



# DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

## PRO-LIFE

### *Newsletter*

Welcome, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The 2026 Annual Pro-Life Mass was a tremendous success. God is good!

Nearly 2,000 faithful gathered on Thursday, March 19, at the Nelson Center Ice Rink for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass concelebrated by Bishop Louis Tylka and our own Bishop Thomas John Paprocki. From infants to the elderly – including many Catholic school students from across Illinois – the joyful witness of the Church was powerfully visible.

I am deeply proud that the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois continues to host, organize, support, and finance this important annual event for the spiritual benefit of Catholics throughout our state.



What impressed me most was the unmistakable joy shared throughout the Mass which brought to mind Luke 24:32:

*“And they said to one another, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?’”*

There has never been a time in the history of our world when the dignity of human life has *not* been vulnerable and 2026 is certainly no different. Our faith calls us to pray for and serve all those in spiritual and corporeal poverty, *especially* those who are unborn because they are indeed the most vulnerable members of society.

In accordance with the Church Teaching of Preferential Option for the Poor, the Pro-Life Mass was deeply encouraging. It was very affirming to join in solidarity with so many Catholics publicly gathering in prayer, charity, and joyful witness to the Gospel of Life.

Thank you to everyone who attended, prayed, volunteered, traveled, and helped make this year’s Mass such a beautiful



*Above: 2026 Pro-Life Mass*

expression of faith in action.

Catholic groups were also strongly represented at the Illinois Pro-Life March organized by Illinois Right to Life, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to defending the dignity of human life. The rally featured several speakers, including Bishop Thomas John Paprocki and Kramer Soderberg, head basketball coach at Millikin University.

Filled with prayer, peaceful witness, and joyful song, the march brought together Christians of many backgrounds in public support of the Gospel of Life. Throughout the day, participants demonstrated a spirit of charity, hope, and visible faith in the public square.

Overall, the event served as a safe, encouraging, and inspirational witness to the dignity of every human person.

Coming Up This Summer: *Biking For Babies!*

National Ride Cycles Across the Country to Support Women, Families, and Pregnancy Care



*Above and Below: 2025 Biking for Babies riders!*

Biking for Babies missionaries ride July 13–18, including through the Diocese of Springfield

Biking for Babies, a national nonprofit that forms young adults as Christian missionary disciples, will host its annual National Ride from July 13–18, bringing together cyclist and support-crew missionaries in a six-day effort to renew the culture of life through personal transformation in holiness and raising awareness and financial support for pregnancy resource centers and the women, men, and the children and families they serve.

Founded in 2009, Biking for Babies combines physical challenge, community life, and faith-based reflection to prepare young adults to serve others with courage, discipline, and compassion. The organization partners with pregnancy resource centers across the country, helping expand access to free, life-affirming care for families navigating unexpected or difficult situations.

During the National Ride, teams travel approximately 600 miles across nine distinct U.S. routes, stopping in local communities to



share stories from the front lines of the culture of life and invite people to be part of the mission. Each team includes both rider missionaries and support-crew missionaries, who serve side by side.

While riders take on the physical demands of the road, support-crew missionaries ensure safety, logistics, hospitality, and encouragement, playing an equally essential role in the success and purpose of the ride.

Teams depart from distinct regional starting points, as outlined on the National Ride website, and travel through many communities before concluding with Celebration of Life events. Along the way, they host gatherings at churches and in homes, creating opportunities for local residents to learn more about pregnancy care resources and how to support families in need.

Since its founding, Biking for Babies has formed more than 300 missionaries and partnered with nearly 300 pregnancy resource centers, providing approximately \$2.5 million in financial support while increasing public awareness



*Above: Speaker Jessica Parrill at the *Breaking the Silence: A Women's Day of Hope and Healing* event sponsored by Right to Life of Edgar County.*

of compassionate care available to women, men, and families across the United States.

Biking for Babies has a rich history within the Diocese of Springfield, stopping in many communities across the region.

This year, missionaries from four different teams will stop in Springfield, Carlinville, Virden, Quincy, and Effingham, with public touchpoints at all but Effingham where they'll hold a private audience with local supporters. Community members can follow the ride, find events along each route, and learn how to get involved at [bikingforbabies.com/national-ride](http://bikingforbabies.com/national-ride).

Those who wish to support the mission financially can donate at [bikingforbabies.com/give](http://bikingforbabies.com/give), helping fund missionary formation, essential supplies, and pregnancy resource centers nationwide.

If you would like to 1) get involved or 2) attend B4B participant testimonies, please email me ([mcarlson@dio.org](mailto:mcarlson@dio.org)) or call me (217-321-1132) and I will put you in touch with your local

organizer.

For more information about the program, visit [www.bikingforbabies.com](http://www.bikingforbabies.com).

Right to Life of Edgar County:  
Two Events!



### *Safe Haven Awareness*

Right to Life of Edgar County recently hosted a Safe Haven Awareness Event on April 24 in Paris, IL, bringing together local leaders, first responders, healthcare professionals, and pro-life advocates to promote awareness of Illinois' Safe Haven law. The event included presentations at Horizon Health, the Paris Fire Department, and the Paris Police Department, where new Safe Haven signs were presented in partnership with the Save Abandoned Babies Foundation.



*Left to Right: Horizon Health staff Rachel Kelley, Eunice Chaney, Kyra Graham, Jay Carmichael President and CEO, Samantha McCarty Director of Emergency Services; Vice President of Save Abandoned Babies Foundation Tahj McDaniel; Right to Life of Edgar County Board Members Linda Lane, Mary Taylor, Mary Ann Sullivan*

Special thanks to the dedicated members of Right to Life of Edgar County for their continued witness to the dignity of every human life and for the care they show to families and mothers in crisis.

Their longstanding commitment to serving the Paris community with compassion, generosity, and hope is deeply appreciated throughout the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

More information and photos are attached!

*Breaking the Silence: A Women's Day of Hope and Healing*

Right to Life of Edgar County recently hosted *“Breaking the Silence: A Women’s Day of Hope and Healing”* in Paris, Illinois – a powerful reminder that the pro-life movement is not only about protecting unborn children, but also about loving and healing women hurt by abortion, addiction, trauma, and despair.

Women gathered for fellowship, testimony, prayer, encouragement, and practical healing resources. Speakers shared personal stories of recovery, motherhood, forgiveness, and hope. One attendee said the testimonies mattered because *“so many women have gone through so many silent struggles.”*

Jessica Parrill encouraged mothers not to give up:

*“Your past may be part of your story, but it is not the end of it.”*

The event reflected a truth often ignored by the media and

abortion industry: countless women carry deep emotional and spiritual wounds after abortion and need compassion, community, and healing – not silence.

Right to Life of Edgar County continues its mission to defend the dignity of every human life as a God-given gift through education, advocacy, and support for life-affirming ministries.

Please read the attachment for the full story.

Calendar Clarification:

Some have asked me how to best promote their local Pro-Life events, so here are some guidelines:

- If you're hosting a real event (a specific date, time, and place – like a speaker, prayer service, march, training, Mass, or retreat), and it's organized by a parish, school, or a diocesan-affiliated group, it can go on the diocesan website calendar and in the Pro-Life newsletter. You'll just need to submit it through the [[dio.org/events](https://dio.org/events)]Diocesan Event Request Form.
- If it's a small, local gathering (for example, a meeting

or very low-key parish activity), it might not fit the diocesan website calendar — but it can still go in the Pro-Life newsletter, since that newsletter is specifically for our pro-life community.

- If it's not an event but an ongoing initiative (like a prayer campaign, sidewalk outreach, or a program), those don't go on the diocesan calendar — but they are perfect for the Pro-Life newsletter!

To submit pro-life events for consideration in the next quarterly Pro-Life newsletter, please email: [SpiProlife@dio.org](mailto:SpiProlife@dio.org), "Pro-Life Event" in the subject line.

Include:

- Event title
- Date & time
- Location
- Brief 2-3 sentence description
- Contact information

The Office for Pro-Life newsletter will be distributed quarterly: February, May, August, and November.

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**Formation Feature: *Safe Haven Laws Protect Life***

Every child is a gift from God. Every mother deserves compassion, support, and hope – especially in moments of fear or crisis.

That is why Illinois has Safe Haven laws. Under Illinois law, a parent may safely surrender an unharmed newborn infant at designated locations such as hospitals, police stations, or fire departments. The child immediately receives protection and care, and the parent may do so without fear of prosecution when the law is properly followed.

Safe Haven laws exist because a just society protects the most vulnerable. They provide a life-affirming alternative in desperate situations and remind us that no child is disposable.

This reflects the heart of Catholic Social Teaching: the dignity of every human person created in the image of God.

Saint John Paul II taught:

“A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members.”

The unborn, newborn children, frightened mothers, and struggling families all deserve protection and mercy.

Catholic teaching also reminds us that freedom must be joined to responsibility and solidarity. We are called not only to defend innocent life, but also to build communities where women are not abandoned and children are welcomed with love.

In a culture that too often treats human life as disposable, Safe Haven laws are a small but important witness that every life matters.

Saint John Paul II, *pray for us!*

Faithful Citizenship: *USCCB Urges Congress to Defend Life and Support Families*

Attached to this newsletter is a recent letter from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to Congress regarding federal budget priorities for Fiscal Year 2027. The bishops call on lawmakers to protect the dignity of human life “from conception to natural death” and to support policies that strengthen mothers, children, and families.

The letter strongly supports:

- maintaining the Hyde Amendment and other protections against taxpayer-funded abortion,
- redirecting funding away from abortion providers,
- increased support for mothers and children through programs such as WIC,
- stronger family-centered policies,
- and ethical alternatives to IVF that respect the dignity of unborn human life.

The bishops also emphasize an important Catholic principle: *being pro-life means more than opposing abortion. It also means supporting women in crisis, helping families flourish, protecting children, and ensuring that the vulnerable are not abandoned.*

I encourage you to take a few moments to read the attached letter. It is inspiring to read our Bishops advocate for just legislation!

Witness to Human Dignity

“Pro-life” is a modern term, but the Church’s defense of human dignity is ancient. From the earliest centuries, Christians have proclaimed the sacredness of every human life, created in the image of God and destined for communion with Him.



*By Unknown author - en.wikipedia, Public Domain,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10727408>*

The saints remind us that God's mercy can transform any life into a witness of hope and charity.

St. Bartolo Longo (1841-1926) was once far from the faith, caught in spiritual confusion and despair, even participating in occult practices and anti-Catholic movements. Yet through the grace of God, devotion to the Rosary, and the loving witness of faithful Catholics, he experienced a profound conversion to Jesus Christ.

That conversion did not remain private. It changed the way he lived.

St. Bartolo Longo dedicated the rest of his life to the Corporal Works of Mercy taught by the Church: caring for orphans, feeding and sheltering the poor, supporting struggling families, educating children, and visiting and assisting prisoners and their families. In Pompeii, he took in orphaned girls and children whose parents were imprisoned, providing them with education, vocational training, and stable homes so they could live with dignity and hope.

His life reflected what Catholic Social Teaching calls the Preferential Option for the Poor – the Christian duty to place special concern on those who are vulnerable, suffering, or forgotten.

True faith always bears fruit in love of neighbor. As Catholics, we believe that every person possesses God-given dignity *at all times* because every person is created and loved by God.

The witness of St. Bartolo Longo reminds us that holiness is not reserved for the unbroken and sinless. God delights in mercy, welcomes sinners home, and sends transformed hearts back into the world to serve others with joy, compassion, and hope.

His final words: *“My only desire is to see Mary who saved me and will save me from the clutches of Satan.”*



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St. Bartolo Longo, *pray for us!*



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*Mary, the Immaculate Conception Pray for Us.*