

Walking with
Moms in Need
a year of service



PARISH ACTION GUIDE SUMMARY

Pregnant and parenting moms in need are in our parishes and our neighborhoods. As Pope Francis reminds us, our parishes need to be “islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference.” Everyone in the parish community should know where to refer a pregnant woman in need. As the Church celebrates the 25th anniversary of *Evangelium vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*), we are inspired by St. John Paul II’s call in this prophetic document to assess our efforts in building a culture of life and to increase our outreach to pregnant and parenting women in need.

The 25th anniversary year of *Evangelium vitae* gives us a wonderful opportunity to assess, expand, and communicate resources to pregnant moms and families in need. Parishes across the country, through the support of their bishops and pastors, are invited to join a nationwide effort from March 25, 2020 to March 25, 2021 entitled, ***Walking with Moms in Need: A Year of Service***.

Through this yearlong initiative, parishes are asked to complete a simple inventory of the resources currently available in their local area, assess the results and identify gaps, and plan and implement a parish response based on their findings. The Year of Service is broken up into five phases of parish action. The five phases include:

- **Phase 1:** Announce *Year of Service* and Begin Building a Core Team (March 2020)
- **Phase 2:** Launch Parish Inventory Process (May 2020)
- **Phase 3:** Share Inventory Results and Begin Assessment and Planning (September 2020)
- **Phase 4:** Announce and Commit to Parish Response (January 2021)
- **Phase 5:** Celebrate and Implement Parish Plans (March 2021)

This Parish Action Guide Summary is provided to assist parishes in participating in the *Year of Service*. This Action Guide Summary provides simple, one-page instructions for completing each phase of the initiative. (For additional materials, including sample timelines, announcements, prayers, activities, homily notes, and more detailed instructions, please see the full [Parish Action Guide](#).)

While each parish will participate in its own unique way, this Action Guide Summary provides a basic framework and structure that can be adapted to each local Church’s needs. Through the combined efforts of parishes nationwide, we hope to move closer to the day when every pregnant woman in need knows where to turn for help, and abortion is simply unthinkable.

PHASE 1

Announce Year of Service and Begin Building a Core Team

March 2020

*Here is a list of simple steps to guide you through Phase 1 of the Year of Service. These steps offer ideas to get this initiative started in your parish community—feel free to adjust and adapt as needed! During Phase 1 pastors are asked to select a parish leader for the initiative who will then begin assembling a parish core team to help complete the parish inventory and related tasks. During this phase, parishes also celebrate the 25th anniversary of *Evangelium vitae* (The Gospel of Life), highlighting its call to serve pregnant and parenting moms in need.*

1. Appoint a parish leader.

The pastor of each participating parish is asked to appoint a parish leader for the *Year of Service*. The parish leader acts as a main point of contact and coordinator. Pastors can find tips and suggestions for filling this important role in [“Selecting a Parish Leader.”](#)

2. Begin assembling a parish core team.

Once a parish leader has been selected, he or she, with the guidance of the pastor, can begin assembling a parish core team. The core team will meet throughout the *Year of Service* and complete various tasks, including the parish inventory, assessment, and response planning and implementation. More detailed instructions and tips can be found in [“Building a Parish Core Team.”](#)

3. Establish a parish support network.

In addition to assembling a core team, you will also want to begin establishing a broader group to help support the *Year of Service*. In the beginning stages of this project, you will likely only need assistance from your core team. However, as the project continues, grows, and develops, you will likely need wider parish support. Establishing a simple support network allows you to inspire broader parish involvement and enlist assistance during later phases of the *Year of Service*. (See the full [Parish Action Guide](#) for details.)

4. Announce the *Evangelium vitae* anniversary and Year of Service.

On the weekends of March 21-22 and/or 28-29, announce the *Evangelium vitae* anniversary and *Year of Service* within your parish community. Encourage your pastor, priests, and deacons to include this exciting news in their weekend homily. (Sample announcements and homily notes are available in the full [Parish Action Guide](#).)

5. Pray for pregnant mothers in need as a parish community.

When announcing the *Year of Service*, use this opportunity to pray the [“Prayer for Pregnant Mothers”](#) together as a community and to encourage regular use of the prayer. Include intercessions for pregnant mothers in the Prayer of the Faithful during Sunday Masses. (Sample intercessions are available in the full [Parish Action Guide](#).)

6. Begin planning your first core team meeting.

Even if your core team is not fully assembled, begin thinking about when your team can gather for the first time. Consult current members of the core team about their availability and what days and times generally work best with their schedules. Begin thinking about your [agenda](#) and what you might hope to accomplish in this initial gathering.

PHASE 2

Launch Parish Inventory Process

May 2020



Here is a list of simple steps to guide you through Phase 2 of the Year of Service. These steps offer ideas on how to use the provided materials to begin the inventory process in your parish community—feel free to adjust and adapt as needed! During Phase 2 parishes will continue to assemble their core teams through personal invitations and expand their parish support network. Phase 2 also launches the parish inventory process and utilizes Mother’s Day (or any other weekend in May) to once again pray for pregnant women in need.

1. Host the first meeting with your core team.

Once your core team has been assembled, begin thinking about when your team can gather for the first time. Consult members about their availability and what days and times generally work best with their schedules. Begin thinking about your [agenda](#) and what you might hope to accomplish in this initial gathering. (See “[Hosting a Meeting](#)” for ideas and tips for planning your first gathering.)

2. Gather resources and information from your diocese.

Before beginning your parish inventory, we recommend contacting your local diocesan Respect Life [office](#). Many pregnancy resources are appropriately coordinated at the diocesan or regional level. Your diocesan office may already have completed its own diocesan inventory and be able to provide you with a list of resources within the diocese. This list will be a great resource for you as you complete your parish inventory.

3. Review the inventory tool.

The [inventory tool](#) provides a framework and structure to help your parish think about the various resources that a mother in need may find helpful. Using the inventory tool, each parish is asked to identify the local pregnancy help resources in their community that are currently available to a woman facing a difficult pregnancy. The needs of pregnant and parenting moms can be overwhelming, and the sources for help may not be apparent to those most needing support. Take time to familiarize yourself with the inventory tool.

4. Celebrate Mother’s Day with the Year of Service.

While not a Catholic or liturgical observance, Mother’s Day is an appropriate opportunity to continue praying for mothers in need. We suggest utilizing this holiday (or another weekend in May) to announce the start of the inventory process to your parish community. (Sample announcements, intercession, and homily notes can be found in the full [Action Guide](#).)

5. Begin the inventory process.

The purpose of the inventory process is to find out what resources are currently available and allow you to assess these resources and identify possible gaps. Through site visits, phone calls, and research, begin filling out the [parish inventory](#). You may want to divide up different sections and assign them to core team members to research and report back to the group. Once the information has been gathered, both individually and as a group, compile everything into the inventory form. (See “[Completing the Parish Inventory](#)” for more detailed instructions on getting started.)