

Archdiocese of Milwaukee Respect Life Ministry  
“Church Hall” Meeting for Leaders from Archdiocesan Parishes  
St. Mary Visitation – Elm Grove, WI  
Sat., June 17, 2023

## Spiritual Adoption Program

Presentation by Dan Zeidler

Good morning!

There are THREE points I'd like to make this morning Re: Spiritual Adoption:

FIRST – P R A Y E R - as the essence of the program

SECOND – I'll talk about the ARCHDIOCESE of BALTIMORE - They have an excellent MODEL to use to implement Spiritual Adoption at the parish and school level – One of the well-known aspects of their program is the use of these beautiful and highly effective posters you see beside me.

THIRD – I would like to propose some SUGGESTED Weekly Mass petitions and weekly corresponding bulletin messages to use in the Spiritual Adoption Program. We will be handing out packets detailing this in a couple minutes.

## FIRST POINT - Prayer

What is the Spiritual Adoption Program?

A person commits to say a simple prayer each day for a period of nine months for an unknown baby in danger of abortion. (Sample prayer cards are in your packet.)

That is the essence of the program - prayer – daily - for nine months - to save a baby.

That's it!

Prayer is crucial. Here is what the Pope St. John Paul II said in his great teaching on the Gospel of Life – (from para 100, *Evangelium Vitae*):

*“...a great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world. Through special initiatives and in daily prayer, may an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and lover of life, from every Christian community, from every group and association, from every family and from the heart of every believer.”*

Encouraging people to participate in the Spiritual Adoption Program is important. Lives can be saved.

To convey this message, a number of years ago, a brief video was produced. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zQiNedKVDM>) It starts with a young woman whose morning alarm clock wakes her. As she reaches over to turn off the alarm, we see on her night stand the Spiritual Adoption prayer, which she later takes with her as she leaves for work.

Meanwhile, the scene switches to another woman in a different city looking at her positive pregnancy indicator and feeling distraught, and the man in her life getting upset and demanding she get an abortion.

A few hours later, we see this same second woman enter the abortion clinic and while being prepped for an abortion, it is clear she is distressed. At the same time, the first woman has taken her lunch to eat in a park, but first reverently says the Spiritual Adoption prayer.

The video stops at this point, and we see a message on the screen indicating it is now 4 years later. A little boy is in a park playing and comes up to the second woman giving her a flower and saying, "I love you mommy."

The message is clear: Prayer stopped that abortion and saved both child and mother.

That is the essence of the Spiritual Adoption Program - PRAYER.

But there can be much more to the program.

## **SECOND POINT:**

**THE ARCHDIOCESE of BALTIMORE offers an excellent MODEL for Spiritual Adoption at the parish and school level.**

For many years, the Archdiocese of Baltimore has extensively promoted the program to its parishes and schools. Their website has lots of suggestions for how to implement the program. (<https://www.archbalt.org/respect-life-2/spiritual-adoption-program/>) Besides the always central aspect of prayer, they encourage educational, service, pastoral and public witness aspects.

A well-known element of their program is the educational aspect, in particular the large, beautiful color posters with the illustrations of the developing child at various stages.

The posters are attractive and informative. People can begin to identify with and appreciate more the unborn child they are praying for.

Having people identify with the child is an important goal, and through the information provided on the posters, pamphlets and other materials used throughout the 9 months, we hope people will experience the preciousness of the unborn child.

Please check out the Baltimore website for more details. We highly recommend this model; it provides a great framework for Gospel of Life

catechesis and evangelization for parishes and schools in concrete and practical ways.

### **THIRD POINT:**

#### **SUGGESTED Weekly Mass petitions and weekly corresponding bulletin messages.**

We now will hand out the packets which describe the petitions and messages.

We mentioned that the Spiritual Adoption Program can provide a framework for lots of Gospel of Life catechesis and evangelization.

That is what we attempt to do with these suggested weekly Mass petitions and weekly bulletin announcements – They are only suggestions – not written in stone.

There is a lot of material in your packet, but for reasons of time, I will be very selective. I WOULD INVITE YOU TO OPEN UP YOUR FOLDER AND TAKE OUT the first document on the left side, entitled, "Using the Spiritual Adoption Program as a framework..."

And please turn to the 3rd sheet entitled "Spiritual Adoption Program" and underneath it says "sample weekly petitions and weekly Gospel of Life bulletin messages".

You'll see that each week there is a specific Sunday Mass petition and corresponding weekly bulletin message. A different petition and bulletin message each week normally.

The first few weeks we chose to highlight the wonder and beauty of the preborn child's development –

The first week, if they go to the URL or QR code, they'll see the Watch Me Grow! pamphlet, the first item in the right pocket of your folder (NOTE: Each of the materials on the right hand side is directly related to one of the weekly bulletin messages.)

The second week the link takes them to the “Life Before Birth” flier you have also on the right side of the folder. It is a powerful image and message – a striking testimony of the physician who tells of his experience seeing a living baby so early... (quote partially)

Continuing along the same line of the preciousness of the unborn, a couple weeks later we offer parents some suggestions for talking with their young children. In the sheet entitled **A Precious Conversation with Your Child:**

When you feel your child might be ready, you tell him or her, ***“Hey, Sammy or Jenny, come on, sit down next to me on the sofa, I’d like to tell you a story – the story of your life!”***

***“Sammy, who created the world with all the mountains, the oceans, the sun and the stars?”***

***Sammy responds, “Well, Daddy, you know, God created the world!”***

***“Right, Sammy, and you know what? Before God created the world and those gigantic mountains, God was thinking of you! He wanted you to come into existence!***

***And before putting the sun high in the sky, He was thinking of you, He loved you. He wanted to share His Life with you - to love you and receive your love, too.***

***And much, much later, just at the right time, He created you - your life began!***

***You were so small....***

At this point you can maybe show him some of the pictures of the developing child from the pamphlet, “Watch Me Grow!”. And in this way, with more simple explanations and illustrations the child learns how he grew and developed and how his mom took care of him during all that time – all within a context of Love, loved by parents and loved by God.

EVERY subsequent week covers a different aspect of the Gospel of Life in a practical and concrete way, including the need to respond in helpful ways to those experiencing a difficult or unexpected pregnancy, information on the Catholic bishops “Walking with Moms in Need”, more aspects on prayer, including distributing the beautiful Pope St. John Paul II prayer cards you see in your packet. We address the huge and growing problem of chemical abortion and the possibility of its reversal if done soon enough – **People need to know these things.** We also encourage young people to get involved, for example, through Students for Life...

One area that I would like to underscore for a minute here is the need for healing after abortion. In week 9 we offer testimonies of women who have experienced abortion and, thanks be to God, been healed. It is important to promote the healing ministries of Project Rachel and Rachel’s Vineyard. Offering the 3x5 cards with the message of hope, healing and forgiveness is a great idea, as is displaying the healing sculpture replicas we have available on loan. Jim Axt coordinates the loan of our replicas. Two replicas are circulating right now in the 6 or 7 parishes in the Fond du Lac area. Art communicates in ways that words cannot.

A few other areas we cover in the many weeks of the program are how to concisely address pro-abortion arguments. Offering beautiful pro-life witnesses such as Mother Teresa, promoting Public Witness – such as 40 Days for Life and Life Chain, talking about fathers and abortion, valuing the elderly, alerting people to the dangers of changing medical ethics where, for example, palliative medications designed to relieve suffering are sometimes misapplied in a hospice-type setting to intentionally hurry the death of someone. People need to be aware of this and be prepared. (By the way, we have no pretense that our little weekly bulletin messages are in any way sufficient; they only are meant to start the process hopefully to more complete awareness and evangelization.)

There is one final topic I’d like to mention from Week 5 where we raise the issue of parents receiving a negative prognosis during pregnancy.

The link is to a 7-minute video testimony of a young mother who gave birth to a child with no eyes. It turns out to be a very inspiring story. You see this young mother holding her child like this – all you see is the back of the child. – And she begins telling her story of falling in love and getting married. She is all smiles; she even shows her wedding photo. Later they become pregnant and are overjoyed, but mid-way or so thru pregnancy they are told there is a problem. Of course, they are concerned but hope for the best. Their little son Christian is born with even more problems than they thought.

This, of course, presented a lot of difficulties and sadness for them, but the worst part was when they took little Christian out in public. People would stare and whisper behind her back, “What’s wrong with that baby?” Someone even told her she was horrible for not aborting him. She was miserable, but little by little she met people who offered her help and support, and became friends, and came to love little Christian as she did. There is more to the story, but at the end of the video she is all smiles, she loves her little Christian, And she then turns him around so we can see him, and I’d say after watching the video, you, too, will love this little guy.

I think this video is important to create awareness. We need to let people know of the great help programs that are available, like Prenatal Partners for Life (<https://prenatalpartnersforlife.org/>) – a fantastic group of professionals, clergy and parents, all of whom are experts in helping other parents deal with these kinds of difficult medical prognoses.

TO REPEAT: These Mass petitions and bulletin messages are only SUGGESTIONS for your possible consideration.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, keep the emphasis on prayer.

DON’T FORGET to offer this program to your Catholic school – grade school or high school – the KEY is to find one teacher who is on fire for the Lord and open to exciting his or her students – better to have only one

class of students motivated than a whole school just going through the motions. (Suggestions for schools included in packet material.)

By the way, virtually all these materials are available in Spanish. So if you have a Spanish Mass in your parish, we would be so happy to share our materials and our vision with your Hispanic people.

Thank you for your attention!

God bless your efforts to promote the Gospel of Life in your parishes and schools!

NOTE: For more information about the Spiritual Adoption program and this presentation, contact: Dan Zeidler, [wauwatosalife@gmail.com](mailto:wauwatosalife@gmail.com) 414-218-3769.