

# ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Archbishop



Post Office Box 1979  
Chicago, Illinois 60690-1979

December 28, 2011  
Feast of the Holy Innocents

Dear Father,

*“A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she could not be consoled, since they were no more,”* Matthew 2:18. On the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the Church in her wisdom gives us time during the joyful Christmas season to reflect on the sadness of the young martyrs who died in the place of Christ. With Christ’s coming, new value is placed on human life – made in the image and likeness of God. Thus, on January 22, the Church remembers the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, the U.S. Supreme Court decisions that legalized abortion on demand throughout all nine months of pregnancy. Since those tragic decisions were handed down in 1973, more than 55 million children have been aborted in our nation. In 2010 alone, over 25,238 abortions were performed on women and their children in Cook and Lake Counties.

Therefore, I ask you – and all Catholics across the Archdiocese of Chicago – to place special focus on the sanctity of life and the *Roe* anniversary on the weekend of January 21-22, 2012. I ask that intercessory prayers, bulletin information, and homilies at all Masses that weekend focus on abortion and post-abortion healing. To that end, two resources from the USCCB, “Preaching for Life” and “Intercessions for Life,” are attached along with a Project Rachel brochure.

As you know, thousands of women and men in the pews of our parishes suffer post-abortion aftermath, while many more have left the Church entirely due to their misunderstanding of their status in the Church. I urge you to include information about the Catholic Church’s post-abortion healing program, Project Rachel, as part of your preaching for the weekend of January 21-22, and throughout the year when appropriate. The Respect Life Office will be happy to provide free Project Rachel post-abortion healing brochures for your parish pews or bulletin.

Another way to highlight the sanctity of life is the celebration of a special Mass on Monday, January 23, as provided in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 373:

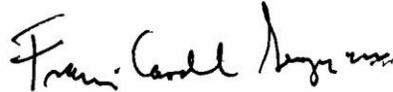
*In all the dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when the 22nd falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of prayer for restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion. The liturgical celebrations for this day may be the Mass “For Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life,” (no. 48/1 of the Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions,) celebrated with white vestments, or the Mass “For the Preservation of Peace and Justice” (no. 30 of the Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions,) should be celebrated with violet vestments.*

In addition, I hope that every parish will offer a Holy Hour for Life or some other form of prayer activity around the January 22 date. The Respect Life Office has a format for such a holy hour that they can send to you if you wish. My hope is that every parish in the Archdiocese will have an *active* Parish Respect Life Coordinator and Committee to assist you in the mission of spreading the message of the Gospel of Life in your parish community. If you do not have a coordinator, the New Year is a good time to identify a volunteer in your parish to serve in this ministry.

Finally, I invite you to join me to concelebrate the annual Archdiocesan Mass for Life on Saturday, January 14, 2012, at 5:00 p.m., at Saint Sylvester Parish, which is located at 2157 N. Humboldt Blvd., Chicago. Please contact the Respect Life Office at 312-534-5355 if you have any questions about these events, if you would like copies of any of the resources mentioned above, or if you have named a new Parish Respect Life Coordinator.

Let us ask the Holy Innocents to intercede for us that we may bring about a renewed respect for human life in our society. Thank you for your dedication to your people. You are in my daily prayers; please keep me in yours.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.", written in a cursive style.

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.  
Archbishop of Chicago

Enclosure:  
USCCB Homily Notes and Intercessions for Life  
Archdiocesan Project Rachel Brochure