



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

# Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics



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**March 2022**

Dear Friends for Life,

## **40 DAYS FOR LIFE**

As we reach the midpoint of Lent, so too, we find ourselves at the midpoint of the 40 Days for Life (40DFL) Spring Campaign. We are so grateful to all those who have been a part of this most important form of peaceful witness that brings a message of love and mercy, person to person, to those contemplating an abortion or involved in this destructive industry. We are especially thankful to Bishop Henning and Bishop Coyle for celebrating the Kick-Off Masses at Hempstead and Smithtown as well as the young adults who gave moving testimonies at the Patchogue Kick-Off event. It is not too late to join a campaign—just one hour a week could save a life! And remember:

*My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you should stray from the truth and someone bring him back, he should know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. --James 5:19*

## **DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS**

March 21 also marked World Down Syndrome Day. In the U.S., one in 700 children born have Trisomy 21 or Down Syndrome (DS), the most common chromosomal disorder.<sup>1</sup> Estimates are that upwards of two-thirds (and in some places, like Iceland, up to 100%) of babies suspected to have DS on prenatal testing are aborted,<sup>2</sup> despite a survey study published in 2011, that found most people with DS are happy and find their lives fulfilling.<sup>3</sup>

Abortion does not eliminate DS, it merely eliminates the unique and unrepeatable person who has DS. Studies indicate that the best way to eradicate abortion as a default option for a DS prenatal diagnosis is with accurate information, positive stories, and personal interactions.<sup>4</sup> This can make all the difference in dispelling parents' fear and worry that a child with DS will have a life of burden. This witness can change lives, too. Please check out our website for information to help with this (under Support & Services).<sup>5</sup>

## CONSECRATION OF RUSSIA AND UKRAINE: WHY WE NEED IT

In the last month there has been a maelstrom of activity on the abortion front: the Women's Health Protection Act failed to pass the U.S. Senate,<sup>6</sup> the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) has insisted on the use of language which may obscure the reality of abortion (because transparent language makes matters clear!),<sup>7</sup> and while many states are adopting stricter abortion laws (perhaps in anticipation of a post-*Roe v. Wade* environment)<sup>8</sup> other states are aggressively pursuing increased abortion access.<sup>9</sup> But the most visible affront to life right now is the Russian-Ukraine War playing out in real time through the media and giving us a virtual experience of the devastating casualties of war. Indeed, these wartime images are a palpable depiction of the consequences of a wholesale denial of the sanctity of all human life. In a certain way, they are a vivid reminder of the more private tragedy of the war crime that takes place in the womb with every abortion.

In response to this war and the devastating attack on human life, *Pope Francis will consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary this Friday, March 25, 2022, the Feast of the Annunciation.*<sup>10</sup> Bishops throughout the world will undertake this same prayer for peace on Friday. Our own Bishop Barres will join Pope Francis in this Act of Consecration during the 12:10pm Mass he will celebrate at St. Agnes on that day.<sup>11</sup> Let us join in person or at least in spiritual unity through the virtual options available [here](#).

But what is Consecration? There are three general ways in which we speak of "consecration," which is derived from the Latin, *consecrare*, to render sacred or make holy:

1. Consecration is the part of the Mass during which the substance of bread and wine are transformed into the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, when the priest repeats the same words Jesus used at the Last Supper (the institution of the Eucharist).<sup>12</sup>
2. Consecration is also the exclusive dedication of something or someone to God and His service. For example, a Church, an altar, or a liturgical vessel can be consecrated by a solemn blessing that differentiates its purpose only for the Divine—it is no longer to be used for mundane purposes.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, persons can be consecrated to God through a permanent religious vow. Through Baptism, we are all set apart for God, but for those inspired by the Holy Spirit to give themselves completely to Him in service of the Kingdom, there is the consecrated, or religious, life. This more intimate consecration, an imitation of the self-emptying of Christ, entails a permanent vow of celibacy, poverty and obedience so that one may pursue more intentionally the perfection of charity in his or her life, all for the glory of God.<sup>14</sup> Consecration is also another name for the ordination of priests because a man is "set apart" by Christ for His Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit which "permits the exercise of a 'sacred power.'"<sup>15</sup>

3. Finally, Consecration to Mary is a personal devotion in which one entrusts his or her entire life (body, soul, merits, etc.) to Our Lady because it is through her intercession that we most perfectly (and quickly!) are led to union with Christ. The basis of Marian Consecration is John 19:26-27, in which Jesus, about to breathe His last, entrusts John, the disciple He loved, to His mother: "Woman, behold, your son" and "Behold, your mother." This consummate gift of self is permanent and lived, both interiorly (in our prayer life) and exteriorly (in our actions), under the guidance of Mary. This devotion can and should be renewed regularly.<sup>16</sup> In the Middle Ages, the idea of personal consecration was extended to places like countries or cities as an intercession for a whole people to be placed under Mary's protection and guidance. And this, too, can be reaffirmed in a re-consecration.<sup>17</sup>

Why is Consecration important now? In 1917, in the heat of World War I, Our Lady appeared at Fatima to three shepherd children. She requested that to bring peace to the world, as per God's desire, **Russia must be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart (a particular aspect of her holiness) and that reparations be made through the devotion of First Saturdays.** (Note that, Ukraine was not an independent country at the time of the Fatima apparitions.) **Otherwise, Russia's errors would disseminate throughout the world and would result in more war and persecution for the Church.** Following this, there have been numerous consecrations of Russia (and the entire world) carried out by several popes over the last century.<sup>18</sup>

Now, as we see the horrors of war once again, with the potential for a nuclear World War III, it seems ever so necessary to consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary again. Both the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Russian Conference of Catholic Bishops are in agreement to entrust the people of their countries to Mary's heart and motherly protection: "We want to ask Our Lady with her heavenly power that the shedding of blood may stop, as soon as possible."<sup>19</sup> And **consecration is the surest way to achieve that peace.** This worldwide attention is also a way to remind each of us of the opportunity to entrust ourselves individually to her Immaculate Heart.

Please join Pope Francis, Bishop Barros and all the bishops of the world as we pray for peace in Ukraine and Russia through this solemn Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary—on this important feast day, when she proclaimed her "Yes!" as the Mother of God. Let us also pray for peace across the world, in our homes and in our families, most especially for peace in the womb of every mother with child.

*All this is inhuman! Indeed, it is also sacrilegious because it goes against the sacredness of human life, especially against defenseless human life, which must be respected and protected, not eliminated, and this comes before any strategy! Let us not forget it is inhuman and sacrilegious cruelty!....May she, the Queen of Peace, help us obtain peace."-- Pope Francis<sup>20</sup>*

## PRAY UNCEASINGLY

Let us continue to pray unceasingly. Consider doing a personal Consecration to Mary or renewing your **Marian Consecration.** Additionally, there is the devotion of **First Saturdays** revealed to Sister Lucia of the Fatima apparitions, which focuses on repentance, conversion and reparation with the promise of salvific graces at the hour of death; as with Marian Consecration this is also very important to bringing us closer to Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary.<sup>21</sup> And finally, you might join the Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics at 3:00 p.m., the Divine Mercy Hour, this Friday afternoon, the Feast of the Annunciation, as we begin a monthly **Rosary for Life** to continue every fourth Friday of the month.<sup>22</sup>

### The Angel's Prayer

*With the Blessed Sacrament suspended in the air, the angel at Fatima prostrated himself, and recited the prayer:*

O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifferences by which He is offended. By the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg the conversion of poor sinners."<sup>23</sup>

Sincerely in Christ,

  
Lisa A. Honkaniemi, M.D.

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- <sup>1</sup> [Down Syndrome Facts | National Down Syndrome Society \(ndss.org\)](#)
  - <sup>2</sup> [Prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome: a systematic review of termination rates \(1995–2011\) - Natoli - 2012 - Prenatal Diagnosis - Wiley Online Library](#)
  - <sup>3</sup> [Self-perceptions from people with Down syndrome - Skotko - 2011 - American Journal of Medical Genetics Part A - Wiley Online Library](#)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=d6GewCpuC30&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=d6GewCpuC30&feature=emb_logo)
  - <sup>4</sup> [Down Syndrome Awareness Makes a Difference - Public Discourse \(thepublicdiscourse.com\)](#)
  - <sup>5</sup> [Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis – DRVC Office of Human Life, Family, & Bioethics \(drvclife.org\)](#)
  - <sup>6</sup> [U.S. Senate: U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 117th Congress - 2nd Session](#)
  - <sup>7</sup> [Guide to Language and Abortion \(acog.org\)](#)
  - <sup>8</sup> [States Introduce Record Number of Pro-Life Bills This Year to Protect Babies From Abortion - LifeNews.com](#)
  - <sup>9</sup> [Reproductive Health Equity Act | Colorado General Assembly](#)
  - <sup>10</sup> [Pope invites bishops to join him in consecration of Russia and Ukraine - Vatican News](#)
  - <sup>11</sup> [Act-of-Consecration-Flyer-full-v6-scaled.jpg \(1978×2560\) \(drvclife.org\)](#)
  - <sup>12</sup> John Hardon, *Catholic Dictionary* (New York: Image, 2013), 107.  
*Catechism of the Catholic Church with modifications from the Editio Typica*, 2nd edition Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 1997, 1377.
  - <sup>13</sup> [7 Questions \(and answers!\) about consecrating Russia to Mary \(aleteia.org\)](#)
  - <sup>14</sup> *Catholic Catechism*, 915-917, 932.
  - <sup>15</sup> *Catholic Catechism*, 1538.
  - <sup>16</sup> [Pope to consecrate Russia to Immaculate Heart \(aleteia.org\)](#)
  - <sup>17</sup> [7 Questions \(and answers!\) about consecrating Russia to Mary \(aleteia.org\)](#)
  - <sup>18</sup> [7 Questions \(and answers!\) about consecrating Russia to Mary \(aleteia.org\)](#)  
[Pope Francis to consecrate Russia and Ukraine to Immaculate Heart of Mary | Catholic News Agency](#)
  - <sup>19</sup> [7 Questions \(and answers!\) about consecrating Russia to Mary \(aleteia.org\)](#)  
[Vatican News Russian Bishops: Consecration to Mary is prayer, not magic - Today's Catholic Online \(todayscatholic.com.my\)](#)
  - <sup>20</sup> [Pope: 'War of aggression against Ukraine is inhuman and sacrilegious' - Vatican News](#)
  - <sup>21</sup> [5 Things to Know About First Saturdays \(aleteia.org\)](#)
  - <sup>22</sup> [Rosary-for-Life-2022-791x1024.jpg \(791×1024\) \(drvclife.org\)](#)
  - <sup>23</sup> [Fatima Prayers.pdf \(lighthousecatholicmedia.org\)](#)