

Respect Life: Support the Baby Bottle Campaign

By: Jodi Olson, LSW

Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption Social Worker

Respect Life. What do those words mean to you? Maybe you think about being kind and helpful to your neighbor. Perhaps making sure that an elderly or disabled member of your parish has someone who can assist them with getting groceries or attending mass when they want to. You might think about the poor and the marginalized. Those who don't have the physical, financial or emotional supports in order to meet the basic human needs to survive. How about the unborn? Truly the most innocent of all. As Catholics, we are called to respect all lives, from conception until natural death.

The work of Catholic Charities springs from our primary value "Made in God's image and likeness, every human life has dignity." The Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption Program has been providing help and creating hope for pregnant women and married couples who are unable to have their own children for 72 years. Throughout this time, staff have compassionately listened to women faced with unplanned pregnancies and affirmed their decisions to choose life for their babies. Women have been educated on parenting and adoption as staff have walked with them in their journey while the women choose the best outcome for themselves and their babies. The women are connected with local resources as well as assisted financially if needed. They are armed with the tools to set and attain educational and career goals. For those who choose adoption, they can select the family that they choose to place their baby with and to make the adoption plan that feels right to them.

Facing an unplanned pregnancy can be scary. Sometimes women feel that they don't have the strength or supports to carry their pregnancy to term and to then parent a child. They might already be facing financial burdens or unstable housing and don't know how they will be able to feed another mouth. Not everyone knows enough about adoption to realize that adoption is a self-less, loving decision to make for a child when they feel they cannot parent. All too often the lives of the innocent unborn is intentionally ended. For women and men whose lives have been affected by abortion, there is help. Project Rachel, a post-abortion counseling and reconciliation program, can help people begin healing through the guidance and support of professional counseling staff at Catholic Charities and from specially trained priests throughout the Diocese of Winona. The emotional scars of abortion can emit years following an abortion, often manifesting from significant life events. People of all religious backgrounds are invited to begin healing from abortion through Project Rachel.

To help pregnant women and families with babies overcome financial barriers, the social workers in the Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption program will meet with the women to listen to their unique stories and attempt to connect them with other financial resources. At times, the financial needs are greater than what one program is able to cover, or a person may not meet the eligibility requirements to receive financial assistance. This is where the Mother and Child Assistance Fund can be of help. Thanks to the generous donations of individuals, families and students throughout the Diocese of

Winona during the annual Respect Life Baby Bottle Campaign, we have been able to assist women and babies with basic necessities that can easily be taken for granted. Things such as rent, utilities, baby items, medical, childcare and educational expenses. This is not a “handout” but rather a “hand up” during trying times.

For the past nine years, parishes and schools across the diocese have graciously joined together in making a direct impact on the lives of women and families who have chosen life for their babies just by taking a baby bottle home and filling it with change throughout the month of October. The Baby Bottle campaign kicks off each year on the first Sunday in October, also known as Respect Life Sunday. We are blessed to have the support of so many caring and giving people in our diocese in order for us to help those in need, including those who may not yet have a voice to defend life, including their own.

Here are a few ways that the Mother and Child Assistance Fund have helped others:

“It will help us stay in stable housing until my husband graduates school. He already has a job offer for when he graduates.” – Megan

“Mother/Child Fund is greatly needed in our community. I am a single mother of 4 unable to work and can feel very alone and overwhelmed. This fund is a blessing that I will never forget and helps provide security for myself and for my children. I plan to pay it forward and hope my children learn to be Christians such as yourselves.” – Anonymous

If your parish, school or group would like to participate in the 2016 Baby Bottle Campaign, contact Jodi Olson at 507-454-2270 or jolson@ccwinona.org for more information. Individual donations can be addressed to Mother and Child Assistance Fund and sent to Catholic Charities 111 Market St. PO Box 379 Winona, MN 55987.



For questions about the Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption program, or to talk to someone regarding Project Rachel, please call our hotline at 1-800-222-5859. The hotline is staffed 24/7/365 by one of our licensed social workers. You will receive help that is compassionate, confidential, professional, and non-judgmental.