

## Teaching Our Children What it Means to be A *People of Life*

This October will mark the 44th anniversary of the nation's Respect Life Month. Although some of our children are still too young to fully understand the issue, we are all a **People of Life**, and we can begin to teach our children the "Three Rs" of a pro-life education: 1.) **Recognize** that every human life is special and sacred, no matter how small, sick, or old; 2.) **Respect** all human life and every living thing; 3.) Take **Responsibility** in helping to protect and defend all human life.

So, how do we allow our young children to maintain their innocence and joy of life while also instilling a sense of compassion and prayerfulness for the unborn? How do we educate our older children without adding to their many pressures and fears? Here are some ideas:

♥ Children can be taught at a very young age that life begins at conception ~ from when the very first cell of a new baby is created. We must emphasize that life is a continuum. Just as a growing baby in its mother's womb is less developed than a newborn baby, so is a toddler less developed than an eight-year-old child, who is less developed than a teenager, and so on.

♥ Explain how babies grow by reading books that show pictures of developing babies in the mother's womb. There are three children's books that explain, with beautiful illustrations, the wonderful nine-month journey of a baby in utero: *Angel in the Waters* by Regina Doman, *The Miracle of Me* by Amy Pedersen and *Before You Were Born* by Jennifer Davis. These books beautifully show children that, indeed, their life began before the day they were born! Check with the SIJ school library or the Hinsdale Public Library to see if these books are available.

♥ As your family prays together, remind your children to pray for babies living inside "mommies' bellies," and for the parents who have just found out they are going to have a baby. They can pray for the disabled, the terminally ill, the elderly, the handicapped ~ all people who need our protection and deserve our respect. Older children can pray for more people to support pro-life causes and for the effectiveness of those who do pro-life work.

♥ You can talk to your older children about the fascinating facts of fetal development, i.e., the baby's heart starts beating at 3 weeks, at 2 months all body systems are present and the baby can suck its thumb, and at 12 weeks the facial characteristics already resemble those of the parents. There are many facts that your children might find very "cool" while simultaneously developing a greater understanding of the importance of protecting that human life. A good web site for facts about fetal development is [www.nrlc.org/archive/abortion/facts/fetaldevelopment.html](http://www.nrlc.org/archive/abortion/facts/fetaldevelopment.html)

♥ Encourage your older children to learn more and become active. The Respect Life Ministry has numerous opportunities through which teenagers can become involved. They can join or start a prolife club at their school, pray at the local abortion clinic or volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center. You can write or call your Illinois and US legislators if your teenager or family is interested in urging them to support pro-life legislation.

If you have any questions, concerns or would like more information about how you can talk to your children about abortion or other Life issues, please call the parish office and ask for the Respect Life Ministry.