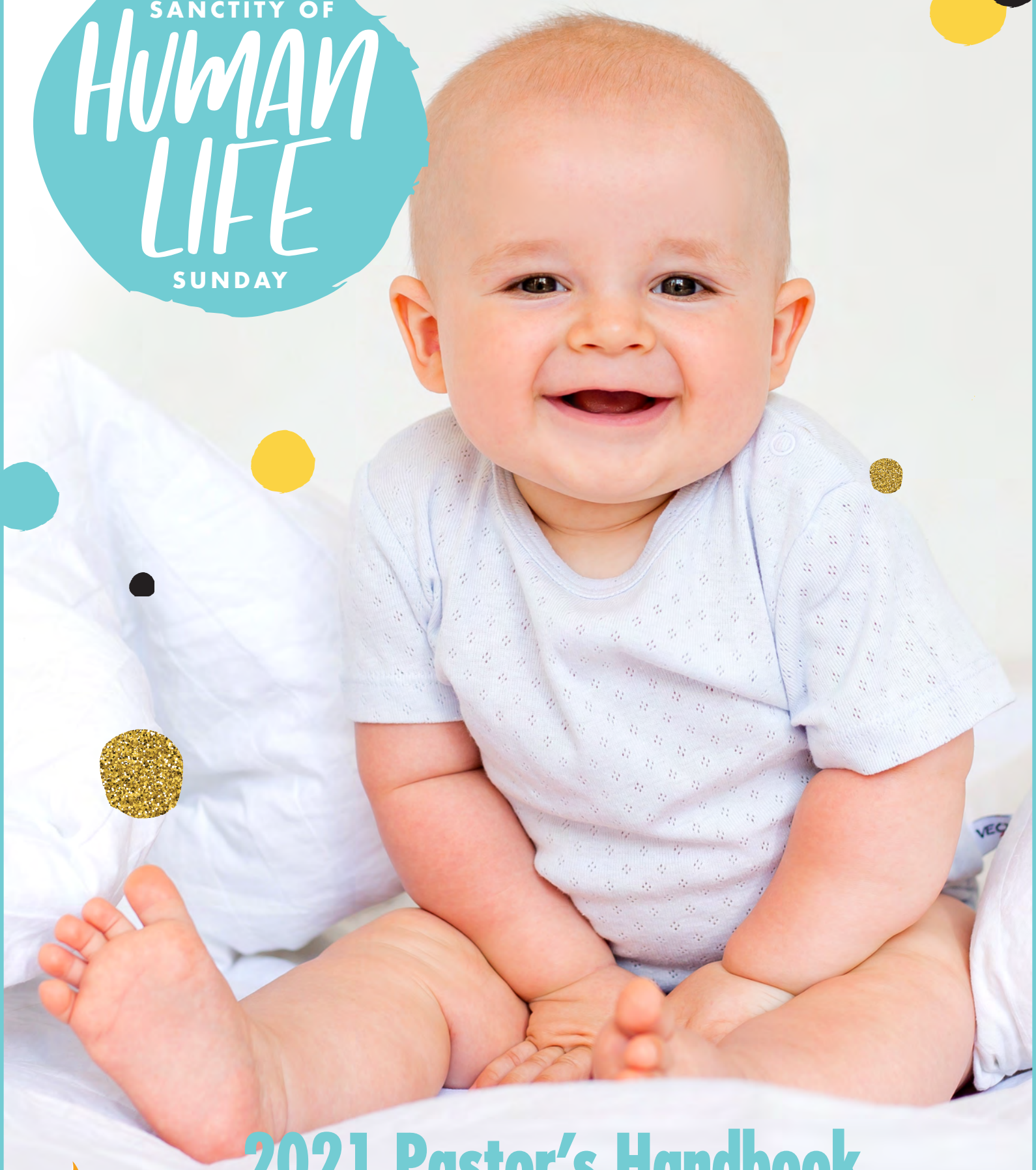
SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY



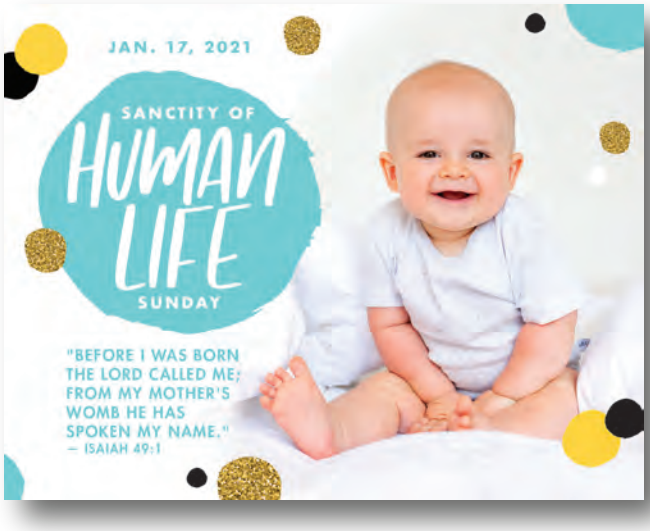
2021 Pastor's Handbook

LOUISIANA RIGHT TO LIFE

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY

JANUARY 17, 2021

We encourage churches to observe Sanctity of Human Life Sunday on Jan. 17, near the anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion on demand in the U.S 48 years ago. We have provided these resources to make your observance of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday even more special. Visit www.ProLifeLouisiana.org/Sunday to access all our resources and to request our FREE SOHLS Bulletin Card Inserts (shown below).



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"Before I was born the Lord called me;
from my mother's womb he has spoken my name."
- Isaiah 49:1

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SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY

Dear Pastor,

The sanctity of human life in Louisiana is in grave danger. All in the name of profit, abortion facilities right here in our state extinguish the lives of thousands of unborn babies each year. We've seen the closure of several abortion facilities in the state over the years, but three remain open. In addition, at least two more clinics, both in the New Orleans area, are attempting to get licensed by the state so they, too, can perform abortions.

We must speak on behalf of the innocent, unborn lives lost to abortion every year. We know the truth, that God created all life in His image to do his works. He knew us before we were born. He called to us in our mother's womb. The Bible tells us in Isaiah 49:1, "Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name." The Bible tells us all people, including the unborn, are created in the image of God. The Bible tells us in John 1:3, "Through Him, all things were made." Clearly, all life is sacred, and all life represents the beauty of God's love.

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is a great chance for you to deliver a positive and uplifting message about the dignity and value of all human life. We hope you will challenge your congregation to pray for the unborn and take a stand for life. This handbook provides ideas to assist you in promoting the gift of life by informing, equipping and motivating your congregation to help serve the cause of life in your area.

We hope this information helps you discuss the Sanctity of Human Life more effectively with your congregation. Thank you for your willingness to stand for all life, from conception until natural death!

For Life,

The Louisiana Right to Life Team

"Before I was born the Lord called me;
from my mother's womb he has spoken my name."
- Isaiah 49:1

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SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY

UNDERSTANDING THE MIRACLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- At 22 days, the baby's heart is beating
- At 40 days, the baby's brain waves are detected
- At 7 weeks, the baby's facial features are visible
- At 8 weeks, the baby's arms and legs are growing and eyes, toes and fingers are formed
- At 10 weeks, the baby's unique fingerprints are forming
- At 12 weeks, all the baby's organs work; the baby can hear and even undergo surgery
- At 20 weeks, the baby can feel pain
- At 22 weeks, a baby can survive outside the womb with active medical treatment
- At 23 weeks, the mother feels the baby move
- At 27 weeks, the baby can open and close its eyes
- At 28 weeks, the baby can dream
- At 37 weeks, the baby is considered full term and ready to be born

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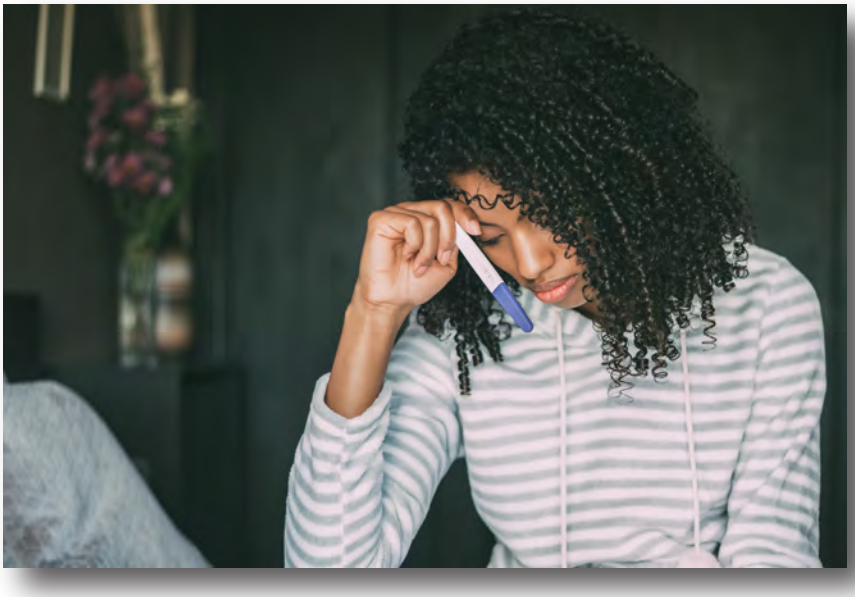
UNDERSTANDING THE TRAGEDY OF ABORTION

IN LOUISIANA:

• 8,144 unborn children lost their lives to abortion in Louisiana in 2019, according to preliminary statistics provided by the Louisiana Department of Health. That means there were, on average, 22 abortions per day.

• The largest number of abortions - 2,521 - were performed on women between the ages of 25-29. Women ages 20-24 were right behind at 2,302. There were also 1,030 women ages 35 and older and another 726 girls between the ages of 15-19 who had abortions as well as 26 girls under the age of 15.



• African-Americans make up about 32% of the state's population but account for 63% of the state's abortions in 2019.

IN THE UNITED STATES:

• Based on available data, 862,320 abortions took place in the U.S. in 2017, down 7 percent from 926,190 in 2014.

• 18% of pregnancies (excluding miscarriages) in 2017 ended in abortion.

• African American women make up only 13% of the female population (ages 15-44) in the U.S., but they accounted for approximately 36% of the abortions in 2015.

• On average women give at least 3 reasons for choosing abortion:
  - 3/4 say that having a baby would interfere with work, school or other responsibilities.
  - About 3/4 say they cannot afford a child.
  - About 1/2 say they do not want to be a single parent or they are having problems with their husband or partner.

(Statistics from the Louisiana Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Guttmacher Institute.)

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Does Society Value the Lives of Unborn Human Beings?

It is estimated by the Guttmacher Institute that nearly three-quarters of a million abortions take place in the United States each year. The Guttmacher Institute states that 18 percent of all pregnancies (excluding miscarriages) end in abortion. The innate dignity of human life is assaulted by legal abortion. It is estimated that nearly 62 million abortions have occurred in the United States since 1973.

What if I was never born?

In addition to abortion, infanticide has a long history in the United States. It was in the news in 2019, when New York's Reproductive Health Act took effect, "protecting" women's reproductive rights up to and including the birth of the child. And in the past there have been cases around the country in which children have survived abortion attempts and then were left to die. Jill Stanek, a nurse who used to work in the Chicago-area Christ Hospital, discovered that her hospital was participating in infanticide and brought the atrocity to national attention with her witness. The Grand Jury report on abortionist Kermit Gosnell brought to light one employee's disturbing testimony that hundreds of born-alive children were killed in Gosnell's clinic under his direction.

What if I was never born?

Clearly, our society is not placing enough value on the lives of children preparing to be born. Whether individuals incorrectly think they are not living human beings or go ahead with abortions despite recognizing the humanity of those babies, abortion and infanticide are violent acts that occur far too often in our society.

Assisted suicide is also expanding in the United States, and human life is being attacked from conception to natural death in America. What can we do as individuals, families, and a church to help our society value human life?

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"I call upon the citizens of this blessed land to gather on that day in homes and places of worship to give thanks for the gift of life, and to reaffirm our commitment to the dignity of every human being and the sanctity of each human life."

- President Ronald Reagan

WHAT IS THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY?

Background: On Jan. 22, 1984, President Ronald Reagan designated the third Sunday of January as National Sanctity of Human Life Day. Churches around the United States still use this day to raise awareness in their congregations about core life issues, such as abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, embryonic stem cell research, infanticide, and more. Pastors can take this opportunity to teach what the Bible says about the sanctity of human life and what the church can do to minister to the vulnerable in our society.

Why the Third Sunday of January? The third Sunday of January falls in close proximity to the anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision, handed down on Jan. 22, 1973, and legalizing abortion in all 50 states, in all nine months of pregnancy, and for virtually any reason (or no reason at all). With other events happening in January across our nation to call attention to the life issues, along with occasional media coverage, you will be able to magnify a timely pro-life message to your congregation.

What Should Churches Do? Pastors, elders and church leadership should utilize the timely opportunity of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday to shine the light of Jesus Christ and dispel the darkness of the culture of death. By setting aside time to remember the lives lost to abortion and the women hurt by abortion, we can take a step toward a day when abortion and all life-destroying actions will be unthinkable in America. This document should provide numerous ways, both large and small, to implement Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in your church.

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"I know it's common today to think of abortion as a simple answer to an inconvenient problem – but it is actually a far more serious issue. Your child isn't simply a mass of tissue; he or she is a human being in God's eyes."

- the late Dr. Billy Graham

GOD'S WORD ABOUT SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

What does the Bible say about Abortion? The Bible does not contain the word "abortion," but the message is clear throughout: Human life is precious in the sight of God. As Genesis tells us, God created human beings "in his image," and it is bestowed on each person in their "mother's womb" (Psalm 139). Moreover, through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God's only Son, human life was joined to God in an even more sacred manner. And we can't forget that Jesus' life began as an innocent baby in his mother's womb. Even John the Baptist, also an unborn child at the time, recognized this sacred dignity as he "leapt" in his mother's womb on his first meeting with our Savior.

With the dignity of human beings established, the powers of sin and death seek to destroy innocent human life, just as Pharoah did in the waters of the Nile, or Herod in the city of Bethlehem. And over the years as human life has been attacked in different ways, leading to the systematic destruction of life through abortion in modern times, we can trust that God desires for us to protect the innocent, since we know that God "hates hands that shed innocent blood" (Proverbs 6:16-17). Also, there are strict prohibitions on the unjust taking of life in Hebrew Law (Numbers 35:30, Deuteronomy 13:6-9, Genesis 9:6).

Finally, during his ministry, Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, "Let the little children come unto me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." If God sees the value of children, including the unborn, then surely Christians must take a stand against the taking of their lives.

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SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY

Verses to Support a Biblical Pro-Life Position

Truly children are a gift from the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. - *Psalm 127:3*

Thou shalt not kill. - *Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17*

But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb called me by his grace, ... - *Galatians 1:15*

You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit. - *Job 10:12*

Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. - *Psalm 127:3*

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. - *Psalm 139:13-16*

The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. - *Jeremiah 1:4-5*

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. - *Ephesians 2:10*

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. - *Luke 12: 6-7*

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live. - *Deuteronomy 30:19*

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit…[saying] 'As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.' - *Luke 1: 41, 44*

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Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in Your Church

Pastors, there are many ways to observe Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in your churches.

• **In Your Sermon / Message:** Take this opportunity to discuss abortion and other life issues during your message to your congregation. We have provided some scripture verses that can serve as an inspiration for your message as well as statistics about abortion in our state and nation. Also, visit our SOHLS page online at ProLifeLouisiana.org/Sunday for links to example pro-life sermons.

• **Distribute SOHLS Cards:** Louisiana Right to Life offers free postcard size "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday" cards to distribute in your church or place in your bulletins. You can request those from ProLife-Louisiana.org/Sunday.

• **Share a Personal Testimony:** Identify a church member or guest speaker with a personal testimony, especially those women who have been hurt by abortion and have found healing and forgiveness, and ask them to share their story with others.

• **Discuss in Sunday School / Small Groups:** Recommend that your Sunday school and Bible study leaders discuss abortion and other pro-life issues with their groups. Encourage these small groups to discern ways God is calling your congregation to take a further step in protecting human life.

• **Invite an Expert:** Invite a local speaker from a pro-life organization to give a message to your congregation. Louisiana Right to Life can assist in providing or helping identify the right presenter.

• **Play a Pro-Life Video:** Play pro-life videos during your worship service. We offer a great video called the "Miracle of Life" that you can download and play at no cost. Visit www.ProLifeLouisiana.org/Sunday for access to the video.

• **Enlighten Your Youth**: Plan a special "Life Night" for your youth group that focuses on the pro-life cause. Invite a speaker or local group to visit with your youth and plug them into local pro-life efforts. Louisiana Right to Life's youth team offers engaging "Pro-Life 101" presentations designed for youth. You can also promote upcoming PULSE Immersion Camps sponsored by Louisiana Right to Life to train student pro-life leaders. www.ProLifePulseLA.com.

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What Your Congregation Can Do

Pastors, make suggestions to your church members of ways they can promote the Sanctity of Human Life in their homes and communities.

• **Pray:** Pray for men and women facing the fears associated with an unplanned pregnancy and for those who are suffering in silence with the regret of past choices they have made.

• **Speak Out:** Be respectfully brave on social media by posting honest articles that inform, help and heal.

• **Educate Yourself and Your Children:** Learn more about abortion and other life issues by reading books or articles. Watch a pro-life movie, such as "Unplanned," "Bella" or "October Baby" with your children and discuss it with them. Even books like "Horton Hears a Who!" by Dr. Seuss can instill a pro-life world view in young children.

• **Help a Pregnancy Center, Maternity Home or Adoption Agency:** Support a local pregnancy center, maternity home and/or adoption agency in your community. Pregnancy Centers provide free services to pregnant women to assist them both before and after birth. You may donate supplies or money, or volunteer your time. To find a list of all pregnancy resources in Louisiana, visit www.ADifficultChoice.com or www.ProLifeLouisiana.org/Centers.

• **Help the Elderly and Disabled:** Visit a nursing home or assisted living facility and listen to individuals' stories, help an elderly church member with projects around their home, provide respite care for parents of a special needs child, or pay for a disabled child to attend a summer camp or participate in another fun activity.

• **Give a Child a Home:** Become a foster parent, or adopt a child.

• **Participate in Outside Events:** Promote and participate in local, statewide, and national pro-life events, such as the Louisiana Life March gatherings held in multiple areas across the state. Learn more at www.LALifeMarch.com.

• **Be Politically Active:** Call local, state and national officials and let them know you don't want your tax dollars going to abortion providers like Planned Parenthood. Cast your votes for pro-life candidates.

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RESOURCES FOR YOU AND YOUR CHURCH

• **Visit** our Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in Louisiana webpage at www.ProLifeLouisiana.org/Sunday for a full list of resources, including links to outside Bible study suggestions and sermon notes.

• **Sign** up for Louisiana Right to Life's email list to stay in touch with what is happening in the local and national pro-life movement!

• **Become** a Louisiana Right to Life Luminary Member Church for as little as $50 a year. You will receive copies of our educational Luminary publication for distribution to your congregation.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

Louisiana Right to Life's team is always available to discuss ideas or provide advice to your church. Our team is available to visit your church to train your staff and volunteers or to provide pro-life messages or educational presentations. Contact us!

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Visit us on social media @LARighttoLife

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