



Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, Office of Family/Respect Life Ministry  
240 E. Onondaga St., Syracuse, NY 13202 • Lisa Hall, Director • (315) 472-6754 Ext. 1 • e-mail: [lhall@syrdio.org](mailto:lhall@syrdio.org)

# Syracuse Holy Hour, Mass, and March for Life

A Day of Prayer for  
the Legal Protection  
of Unborn Children

Join us at the  
Cathedral of the  
Immaculate  
Conception for:

- Holy Hour- 9:30am
- Mass- 10:30am
- Syracuse March for Life\*  
12:00pm (starting at the MOST)

\*Sponsored by Syracuse Right to Life

Bishop Douglas J. Lucia  
Presider and Homilist



Saturday  
January 17, 2026

## Questions? Contact:

Charles O'Malley, Program Coordinator  
(315) 472-6754 x.7  
[familyrespectlife@syrdio.org](mailto:familyrespectlife@syrdio.org)

# **Person of Life: Michelle Kirk**

## ***1. How long have you been interested in pro-life issues? What draws you to them?***

We all encounter questions related to the pro-life issues at every stage of our lives. Like many others, as my parents aged, I had questions about how to navigate the difficult decisions at the end of life. I also saw those close to me struggle with the fear and unknown of an unplanned pregnancy. Life issues impact many areas of our lives, and I found that it was the Catholic Church that had clear and meaningful guidance in these areas of profound importance. This motivated me to learn more and get more involved.

## ***2. You lead the parish Respect Life Committee at St. Mary's, Baldwinsville. What stands out to you about the work of the committee? What have you enjoyed most about serving? Would you encourage others to get involved with life ministries?***

By forming ourselves in the issues important to life and sharing what we have learned; we help to build a culture that is life affirming and unites us in caring for one another. A small effort to donate a baby item, to pray with the elderly, to learn more about care at the end of life, to advocate for the legal protection of the most vulnerable or pray a Holy Hour for Life; these are not small efforts but life changing for those served but also for us. I have witnessed how educating ourselves, sharing our experiences and brainstorming how to reach out to others has opened our hearts to understand compassion in a deeper way. What you gain is way more than what you give!

## ***3. You have generously gifted your time to Project Rachel Ministry. What has struck you most about being part of the ministry?***

Project Rachel Ministry has had a profound impact on my life. This ministry reaches out to women who have experienced the trauma of abortion, offering them a path to healing and forgiveness through the infinite mercy of God. I have learned that the abortion decision is often less of a free choice than an act of desperation or coercion.

A woman often feels she has no other choice than abortion but will find that this choice wounds her deeply. Many women have carried the crippling guilt and shame of abortion and been isolated in self-condemnation and regret for 20, 30, even 40 years before reaching out for help. The Day of Hope and Healing offered by the Project Rachel Ministry is a life changing encounter. I am grateful to have the profound privilege of witnessing the transformative power of the grace and mercy of God as women experience healing through the Sacraments of the Church and this support ministry.



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# **Building a Culture of Life: Mary's Closet**

by Jody Frawley

As disciples of Christ, we're called to listen and respond to God's call in our life, and like Our Blessed Mother, respond with a resounding Yes, May your word to me be fulfilled!

This is how the Pastor and parishioners of St. Stephens and Holy Trinity parishes of Central NY decided to start 'Mary's Closet', a compassionate outreach center for pregnant women, mothers and caregivers of young children. Their mission is to create a welcoming environment where every visitor feels a sense of belonging and finds the resources they need to provide the very best care for their children.

The idea first came to Fr. Joseph Scardella one night during their monthly Free Community Dinner at Holy Trinity parish, when he saw a child come in with her parents and she had no shoes. He had hoped to begin helping the homeless population in Fulton and felt this would be a great venture since the USCCB was launching the national program "Walking with Moms in Need". He enlisted the help of the Family Life and Respect Life Committee to explore the needs and organize how to launch and sustain this service. Shelly Shepard and Peg Woodruff agreed to co-chair the project.

They wanted to dedicate the shop to Our Lady, because it is housed inside what was St. Mary's school. They also felt it was important to put the project under the protection of our Blessed Mother because she, herself, was a young mother in need. Ms. Shepard shared that "the first name they came up with was Mary's Cupboard. Father suggested Mary's Closet rather than cupboard, and Mary's Closet it is."

Prior to Mary's Closet, this space served as The Pregnancy Center, which was run for many years as an extension from the Center in Mexico staffed by St. Anne, Mother of Mary Parish. Their services ended around 2020. Because of this past history, there was a precedent with helping 'moms in need' at St. Mary's School/Holy Trinity parish, so word spread quickly throughout the County.

After several months of planning and donation requests at both parishes, the grand opening was held on Thursday May 1st from 10am-2pm. They had 4 clients on their very first day. Father Scardella blessed the shop, they enjoyed refreshments, and the honorable Fulton Mayor, Jim Rice attended and donated 2 boxes of diapers. Ms. Shepard says, "It's been a wonderful blessing for both the community and our wonderful volunteers as well. In the first 2 months we have been there we have served 84 clients in need."

"Our funding is solely donation based and people have been marvelously generous with monetary donations as well as durable supplies." Father Scardella added "We have been fortunate that a number of parishioners have donated to Mary's Closet. We have not asked the parishes for financial assistance because people have been so generous." Mary's Closet has also received funding through The Catholic Daughters of New York State and is thankful for help from Fulton Catholic Charities and the Onondaga County chapter of Birthright. This would not be possible without the generosity of the community.

Ms. Shepard shared that one of the most poignant moments to date, was when a mother came in with 4 daughters. Her 7 year old came up to her with a dollar to donate. She told her to please take her dollar and buy some candy, but the little girl was adamant that she should take it to help others. In the end, she took her money and then sent her a thank you note.

**If you would like to start a Walking with Moms in Need at your parish, please contact Buddy O'Malley at 315-472-6754 or [familyrespectlife@syrдио.org](mailto:familyrespectlife@syrдио.org)**



## Building a Culture of Life

# Bishop James Moynihan Pro-Vita Scholarship For High School Seniors

Awards presented by Bishop Lucia in January 2026

Contest is open to all public or private school Catholic students in the Syracuse Diocese.

Submissions may be video, essay, song, music, photos, or art (limit to 2 minutes or 500 words).

Scan the QR Code to send submissions by December 12, 2025.



*Bishop Moynihan praying for those involved with abortion.*

**Awards: Two - \$1000 and One - \$500 Scholarships**

*\*must be used on college tuition or books*

Based on answering:

Why are you Pro-Life & How will You help build a culture of life?



## 9 Days for Life Novena

Join thousands of Catholics praying for the protection of human life during the 9 Days for Life novena January 16-24! Each day's prayer intention is accompanied by a short reflection and suggested actions to help build a culture of life. Participants can download the novena or sign up to receive the daily prayers via email or text message. Resources are available to promote and share the novena in your parish, school, or ministry.



**Visit [www.9daysforlife.com](http://www.9daysforlife.com) to sign up and learn more!**

# Supporting Families



## Celebrating Advent as a Family

**November 30**

### **The First Week Represents Hope**

Purple is the primary color associated with Advent. Within the Catholic Church it symbolizes penance, preparation, and sacrifice. During the first week of Advent we remember the Old Testament prophets who foretold of Jesus' coming with hope and anticipation. Are you ready to discover the hope Jesus is inviting you to experience this Advent?

**December 7**

### **The Second Week Represents Peace**

During this second week of Advent, we reflect on our lives and focus on becoming better-versions-of-ourselves in preparation for Jesus' coming. We remember the journey Joseph and Mary took from Nazareth to Bethlehem. What has your journey toward Christmas been like so far?

**December 14**

### **The Third Week Represents Joy**

This third candle is rose and symbolizes rejoicing. During the third week of Advent we are filled with joy for the near arrival of Jesus on Christmas day. This Sunday is often called "Gaudete Sunday" as we reflect on the joy the shepherd's felt at the birth of Jesus. How is Jesus inviting you to experience greater joy this Advent?

**December 21**

### **The Fourth Week Represents Love**

During this final week of Advent we rejoice in the endless love that God has for us, which is made apparent in the birth of his Son. We reflect on the good news of God's love brought to us from the angel Gabriel. This is the last week to prepare our hearts for the joy of Christmas. Are you ready?

For prayers for every week of Advent, visit: [bit.ly/AdventWreathPrayers](https://bit.ly/AdventWreathPrayers)

## Supporting Families

# Finding True Joy in Difficult Holiday Seasons from CatholicMom.com

"The holidays are hard. So I want to share some things that bring joy when I need it, and hopefully these things can help add some joy to your holiday season, no matter how much you struggle."

### 1. Look to God for inspiration

Read the Bible, a daily reflection booklet, or just talk to God in prayer. Give God your burdens and allow Him to carry them for you.

### 2. Listen to uplifting music

It's at those vulnerable times when the choir always seems to sing a profoundly appropriate song like "City of God," which warmed my heart just prior to Thanksgiving as I focused on the lyrics.

### 3. Do good for others

Derive joy from seeing others happy. Go shopping for needy families, buy toys for Toys for Tots, shop for extra canned goods for a food pantry, or send cards to people who are lonely. Christ became man as a gift to us. Focus on how you can be a gift to others.

### 4. Seek out your friends

Let your friends rescue you. That's what friends do. But they don't know you need rescuing unless you tell them. Don't be afraid to reach out.

### 5. Make friends with a saint

Saints are our friends in heaven, and they're there to intercede for us. St. Rita is the patron saint of loneliness. St. Dymphna is the patron saint of anxiety and depression. St. Eugene De Mazenod is the patron saint of troubled families. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is the patroness of those who grieve. They are excellent to talk with this time of year, but any saint can be there for you.

## WORLD MARRIAGE DAY Mass and Reception

Sunday, February 15, 2026 at 2:00 pm

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Celebrant: Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia



All married couples and their families are welcome.

Special recognition honoring those celebrating 25, 50, and 50+ years of marriage in 2025.

Couples celebrating 25, 50, or 50+ anniversaries, please contact your parish office to receive your invitation

*A special blessing will be offered for all couples in attendance.*



Sponsored by the Office of Family/Respect Life Ministry



## DIOCESAN EVENTS

- **SYRACUSE HOLY HOUR, MASS, AND MARCH FOR LIFE, January 17, 2026:**  
See page one for details and contact Charles O'Malley at comalley@syrdio.org or (315) 472-6754 ext. 7 for more information.
- **WORLD MARRIAGE DAY MASS AND RECEPTION, Sunday, February 15 2025 at 2:00pm:**  
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Syracuse, NY
- **DAY OF HOPE & HEALING FOR WOMEN, April 11, 2026:**  
Have you felt sad, ashamed, or not forgiven due to an abortion? Experience God's mercy and peace at a Day of Hope and Healing. For more information, call Project Rachel Ministry at (855) 364-0076 or email:hopeandhealing@syrdio.org. All calls and emails are confidential.
- **THIRD OPTION MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT MEETINGS:**  
Meetings are held on Sunday's from **6:30pm-8:30pm online or in person** at the parish center of St. Michael and St. Peter Church at 4780 W. Seneca Turnpike, Syracuse, NY 13215. Come build your marriage in the comfort of your own home. Upcoming topic dates are: **Dec. 7-- Recognizing Childhood Baggage in Marriage; Dec. 14-- Handling Anger Constructively in Marriage; Jan. 4 -- Speaking the Truth in Love in Marriage; Jan. 18-- Stop Arguing and Start Resolving Conflict in Marriage.** For more information or to participate, contact Stephanie Stewart at sstewart@syrdio.org or (315) 472-6754
- **BRANCH OUT AND GROW, Support Group Meetings for those affected by separation and divorce:** Online zoom meetings every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month from 7:00-8:00pm. Meeting topics: **Dec. 3-- Fears and Anxiety; Dec. 17-- Family and Friends; Jan. 7-- Financial and Legal Issues; Jan. 21-- Conflict; Feb. 4-- Forgiveness.** If you're interested in joining the meetings, learning more, or talking one-on-one, contact the Family/Respect Life Office at pjowett@syrdio.org or (315) 472-6754 ext. 9.
- **IGNITE CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE: March 28, 2026:**  
Bishop Ludden-Grimes Jr/Sr High School, Syracuse, NY

## UPCOMING FAMILY/PRO-LIFE HAPPENINGS

- **THE THIRD OPTION MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT MEETINGS:**  
Meetings are held at The Good News Center, 10475 Cosby Manor Rd., Utica, every other Sunday (except for holidays) from 6:30-8:30pm. Meeting topics: Dec. 7-- Rebuilding Trust; Jan. 11-- Appreciating Personality Differences.
- **40 DAYS FOR LIFE Spring Campaign:**  
February 18 - March 29, Public right of way outside Planned Parenthood Syracuse- parking is on the street

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Syracuse, NY 13202

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*Life Line*

Loving God, during this holy season of Advent we ask for your blessing on all of our families.

Let Mary's openness to your wondrous ways be an inspiration to place all trust in you.

Let Joseph's courage provide hope during times of anxiety and uncertainty.

Let Jesus' life ignite all families with a spirit of light and love.

May the grace that encircled the Holy Family widen to embrace all families.

Amen.



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