

# MISSIONARY OBLATES JPIC



## Consistent Life Program

"The case for a consistent ethic of life -- one which stands for the protection of the right to life and the promotion of the rights which enhance life from womb to tomb ... is both a complex and a demanding tradition....It joins the humanity of the unborn infant and the humanity of the hungry; it calls for positive legal action to prevent the killing of the unborn or the aged and positive societal action to provide shelter for the homeless and education of the illiterate." (*Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, St. Louis University, March 1984*)



## The Consistent Life Ethic Means Every Life Matters

The term "consistent life" is attributed to Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, who in a lecture at Fordham University in 1983 made the connection between war and abortion, stating that both issues "must be seen in light of an attitude of respect for life." During his address he covered a whole range of issues, saying "the spectrum of life cuts across the issues of genetics, abortion, capital punishment, modern warfare and the care of the terminally ill."

Since then the consistent life ethic has been articulated as "the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, capital punishment and euthanasia." As Missionary Oblates we believe these issues are connected as manifestations of mankind's broken relationship with God. They emerge from the Oblate charism of valuing the dignity of the human person and being in solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

Inspired by Catholic Social Teaching, the Missionary Oblates JPIC Office seeks to foster respect for human life at every stage, from conception to natural death. We promote an ethic of consistent life: opposing abortion, the death penalty, torture and other assaults on human dignity while speaking out on behalf of the poor and dispossessed – immigrants, migrant workers, indigenous peoples.

Pope Benedict XVI writes in *Caritas in Veritate* that "The Church forcefully maintains this link between life ethics and social ethics, fully aware that 'a society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized'" (no. 15).

"Only with prayer - prayer that storms the heavens for justice and mercy, prayer that cleanses our hearts and souls - will the culture of death that surrounds us today be replaced with a culture of life." –(*Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Catholic Bishops*)

## Connect with Missionary Oblates JPIC

The Oblate JPIC initiative works to promote human dignity and respect for God's creation using an ethic of consistent life. We work through our faith-consistent investment principles, advocacy with corporations and governments, educational outreach, grassroots organizing (in Oblate parishes), and financial support for campaigning organizations.

**Facebook:** Missionary Oblates JPIC

**Twitter:** @omiusaJPIC

**Blog:** <http://missionary-oblates-jpic.blog.com>

**YouTube:**  
[www.youtube.com/OMIJPIC](http://www.youtube.com/OMIJPIC)

“The culture of life is much more than signing the partial birth abortion ban, it is about health care for pregnant mothers, it is about hunger at home and abroad, about war and peace. These involve prudential judgments, but they are not marginal or optional matters for Catholics” (*US Conference of Catholic Bishops*)

## The Church's Voice on the Sanctity of Life

Article 27 of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*), titled Respect for the Human Person, says “everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as another self,” and lists as crimes: “all offenses against life itself, such as murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and willful suicide, all violations of the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture, undue psychological pressures; all offenses against human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions where men and women are treated as mere tools for profit rather than free and responsible persons; all these things and the like are criminal; they poison civilization; and they debase the perpetrators more than the victims and militate against the honor of the creator.”

The US Bishops, in their document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, speak clearly about the sanctity of life. Read excerpts from *Faithful Citizen*. Learn more about the Bishops' Faithful Citizenship initiative and download their documents.

The US Bishops have a vigorous anti-abortion campaign. They offer guidance and materials for Catholic congregations involved in pro-life efforts in America. The Pro-life Pastoral plan contains four major "pillars" that the Bishops have set forth as elements necessary for authenticity:

- Public Information & Education
- Public Policy
- Pastoral Care
- Prayer

Around January 22 every year in observance of *Roe vs. Wade*, USCCB encourages Catholics everywhere to participate in pro-life activities. They provide resources for congregations to use for advocacy. They also organize the *National Prayer Vigil for Life* (an all-night pro-life prayer vigil to pray for an end to abortion) and various other events leading up to the *March for Life* in Washington, DC.

National marches around the U.S. are usually held on or around the date of the Supreme Court's landmark decision. In the past the Washington, DC gathering has drawn up to an estimated 600,000.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for the precious gift of life. Help us to cherish and protect this gift, even in the midst of fear, pain, and suffering. Give us love for all people, especially the most vulnerable, and help us bear witness to the truth that every life is worth living. **G**rant us the humility to accept help when we are in need, and teach us to be merciful to all. Through our words and actions, may others encounter the outstretched hands of your mercy. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. AMEN. — (*USCCB 2015-16 Respect Life Program Prayer Card: "Every Life is Worth Living"*)

## Action

- Talk to your community about what life issue(s) they would like to become involved in or more involved in. See the US Bishop's "Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Ministries" and visit their resources section for materials to download/order
- Identify other organizations/faith communities you can work with, what has been done, what your parish can do to help, and what additional projects are needed for advocacy that are realistic for your community. Then get started, and share what you are doing!
- Most importantly, pray! *"Father and maker of all, you adorn all creation with splendor and beauty, and fashion human lives in your image and likeness. Awaken in every heart reverence for the work of your hands, and renew among your people a readiness to nurture and sustain your precious gift of life. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen"*

## Resources

USCCB's Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Ministries:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/pastoral-plan-prolife-activities.cfm>

Catholic Charities offers hope and assistance to some of the most vulnerable members of our society and world:

<https://catholiccharitiesusa.org/get-involved>

The "Priests for Life" website provides many resources for assisting families facing a crisis pregnancy:

<http://www.priestsforlife.org/crisis.html>

Project Rachel provides healing for women grieving after an abortion: <http://hopeafterabortion.com/>