

Join thousands of people across Ireland to Pray for Life!

The Pray for Life Novena (prayforlife.ie) is an invitation to people across Ireland, and indeed across the world, to pray for the protection of human life. The novena, an initiative of the Council for Life of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, begins on 23rd May 2023 and ends on 31st May, the wonderful feast of the Visitation of Our Lady to her cousin Elizabeth.

Participants who sign up on the prayforlife.ie website are sent the novena prayer each day to their email in-box; the daily prayer includes the intention of the day, a short intercession, a reflection, and a suggested action to help build a culture for life. A downloadable copy of the novena for printing is also available on the website.

This feast day of the Visitation sums up beautifully what the Pray for Life novena is about: a celebration of joy in new life, even in what can seem like difficult and challenging circumstances. Mary was moved by grace to an act of faith and allowed God the Father to guide her. She is the first evangeliser: she carries Jesus in her womb, and John in Elizabeth's womb recognises him and leaps for joy. What transpires for their lives is remarkable. The consequence of Mary saying 'yes' and her simple act of faith is transformative and redemptive for humanity. When each of us respond with joy and courage to the prompt of the Holy Spirit, as Mary did, we can transform not only our own lives but the whole of society. We can return again to a society which values and protects all life, especially at the earliest and most vulnerable stages. We can build again a society that understands a fundamental truth: that every life is a good and perfect gift, deserving protection, that we each have a Father who wants us to "have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10) What a powerful reality, that as members of the Body of Christ we can help those in their darkest moments, we can spiritually and practically connect with those feeling isolated, alone and undervalued: we can make a difference!

Last year was the first year of the Pray for Life novena, and the response was heart-warming and extremely encouraging: thousands of people of good will across Ireland and beyond joined in praying for life. The daily intentions included prayers for expectant mothers and fathers, for

unborn children, for those who defend life, and for an end to abortion. We heard from parishes, prayer groups and families around Ireland who arranged to pray the novena together as a community, and who in turn shared it with others. This year again, the Council for Life encourages parishes or other groups to pray the novena together in their church, prayer group or family. **If you are praying the novena as a group, please get in touch via the website www.prayforlife.ie to let us know, so that together we can build a sense of a community of life, and of praying together, inviting and encouraging others to join us.**

The aim of this Novena is to help nurture a culture that respects all human life and to promote the protection of life in its entirety from the moment of conception to its natural end. We invite you to unite in prayer with thousands of people all over the country. We know that if we continue to pray and act and never give up, all human life will once again be valued and protected in our country.

“Bow down then before the power of God now, and he will raise you up on the appointed day; unload all your worries on him, since he is looking after you” 1Pet 5:7 from Evening Prayer for the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary