



Christians and parish communities to consider ways in which they can reach out and care for those around them who may be vulnerable to suicide, as well as to those who continue to suffer as a result of the suicide of someone close to them.

The Church wishes to show its care for and closeness to those who, for whatever reason, believe their own lives are no longer worthwhile and are tempted to give up on life itself.

We all have a role play – a call to work together for the culture of life

The culture of life affirms the inherent value of life at all of its stages. It seeks to build an environment of compassion and care that nurtures and sustains life, even in the midst of the most challenging of human events and personal circumstances.

Catholic social teaching holds up the vision that no person should ever be marginalised or set aside. All have an inherent value and worth that comes not from governments or the State, but from the very heart of God. The *Year of Faith* is an opportunity for each of us to renew our commitment as Christians to building up the culture of life and leading others to Christ by the quality of love and care we show to others in his name.

As Christians we also take this opportunity to invite all people of good will, all those who wish to build a society more worthy of the human person, to give renewed value to the place of selfless love and care for others in social, political, economic and cultural life, making respect for the inherent dignity and preciousness of life, from conception to natural death, the constant standard by which all our decisions are made.

Day for Life Prayer

Holy Mary, Mother of Love, holding in your arms, the fruit of your womb, graciously look upon our earth and remove from it all that hardens our hearts and dims our eyes to the preciousness of human life, from the moment of conception to natural death.

Through the example of your tenderness teach us the ways of compassion and love that we may build up the civilisation of love among us and a society that is truly worthy of the human person.

Help us to reject all that contributes to a culture of death, and to work with others of goodwill in promoting the culture of life.

Bring us ever closer to your Son, so that we may know the fullness of life that he offers us and come to know that life more perfectly, with you, and all the angels and saints, in the eternal life of Heaven.

Amen.



Day for Life is celebrated yearly by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition: www.dayforlife.org

Resources

WEBSITES

www.catholicbishops.ie
Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference website

www.dayforlife.org
Day for Life website

Choose Life

Website: www.chooselife2013.ie

Twitter: @ChooseLife2013

Facebook: Choose Life 2013

RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS

Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)
1995 Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II

Choose Life

Pastoral Letter from the
Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference 2012

As a society we need to care for our carers and ensure that they have the resources and support they need to do their job well.



www.catholicbishops.ie



Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference



@catholicbishops



www.youtube.com/user/IrishCatholicBishops



VERITAS
www.veritas.ie

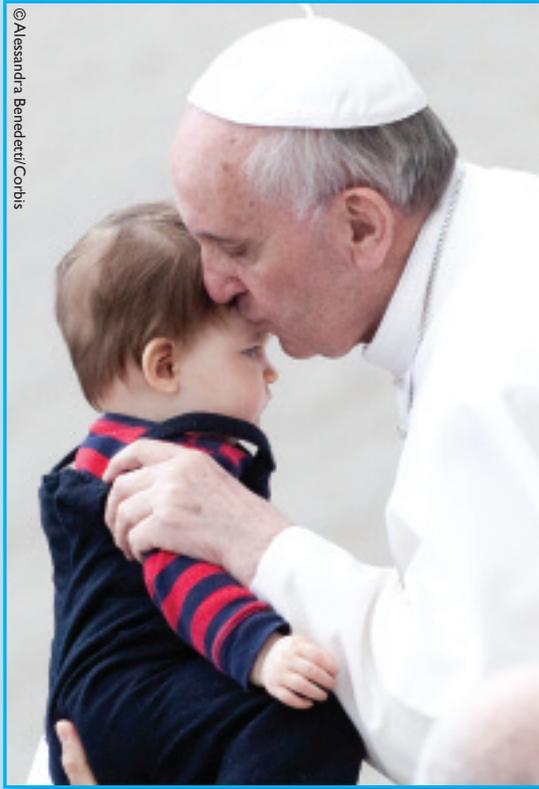
DAY FOR LIFE
Sunday, 6 October 2013

**Care for Life:
It's Worth It**

*Professing our Faith
in a Culture of Life*



IRISH CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMRÁDHL BAPSAID CRISTLICEACH ÉIREANN



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In response to Pope Francis' words – how can we promote a culture of life?

We can build a culture of life by our compassion and care for others, especially those who are vulnerable, and by speaking of the need to care for life. It means seeing life as a whole, caring for it as a 'seamless garment', stretching from natural birth to natural death. Three issues from within this seamless garment of the culture of life are of particular concern at this time:

Care for unborn children and their mothers

The Church strives to protect the lives of unborn children and their mothers and to support them – practically, emotionally and spiritually.

As parishioners, parents, politicians, members of the legal, caring and medical professions, we have a duty to do all we can to build a culture of life by encouraging our society in its laws and medical practice to care for and protect the life of unborn children and their expectant mothers. From conception to natural death, life is a precious gift. The life of a mother and her unborn child are both sacred and deserve to be equally protected.

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God, our loving Father, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation is always ready to embrace with understanding and compassion all those men and women who feel remorse over an abortion and come to confession seeking forgiveness, reconciliation and absolution.

Care for people who are elderly

Caring for the elderly is a noble vocation. Throughout the centuries the Church has played a leading role, and is prominent today, in providing such care.

Whether I am a carer in the home or a professional carer, I contribute to a culture of life when I look beyond the challenges that can be part of caring for a person with special physical or mental needs and see the inherent dignity and eternal destiny of the person I am called to care for. As Christians we can also offer up the challenges that sometimes come with caring for others as a spiritual sacrifice and an opportunity to grow in personal holiness and grace.



While many individuals and institutions provide outstanding care for the aged, there have also been recent disturbing reports of very poor care for the elderly and the infirm. Often this has its roots in a prevalent attitude, which was described by Pope Francis as effectively saying, 'this elderly man, this elderly woman, is useless; discard them, like we hang up the raincoat during the summer ... because they're now disposable, they're useless'.

The culture of life, on the other hand, embraces a love that inspires self-giving. It is a love that allows us to see in every person another self and compels us to protect and care for that person as we would our very selves. It is expressed in practical terms as compassion and care, especially for the most vulnerable. It embraces those whose lives would otherwise be neglected or rejected because of the consumerist, 'cost-benefit' approach to life and care that is increasingly evident in our society.

As a society we need to care for our carers and ensure that they have the resources and support they need to do their job well.

Care for those who are suicidal and their families

The increased incidence of suicide, especially among younger men¹ is a matter of grave concern.

The Church wishes to show its care for and closeness to those who, for whatever reason, believe their own lives are no longer worthwhile and are tempted to give up on life itself.

We appeal to all those who may find themselves with suicidal thoughts to seek help and support from others around them, especially from those voluntary and statutory agencies with experience of providing appropriate support and care in this area. We appeal to you to choose life, not death. We appeal to you not to be deceived by the lie that taking one's own life, in any circumstances, is a helpful, humane or dignified solution to any problem. Suicide is never the solution.

Often, when someone dies by suicide, the difficulties for those left behind are simply multiplied many times over. A long shadow of grief, pain and confusion is cast over the lives of family, friends and the wider community.

It is important to avoid the impression that a certain level of suicide is inevitable in society and therefore quietly tolerable. In the Samaritans' most recent annual report, they state their belief 'that a reduction in suicide is not only possible but that it is an urgent and important priority'.² We take the opportunity as a Church to echo that sentiment today. We call on the Government to give priority to strategies and services that seek to prevent suicide and which provide adequate support and care for those who are feeling suicidal and their families. We encourage individual

^[1] Cf. *Suicide Statistics Report 2013: for the UK and ROI*, by the Samaritans.

^[2] *Ibid.*, p.4

Some years ago, when celebrating Mass in honour of St Raymond Nonnatus, the Patron Saint of expectant mothers and midwives, Pope Francis spoke simply and beautifully about what promoting a culture of life really means:

'Jesus teaches us to care for life because it is the image of God, who is absolute life. We cannot announce anything else but life, and from the beginning to the end.

All of us must care for life, cherish life, with tenderness, warmth ... to give life is to open the heart, and to care for life is to expend one's self in tenderness and warmth for others, to have concern in my heart for others.

Caring for life from the beginning to the end. What a simple thing, what a beautiful thing ... So, go forth and don't be discouraged. Care for life. It's worth it!

Homily of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, during a Mass in honour of St Raymond Nonnatus, Patron Saint of expectant mothers, Argentina (31 August 2005)