower the

rate of abortion. Unfortunately, *Roe*, its companion case *Doe*, and some subsequent rulings have been used to invalidate many laws meant to lower the rate of abortion.

### *Reparation*

**Leader:** Abstain from snacking today. Eat three meals only as an offering for just, pro-life laws to be passed.

### *Day 8*

**Leader:** Today we pray that those nearing life's end receive medical care that respects their dignity and protects their lives.

**All:** (Pray an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

### *Reflection*

**Reader 1:** The dying process is a sacred time—a final season to seek closure in this life and prepare for the next. We know earthly death is not the end, but rather the door through which we must pass to gain eternal life. The deadly practice of assisted suicide—now legal in several states—shortens or even eliminates this sacred season, carelessly cutting short the life of the patient. To support the “false compassion” of assisted suicide is to see people as a problem to be eliminated. End-of-life care should instead help eliminate or alleviate the patient's problems, whether they are physical, spiritual, or emotional. Those who die in God's grace and friendship live forever with Christ. Because of our belief and hope in the Resurrection, we can face death not with fear, but with trust. We pray that society might recognize that every day of our lives is a gift and is always worth living, especially our final days. We need not fear. Christ is with us.

### *Learn*

**Reader 2:** Assisted suicide is in the news and on lawmakers' agendas. Supporters call it “aid in dying” and claim it is just another option for ending intolerable pain as part of end-of-life care. When properly prescribed for the pain of serious illness, powerful pain medications like morphine and other opioids are safe and effective. Patients can have their pain well-controlled without risk to life, and generally stay alert as well. Assisted

suicide, by contrast, directly intends the patient's death, which is never morally permissible. The doctor prescribes an intentionally lethal overdose, with instructions on how to use the pills to cause death. Palliative care also addresses symptoms beyond physical pain, in ways that go beyond medication. Patients facing serious illness may feel hopeless and depressed, as though their lives have lost meaning. Addressing psychological, emotional, and spiritual problems is essential to palliative care. Assisted suicide alleviates none of these problems, but gives in to them. Consider that about half of patients who had requested assisted suicide under the Oregon law in its first three years changed their minds when the doctor provided palliative care. Assisted suicide is detrimental not only for individual patients, but also for patient care on a large scale. In countries like the Netherlands, where assisted suicide has been accepted for many years, progress in palliative care has stagnated.

### *Reparation*

**Leader:** Sacrifice some of your free time to do a small act of service, such as making breakfast for a family member, writing a note of encouragement for a friend, or praying for the intentions of someone who might be suffering.

### *Day 9*

**Leader:** Today we pray that the tragic practice of abortion, and all crimes against human life come to an end.

**All:** (Pray an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

### *Reflection*

**Reader 1:** Pope Saint John Paul II wrote, "A great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world. Through special initiatives and in daily prayer, 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" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 100). May that prayer arise in our hearts today and each day forward until every human being is protected in law and welcomed in life.

### *Learn*

**Reader 2:** More women and girls consider abortion than we may realize. They are our relatives and friends, people who work with us. Even if someone identifies as being pro-life, the shock of an unexpected pregnancy, the devastation of a difficult prenatal diagnosis, shame, pressures, or fears may influence her to consider abortion. If someone shared with you that she was pregnant and hadn't ruled out having an abortion, would you know how to respond in a loving way that is life-affirming for both her and her baby? Learn about the four steps of the L.O.V.E. Approach: Listen and Learn, Open Options, Vision and Value, and Extend and Empower ([www.usccb.org/l-o-v-e](http://www.usccb.org/l-o-v-e)).

### *Reparation*

**Leader:** For our final Act of Reparation we will pray a Chaplet of Divine Mercy together for an end to abortion and the support of all vulnerable life. (Lead students through chaplet).