

USCCB's '9 Days for Life' prayer, action campaign takes place Jan. 21-29

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Catholics across the country are invited to take part in the 9 Days for Life is a novena for the protection of human life. Each day's intention is accompanied by a short reflection and suggested actions to help build a culture of life.

The pro-life novena, sponsored by the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, coincides with the annual March for Life that takes place in Washington every January to mark the anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion across the country. This year's march takes place Jan. 24.

But "even if you can't come to D.C., you can join others to witness and pray for an end to abortion," said Kat Talalas, assistant director for pro-life communications at the USCCB. "We ask all of the faithful to unite in prayer to protect the rights of unborn children, to end the violence of abortion, and for greater respect for human life."

According to Talalas, thousands of Catholics across the country have already signed up for 9 Days for Life. By signing up online at 9daysforlife.com, participants will receive a daily prayer intention, a reflection and suggested actions via email, text or through an app.

The novena encompasses the annual Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children Jan. 22, the day the Supreme Court handed down its decision in Roe and its companion case, Doe v. Bolton. The USCCB pro-life committee began the novena in 2013 in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Roe.

The “9 Days for Life” website also has materials, in English and Spanish, for parish leaders to share. For each day there is an intercession, prayers, a reflection, “acts of reparation” and “one step further,” describing one more suggested action for novena participants to take.

For example, the intercession for “Day One” is: “May the tragic practice of abortion end,” followed by the Our Father, three Hail Marys and the Glory Be. The reflection for the day says in part: “At every stage and in every circumstance, we are held in existence by God’s love. ... Christ invites us to embrace our own lives and the lives of others as true gifts. Abortion tragically rejects the truth that every life is a good and perfect gift, deserving protection.”

The suggested “acts of reparation” for the first day are: Take a break from television and movies and consider spending some of that time praying with the day’s reflection. Or pray the short prayer “Every Life Is Worth Living,” reflecting on the gift of human life. (It can be downloaded www.usccb.org/worth-living.) Or offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for the day’s intention.

For “one step further,” novena participants are encouraged to read more about abortion, in particular the article “Another Look at Abortion,” available at www.respectlife.org/another-look-at-abortion, which provides a basic overview and summarizes key points. “This article will help you be better prepared to witness to the sanctity of human life,” it says.