



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
**Office of Human Life,
Family and Bioethics**



+JMJ+

November 21, 2022

Dear Respect Life Leaders:

Last year, many of you celebrated **National Night of Prayer for Life** in your parishes. For those who did not or who may not be familiar with this beautiful prayer event, **we encourage you to join in with us this year.** This is the 33rd anniversary of this event. In the wake of the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision, let us make it special! It is fairly simple to arrange and yet profound in its impact.

PURPOSE

The purpose of National Night of Prayer for Life is for all corners of our nation to implore Our Lord, through His Holy Mother, to have mercy on our country and to enkindle a renewed reverence for the most sacred gift of Life created in His Image.

CONNECTION TO THE MARIAN FEAST DAYS

In 1846, the Blessed Virgin Mary was chosen by the U.S. bishops to be the Patroness of the United States of America under her title of the Immaculate Conception. Although the absolute purity of Our Lady's conception was held traditionally at that time, it was not until December 8, 1854 that Pope Pius IX promulgated the Immaculate Conception as dogma. For centuries, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated on December 9 in some parts of the world (including Mexico). But it wasn't until 1708, that Pope Clement XI moved the feast to December 8 for the entire world.

Our Lady of Guadalupe (under whom this Office is consecrated) is Patroness of the Americas and the Unborn. Beginning December 9, 1531, she appeared to Saint Juan Diego in a series of apparitions and requested a church be built in her honor. It was on the last day, December 12, that she directed him to pick flowers from a cold and barren area and to deliver them to the Bishop as a sign of her validity. When St. Juan Diego opened his cloak (tilma) containing the flowers, and the Bishop saw the Castilian roses (not native to this area) tumble out, he believed. To their further astonishment, the ordinary tilma now miraculously bore the image of the Heavenly Lady. We know this as the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe which can be found, perfectly preserved, in Mexico City. In addition to many miracles, her appearance led to the end of the Aztec's human sacrifice and the conversion of ten million natives to the Faith. We celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12.

By holding this vigil on December 8th into the 9th we honor Our Lady in the Feast of the Immaculate Conception as well as recognizing the historical connection to the first appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Under both titles she offers us protection and hope, and so, as Patroness of our country and of the Unborn,

we ask her intercession to likewise end the contemporary slaughter of innocent human life and for the conversion of the hard-hearted:

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, *pray for us!*
Our Lady of Guadalupe, *pray for us!*

WHAT IT ENTAILS

Essential components for the evening include

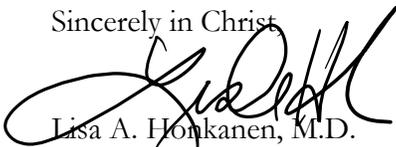
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Benediction
- Recitation of the Rosary

There is an optional (but recommended!) prayer format available for download on the official website, www.nationalnightofprayerforlife.org (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)). Ultimately, the program for the evening, including how many hours you do, will be dependent on your parish environment and at your pastor's discretion.

The evening is intended to cover four hours ideally, from December 8 at 9:00 p.m. to December 9 at 1:00 a.m. The most significant in meaning is the "hour of unity" during which churches in all four time zones across the United States are praying for the protection of all Human Life, the Family, our Church, and this nation. For us in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, that is the final hour commencing at Midnight. This may be difficult for some groups and so accommodations to the schedule are understandable. All efforts are welcome!

Please see the "Action Steps" below. I hope this is helpful in planning a beautiful evening. God sees everything you do!

Sincerely in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa A. Honkanen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "H".

Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D.

ACTION STEPS:

1. **Get approval** from your pastor. You may show him this letter.
2. **Determine the hours** you will be able to hold the vigil.
3. **Arrangements:**
 - Reserve the church/chapel
 - Coordinate with your pastor for Exposition/Benediction
 - (Optional) Arrange for a musician volunteer
4. **Complete the attached form** so that your parish's participation will be registered along with other parishes. These will be posted on our website.
5. **Promote:**
 - Advertise and promote with the flyer (or prepare your own) for posting on parish websites, in parish bulletins, on social media, etc. You may use the attached flyer from the National Night of Prayer for Life or the flyer created by the Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics for this purpose (accessible in two ways):
 - a. Flyer for download: [National-Night-of-Prayer-for-Life-2022.jpg \(1224×1584\) \(drvc.org\)](#)
OR
 - b. Bulletin Board link for bulletin editors: [Bulletin Board - The Diocese of Rockville Centre \(drvc.org\)](#)
 - Share with your Respect Life members as well as other ministries within your parish.
 - Invite family and friends.
 - Prepare a pulpit announcement.
6. **Print the prayer format** (links above) or prepare your own guide for the evening to include the essential elements as appropriate for your circumstances.