Family Learning Plan: A Life-Affirming Family

1. Disrespect for Human Life

Following the spirit of the Fifth Commandment: "You shall not kill" means respecting and protecting all human life. But choosing life, respecting life, and protecting life are difficult today. All families are surrounded by life-denying and -destroying images, stories, and practices. Together as a family think of things that show disrespect for human life.

- **TV Shows.** Name several TV shows that you are familiar with that show disrespect for human life. Use the weekly TV listing to survey TV shows. What are they teaching your family about human life?
- **Movies.** Name several movies that you are familiar with that show disrespect for human life. What are they teaching your family about human life?
- **Video Games.** Think about two or three of the most popular video games in the past year. What are they teaching about human life?
- **News Stories.** Think about some of the biggest news stories over the past year in your community and in the world. Use the magazines at your table to find stories and pictures that show disrespect for human life. What are they telling us about respect for human life.
- **Family Life.** Think of some of the things you do in your family, such as the way people treat each other, that shows disrespect for the other person.

Create a newsprint report of what you discovered. Use only the left side of the paper. (Use the newsprint long-ways for this activity.) Write a headline that says: "Ways We Disrespect Human Life." Write the names of TV shows, movies, video games, and news stories that you identified. Children can illustrate the poster with pictures from magazines and/or drawings.

2. The Church's Message on Human Life

Review the Church's message on human life with your family.

The Bible and the Catholic Tradition teach us that:

- We know that all human life is sacred and a gift from God. All actions that support and protect life support the Fifth Commandment.
- All people possess the human dignity that comes from being made in God's image, and we do not have the right to take that life away from others or ourselves. The Fifth Commandment reminds us that the fundamental respect for life that is owed to every person. Because every life comes from God, every human life is sacred from the moment of conception until the time of death.
- We have a responsibility to honor and protect life at all stages, from conception to old age. All human life is sacred, including the life of the unborn and the elderly. The life of an unborn child is most fragile, and it is deserving of

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the greatest respect and care. Thus, the intentional ending of the life of an unborn child is a grave sin.

- Jesus said that even anger can be sinful if it is not controlled; anger can harden into hatred. Hatred can lead to revenge, or getting back at someone for something that has happened, or to violence.
- The Catholic Church teaches that the death penalty, or, capital punishment, is almost always wrong. Alternatives, such as life in prison without parole, are preferred.
- We respect the dignity of the human person by respecting the rights of others, taking care of ourselves physically and emotionally, and not abusing ourselves or others.

Showing respect for God's gift of life is a way to honor God and defend the dignity of others. To respect and protect human life we should:

- Let go of harmful anger that can lead to hatred or revenge.
- Avoid violence. Violence is justified only in defense of self or others when all other solutions have failed.
- Protect children not yet born.
- Treat persons with disabilities justly and with dignity.
- Help people who are seriously ill or in physical or emotional pain.
- Show proper respect for our health and the health of others.
- Do not abuse any substance, including food, tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs.
- Never see suicide as the solution to a problem or an illness.

Part 3. Celebrate Human Life

Using the key teachings of the "Church's Message on Human Life," identify how people demonstrate a respect for human life: in your family, in churches, in the community, and in the country and world. Think about events in our world (news stories) over the past year that celebrate life and a respect for human life; people who work (or have worked) to protect and respect human life—locally in your parish or community, nation or world; and ways you act in your extended family that demonstrate a respect for human life .

Using the right side of the newsprint paper, write a headline that says: "Ways People Respect Human Life." Write all the ways you celebrate human life. Children can illustrate the poster with pictures from magazines and/or drawings.

Part 4. A Pledge: A People *of* Life and *for* Life

One of the best ways to help concretize the work of respecting and protecting human life is through a pledge for action. Review the pledge as a family and discuss how you can live the pledge to respect and protect human life. Be specific! Consider the following:

- What are the strengths or benefits of living this the pledge?
- What will it mean for us to live the pledge?

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- What changes will it involve? What will we need to start doing? Stop doing?

Sign the pledge as a family and, when you get home, post the pledge on the refrigerator or other prominent place in your home to remind every family member of the commitment to respect and protect human life. Then review your commitment and actions each month.

Part 5. Prayers for Life

Conclude by creating several "Prayers for Life" for the closing prayer. Write each individual prayer on an index card. Here are several examples:

- For families and persons who care for those with special emotional or physical needs, we pray:
- For those who have grown old, that society will acknowledge the contributions which the elderly have made and continue to make to our world, we pray:
- For all who do not embrace the rights of the unborn that, in love, they may come to know and treasure the infinite value of every human person, we pray:

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