

**Catholic Daughters of the Americas
State Convention Presentation – April 11, 2015**

By Respect Life Chairman: Mary Rose Barta

Court St. Paul #1604, Shiner, Texas

TITLE - Respect Life - SLIDE #1

I want to begin by giving a brief summary of the history of the State CDA Respect Life program. In 2011 our Immediate Past State Regent Carolyn Malik created a State CDA Pro-Life Chairmanship. It wasn't that we as Catholic Daughters had not been promoting the pro-life cause. It was just that it had become such a vital issue that Carolyn wanted to bring it to the forefront of our actions to support life. So we thank Carolyn for creating this position. And we thank Carolyn Janak for her two years of service as the first State Pro-Life Chairman. We thank both Carolyn's for a wonderful job.

Two years later, in 2013, our State Regent Peggy Rosales took our pro-life work a step further when she gave the program a new name -- "**Respect Life.**" During the past two years Peggy has asked us to broaden our understanding of what being "pro-life" is all about. We thank Peggy for this new challenge. Peggy gave us new goals to work on under the topic - **Respect Life. Let's take a look at those goals...**

SLIDE # 2 – Goals of 2013-15 Respect Life Program

The goals set for the Respect Life program for the 2013-2015 CDA term were:

- Expand and broaden our thinking on pro-life issues
- Promote **Respect Life** awareness for all members – What does it mean and what can CDA members do in their area of the state to help show more **Respect for Life** – all life.
- Adopt a slogan of "Don't just be a check writer – be the helping hands!"

SLIDE #3 – Goals of Presentation

In this presentation we will take a look at how we can meet these goals. I have broken it down into four categories.

- 1) How can we do a better job of showing **Respect for Life** of all human beings - from the womb to the tomb or from conception to natural death?
- 2) How can we show a greater respect for all of God's creation, including other living things, and all the many gifts in God's creation?
- 3) Brainstorm together and share ways of how we can do more as Catholic Daughters to meet these goals.
- 4) Why we do what we do?

I would like to address # 4 goal first ... "**why we do what we do?**" While we expand our thinking on the **Respect Life** issue, we will look to the leaders of our faith for direction and inspiration. I will be using quotes from our beloved Popes and Bishops and other role models of our faith to emphasize a point. **I do this to help us better understand "why we do what we do!"**

With that meaning in mind then, let us compare the meaning of the terms **Pro-Life vs. Respect Life**

SLIDE #4: Pro-Life vs. Respect Life

Too often when we hear the words "pro-life" we think only of being against abortion. In fact, if you look up the meaning of the word **pro-life** in a dictionary, that is the exact meaning given – **pro-life** means opposed to legalized abortion. While we know this is a crucial part of the pro-life movement, we know there is much more to truly being pro-life. **Respect Life means: we are called to respect all forms of human life from the womb to the tomb -- and it means showing respect for all of God's creation.**

SLIDE # 5: Love Them All! -- From the womb to the tomb,,and -- we must respect all things in God's creation.

SLIDE #6: - Respect God's Creation –

“Every single creature on earth is here for a reason.” And we are called to “Live in harmony with all creatures and the environment.”

Yes, all of these topics are life issues and are “linked” so to speak -- and all should be included in any discussion of Respect Life.

SLIDE #7 – We are Masterpieces of God's Creation

“We are masterpieces of God's creation!” - This is the 2014-2015 Respect Life theme as set by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. It comes from the words of Pope Francis when he said: **“... even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God's creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.”**

SLIDE # 8 – 2014-15 Respect Life theme – Each of us Is a Masterpiece of God's Creation. “When we see someone or something as imperfect, it is a reflection of OUR limitations, not THEIRS.”

No matter who we are or what our limitations are – “Each of us is a masterpiece of God's creation!”
Another way to put it ... We are marvels of God's creation!

So as we begin our discussion of respect life for various groups and ages of people,
it seems only natural to start at the beginning – life in the womb.

SLIDE # 9 – The Miracle of Life – “If you don't believe in miracles perhaps you've forgotten you are one.”

SLIDE # 10 – Choose Life! -- Life is Beautiful!

Everyone loves a baby – as the saying goes. But if the baby is never allowed to live, if it is aborted, then there is no life.

SLIDE #11 – Quote from Pope Francis

Pope Francis, stated that “Every child that isn't born, but is unjustly condemned to be aborted, has the face of Jesus Christ, has the face of the Lord.”

There are many opportunities to show our respect for the life of the unborn and the newly born. Let's take a look at a few of these... but first let's look at Pope Francis in action.

SLIDE #12 – Pope Francis Loves Babies

SLIDE #13 - However ... Babies Respond Differently to Pope Francis!

SLIDE # 14 – Supporting the Unborn – Coalition for Life and 40 Days for Life

Coalition for Life are Sponsors of 40 Days for Life

Coalition for Life and 40 Days for Life was born in 1998 when Planned Parenthood intended to build an abortion facility in College Station TX. **As a result of the 40 Days for Life prayer movement**, the Planned Parenthood abortion facility in College Station eventually closed its doors.

40 Days for Life now takes place in 557 cities (5 known in Texas). It is estimated that since 2007 a total of 9,700 lives have been saved through 40 Days for Life.

In Houston, 40 Days for Life takes place in front of the Planned Parenthood facility on the Gulf freeway. In addition to the presence of prayer warriors, Coalition for Life sponsors a mobile crisis pregnancy center, known as **“the blue bus”**. This bus got its start through efforts of the K.C.'s and is now one of the state CDA projects. And recently, **another bus, named “baby blue”** has been acquired. The services available on the blue buses are all free of charge - free pregnancy tests, free ultrasounds and Christian counseling.
When the expectant mother sees her child – she will choose life about 95% of the time.

Now if you really want to be “just check writers” - the blue bus is one area where your donations can do worlds of good! It costs about \$300 each day to keep the big blue bus in operation.

SLIDE # 15 - Here is a picture of the Big Blue Bus and Baby Blue

SLIDE #16 – Here is a group of prayer warriors from Diocese of Victoria taking part in 40 Days for Life in front of Planned Parenthood in Houston ... and three ladies from Shiner who made that pilgrimage. We were part of a group of Senior class students from our parish who made that trip last fall.

SLIDE #17 – Of Course there are other Opportunities to Support Unborn and Newly Born (Do not read ... refer to handouts for other suggestions).

1.Participating in LIFE CHAIN, Holy Hours for Life or other prayer events.

2.Walking in National, State or Local Marches for Life

Many CDA members participate in marches, processions, pro-life rallies etc. – including our national CDA officers who attend the huge march in Washington, DC every year.

3.Gabriel Project and Other Crisis Pregnancy Assistance Organizations

Gabriel Project is a faith-based outreach program that provides women spiritual, pastoral, educational and supportive help during crisis pregnancies and after the birth of the child.

4.Court sponsored baby showers, --

This is one of the most common activities listed for pro-life activity by numerous courts.

5.Rachel Project and Hope After Abortion – for those who have had an abortion and are seeking mercy and forgiveness.

SLIDE # 18 – Individual Support for Life (do not read ... refer to handouts for suggestions)

On an individual level, you can also take part in many simple pro-life activities with very little effort and expense:

- 1) Wearing precious feet pin
- 2) Wearing the red rose pin (symbol of life)
- 3) Using personal banking checks with a pro-life or respect life message
- 4) Use return address labels with a pro-life or respect life message
- 5) Displaying Pro-Life and Respect Life bumper stickers
- 6) Wearing Pro-Life tee-shirts

SLIDE # 19 – Astounding Statistics On Saving Lives

Sometimes it may seem that our small projects or deeds won't make a difference. However if you look at the second statistic on this slide, it is encouraging. Our seemingly small deeds and actions, when combined with that of others – can make a big difference. Those **one million lives saved** are the results of all pro-life people and organizations - including your actions and projects.

Now let's move on from respecting life in the womb to the next stage in life – children.

We must always remember that ...

SLIDE # 20: It is just as important for us to care about children AFTER they are born, as BEFORE they are born. Our love, concern and respect must go beyond the “baby stage.”

We start this stage by taking a look at two of our role models in action - Pope Francis and Blessed Mother Teresa showing their love and concern for children.

SLIDE # 21 -- (Pope Francis with children)

SLIDE # 22 -- (Mother Teresa with children)

So can we as Catholic Daughters imitate the ways of Pope Francis and Mother Teresa ... especially to children who hunger for love and affection? We know we cannot all be a Pope Francis or a Mother Teresa but – we can certainly look to them as the wonderful role models that they are. Their actions should prove to motivate us and help us to better understand why “we should do what we do!”

And every child has rights.

SLIDE # 23

Every child has the right to be respected

The right to dream

The right to be loved and cared for

Gifts that should be recognized and valued

The right to achieve their God given potential

The need for unconditional love.

SLIDE #24 (same as above ... in color)

Unfortunately, we know that not every child receives what they deserve due to circumstances that prevent this from happening. One reason for this is

SLIDE # 25 – Child Abuse -- It Shouldn't Hurt to be a Child and It shouldn't hurt to go home.

These two phrases are usually connected with child abuse and neglect, which, regrettably, are all too common.

SLIDE # 26 - Child Abuse in Texas

The statistics are shocking! Today and every day, an average of 185 children in Texas are victims of abuse! That's over 65,000 in a year!

While you and I may have been blessed to grow up in a loving home environment where we always felt safe, where there was someone who took care of our needs and gave us generous doses of love – there are many other persons who were not as blessed. **So what do you think that calls us to do? How do we share that love we received with others?**

How can we help children to get what they deserve? Again, we may be tempted to say that our little projects won't make a difference. But they will!! Paraphrasing Mother Teresa's words -- if you can't help all the children – at least help one!

SLIDE # 27 - Blessed Mother Teresa Quote

Blessed Mother Teresa also said: **“There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread. Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat”**

SLIDE # 28 Respect Life Opportunities - Children and Teens

There are numerous homes and agencies (they number in the hundreds!) that are available for neglected youth in Texas ... in addition to government programs. Please take time to do your research and check out the youth homes and other such agencies in **your area**.

Besides youth homes there are many other opportunities for volunteering and reaching out to children, including:

- Homes for abused and neglected children and teens.
Simple Good Deed: Send Birthday cards to each child.
- After school programs – check with local schools on ways to help
- Youth in homeless shelters – join the staff of volunteers
- Tutoring or mentoring children – again check with local schools
- Big Brother and Big Sister programs – in some of the larger cities and schools
- Youth in immigrant facilities – Check your area if there is a facility housing immigrants near you.

SLIDE # 29 - Foster Parenting – “Got love, why not share it?”

“**Got Love, why not share it?**” –is a logo found on a foster parenting website. There is a **great need** for foster parenting – both short term and long term. The state has requirements that must be met - but of course the #1 requirement would be a great love for children. Statistics reveal it can be very rewarding!

SLIDE # 30 - Adoption Process

Adoption: “**Adoption not Abortion**” is a popular logo used. There are others, of course. Again, one can check out all the information available on websites.

Suggestion: **Consider having a program** about foster parenting and/or the adoption process at your court meetings. You never know when such information might lead to helping at least one child find a loving home and someone who really cares for them.

Now let's move from the child state to other groups of people who deserve our respect.

Here are some opportunities and groups of people who could benefit from our volunteering.
(They are all listed in your handout So need not read all.)

Blessed Mother Teresa gives us something to think about as we go about doing our volunteering and serving others. She stated:

SLIDE # 31 – “In each of these we have to see the face of Jesus.”

Our help is needed in so many areas... and, of course, this list could be expanded as we each look around our area of Texas.

- 1) The elderly in nursing homes
- 2) The lonely in their homes
- 3) The homeless
- 4) Local food pantries, soup kitchens, Meals on Wheels etc.
- 5) Shelters for abused women
- 6) Immigrants and their families
- 7) Food drives and clothing drives
- 8) Hospital ministry
- 9) Prison ministry

Here we see people in action ...

SLIDE #32 – Respect for the Elderly – Assisting the elderly is often rewarded with a smile ... as we see here.

SLIDE #33 – Pope Francis seems to always find time to visit the sick. ... so can we!

SLIDE # 34 – Life and Death Issues

Other areas affecting life and death are topics we read about or hear about quite often. They include:

- 1) Capital Punishment –
Optional: If you haven't already done so, take time to read the article in the Fall 2014 issue of CDA Share entitled "The Death Penalty – A Pro-Life Issue".
- 2) Euthanasia
- 3) Assisted Suicide

So far, we have looked at various classes and ages of people including

- 1) Unborn and newly born
- 2) Children, teens
- 3) Adults in need, especially the elderly

Now let's continue to the next portion of this presentation.

Let's consider how we are called to show a greater respect for the rest of God's creation.

SLIDE #35 – Respect for all of God's Creation

In 1990 Pope Saint John Paul II made statements about how human life and the rest of creation **are connected**. But for some reason it is believed that many Catholics often ignore respect for God's gifts in the environment. Recently, however, more publicity has been given by our bishops and other church officials about the **connection between respecting life AND respecting all of God's creation**.

(Read from slide) Pope Saint John Paul II said:

"Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join humanity in praising God."

Pope Francis said:

"...let us be protectors of God's creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment."

SLIDE #36 – What is a steward? What is a good steward?

The NCCB Website states that ...

"A Steward is one who receives the gifts of God, including creation, with gratitude, cultivates them responsibly, shares them lovingly in justice with others, and stands before the Lord in a spirit of accountability."

It is **our responsibility** to be good **stewards** of God's creation and take care of our Earth

Slide # 37 -- "Take care of our Earth" –

So what are some ways we can we might do this?

To start with – we can: recycle, reduce, reuse, and replace.

We do not have time to go into all the details of why or how to do this Again, do your homework and look up more information on the vast amount of information available.

However, if you need reasons to recycle ... here are the top ten reasons found on one website:

SLIDE #38 -- Top Ten Reasons to Recycle –

- 10. Save Resources and Energy**
- 9. Reduce Litter and Trash**
- 8. Raise Money for Group**
- 7. Reduce Pollution**
- 6. Something New out of Old**
- 5. Expand Recycling = Create Jobs**
- 4. Create Safer Beaches and Parks**
- 3. Protect Natural Habitats**
- 2. Prolong Life of Landfills**
- 1. BECAUSE WE CAN!**

I think one of the main reasons we should do these things is listed at the bottom on this slide ... **BECAUSE WE CAN! There are many other items that can be recycled** – i.e. aluminum cans, other containers, paper, plastic and glass bottles.... And what else?

I feel certain that after you read up on these topics you will realize what an impact your efforts, as small as they might seem, will have on the environment. You will want to do more!

So what else can we do to keep God's creation clean?

SLIDE # 39:

As we know... Littering is UnLAWFUL ... as well as unsightly and unhealthy. Don't you wish everyone realized this?

And ...

SLIDE #40 : (Plastic bag in tree) -

There are obviously numerous ways to do **keep God's Creation clean** This one should be easy ...

It is a personal pet peeve of mine - those awful looking plastic bags caught on a tree or fence. These plastic bags are **recyclable and reusable** ... and the use of them can be **reduced**.

An easy way to reduce use of the bags is to bring your own re-usable totes or bags to grocery stores or other places you shop. How many of you do that already?

If we can keep these unsightly looking plastic bags out of God's beautiful creation ... we will be helping to **respect** our environment.

SLIDE # 41 – Respect Creation - Conserve Water – Every Drop Counts!

We know we should– but do we make a conscious effort to do it? Again, information is readily available on how and why we should do so. Even if all we do is conserve water usage each in our own household... It can make a lot of difference in the long run. There are many publicized ways to do this. According to the website , the average household uses:

SLIDE #42 -- Household Water Use

Do you know how many gallons of water the average household uses for brushing their teeth – According to one website it is 2 to 3 gallons! And for taking a shower – 10 gallons. Does that surprise you? We can probably all conserve a little water with these common household tasks. ...

Now let's take a quick look at respecting and protecting our forests and all plant life.

Suggested things to do: Plant a tree, shrubbery, or other green plants

SLIDE #43 - Save Trees

Did you know there are over 20 benefits to planting a tree or other green plants? To name only a few: They clean the air, provide oxygen, combat greenhouse effect, conserve energy, provide food, etc. ... and they also heal – studies prove patients heal faster when they have access to nature!

So if you haven't already - **Plant a vegetable garden or flower garden. It provides great exercise too!**

SLIDE #44 The Amen of Nature is always a flower.

Flowers and garden plants also clean pollutants from the air, plus they provide food on our tables, enhance our moods, and certainly have great visual appeal!

Now let's talk about another gift from God ... our friends the animals. They too deserve our care and respect.

SLIDE # 45 – Respect our Animal Friends...

Enjoying our furry friends and taking care of them can be a source of much joy for ourselves and our children. Since many of us have pets, I suppose this should be one of the easier things to do. However, the fact that there are numerous animal shelters in all of our cities tells us that not everyone takes care of their animals.

SLIDE # 46 – Why we should show respect for animals... (read if time allows)

While it is certainly commendable to love and respect our environment, as well as all the animals, sometimes things can get out of hand. It saddens me to see postings such as this....

SLIDE # 47 We Protect: Rainforests, Whales, Trees, Bald Eagles, but when it comes to Unborn Babies, unfortunately that is not always true.

Pope Francis reminded us to keep things in perspective when he recently said:

SLIDE # 48: "Things have a price and can be for sale, but people have a dignity that is priceless – and – worth far more than things."

Suggestion: All of these topics we discussed on the environment would make very informative programs at your court meetings and provide a wealth of information on how to "respect God's creation."

One final thing, and the most important part – we must always remember to pray!

SLIDE # 49 - Quotes on Prayer

We know prayer is of major importance in all our projects . Let us continue our prayers for the success of our efforts and let these words inspire you.

Blessed Mother Teresa said:

"I used to believe that prayer changes things; but now I know that prayer changes us, and we change things." So let our actions be the fruit of our prayers.

And Pope Francis had this to say about prayer: ***" A prayer that does not lead you to practical action for your brother — the poor, the sick, those in need of help,— is a sterile and incomplete prayer. "***

SLIDE # 50 Map of Texas

Just think how much good we can do if all **237 CDA courts in Texas** carries out just ONE new project to **Respect Life** – our good works would spread like ripples all over Texas!

In short, and to summarize what we have talked about we know that we need to Get Busy and ... Take Action ... to Respect Life – all human life from conception to natural death – and

all of the rest of God's beautiful creation! Let's not just be check writers – let's be the helping hands! ...

And a few quotes here Paraphrasing Mother Teresa's words...

SLIDE #51

If you can't help a hundred people, then help just one!"

And again from Mother Teresa, here is another timely reminder:

SLIDE #52

God's doesn't require us to succeed, he only requires that you try.... And....

SLIDE #53

No matter what you do, do it for the glory of God....

And again from Pope Francis:

SLIDE #54

A Christian Can Never be Sad! So let's be happy Catholic Daughters ... as we go about doing our good deeds.

And always remember:

SLIDE # 55

"We are masterpieces of God's creation!"

and

"We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us

SLIDE #56: Closing Prayer – ACT OF CONSECRATION

03/28/15