**Respect Life Month takes on new meaning during Jubilee Year, says bishop**

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An attendee holds a poster during the 52nd annual March for Life rally in Washington Jan. 24, 2025. (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)

**By Gina Christian,**[**OSV News**](https://www.osvnews.com/)

(OSV News) — The upcoming annual observance of Respect Life Month by the nation’s Catholics takes on new meaning amid the Jubilee Year of Hope, said the chair of the U.S. bishops’ pro-life committee.

“The gift of human life exists as a sign of hope to our world today, defying the powers of darkness and the culture of death,” said Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, in a statement included in a Sept. 18 USCCB [press release](https://www.usccb.org/news/2025/respect-life-month-bishop-thomas-calls-catholics-be-agents-hope).

Since 1973 — the year in which the Supreme Court rulings in Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton legalized abortion nationwide — the Catholic Church in the U.S. has designated October as Respect Life Month, with the first Sunday of October as Respect Life Sunday.

The USCCB’s Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities provides a range of resources to help further an understanding of Catholic teaching, which holds that all human life is sacred from conception to natural death, and therefore must be respected and protected absolutely.

Since the first century, the Catholic Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. Catholic teaching also states that “intentional euthanasia, whatever its forms or motives, is murder,” with the Second Vatican Council condemning “euthanasia or willful self-destruction” among the moral “infamies” that “poison human society” and are a “supreme dishonor to the Creator.”

In his full statement — which was dated October 2025 and posted to the USCCB’s website — Bishop Thomas stressed that “the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of our hope.”

“Through Christ, our sins are forgiven, death is overcome, and life is victorious,” he said.

However, he noted, “the daily headlines remind us of how desperately our world is thirsting for the hope that only God can provide.”

Bishop Thomas lamented that “every day we witness the overwhelming disregard for human life,” noting among other indicators “rising rates of abortion and assisted suicide.”

According to data from the Guttmacher Institute, which supports legalized abortion, the nation saw a surge in abortions during the 1970s and 1980s, with the latter decade seeing annual averages around 1.6 million.

Abortion rates steadily declined since 1990, but have increased slightly in recent years, even after the Supreme Court reversed its Roe and Doe rulings in 2022. In 2024, there were 15.4 abortions per 1,000 women ages 15-44, down 1% from 2023, but still a 7% increase from 2020. Guttmacher said the count “includes medication abortions”provided via telemedicine” by U.S. clinicians, with mifepristone and misoprostol pills mailed to patients in states without total bans or bans on telemedicine.

Currently, assisted suicide is legal in 11 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, with a number of other states considering legalization.

Bishop Thomas also pointed to other recent examples of disregard for the sanctity of life, such as “the killing of innocent school children, even at prayer” — an apparent reference to the Aug. 27 mass shooting at a Minnesota Catholic school liturgy — “the mistreatment of our immigrant sisters and brothers as they endure an environment of aggression; and political and ideological violence inflicted against unsuspecting victims.”

“These attacks threaten life precisely when it is most vulnerable and in need of protection,” he said.

For that reason, he said, “it is of the utmost importance that we work to ensure that every life, in every stage and circumstance, is protected in law.”

Those efforts have already achieved some success, said Bishop Thomas.

“Earlier this year, history was made when Planned Parenthood and other big abortion businesses were banned from receiving federal Medicaid dollars for one year,” he said. “I thank Catholics across the country who have embraced a nationwide call to prayer for the end of all taxpayer funding of abortion centers, and I ask that we continue those prayers throughout the month of October.”

Respect Life Month dovetails perfectly with the call of the Jubilee Year, in which “we are challenged to be agents of hope to those whose hearts are burdened by trial, difficulty, or suffering, offering them the hope that comes from Christ Jesus alone.”

He highlighted two examples of such outreach: Walking with Moms in Need, a USCCB-led initiative that helps parishes and communities to befriend and support pregnant and newly parenting women; and the Project Rachel Ministry, which provides post-abortion healing.

Both ministries “are just two examples of how the Church continuously reaches out with love, compassion, and mercy to those most in need of a message of hope,” said Bishop Thomas.

Quoting impromptu remarks Pope Leo XIV made to Jubilee pilgrims May 26, Bishop Thomas added, “How important it is that each and every baptized person feel himself or herself called by God to be a sign of hope in the world today.”

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