



# DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

*Office of the Bishop*

October 6, 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

Today the Catholic Church begins Respect Life Month. This year's theme focuses on Jesus' message from John 10:10, "I came so that they might have life." In this passage, Jesus reminds us to be aware of the thief that "only comes to steal and slaughter and destroy..." Procedures like abortion or physician-assisted suicide can manifest themselves as that thief that comes to steal and slaughter and destroy the life that God has created. We must remain vigilant and aware of these threats to life.

Supporters and politicians frame abortion and physician-assisted suicide as merciful choices, sparing us from suffering, pain, and hardship. However, what many people find is that abortion or physician-assisted suicide are not the simple solutions they were promised to be. For it is in suffering and pain that God comes close to us and gives us life abundantly.

One way the Church walks alongside people struggling with the pain of an abortion is through the Project Rachel Ministry. This ministry offers opportunities to engage in support groups, receive the sacrament of reconciliation from a priest trained in this ministry, and participate in a Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreat. Over a retreat weekend, trained volunteers work with each person, surrounding them with support and encouragement through a supportive, trauma-sensitive approach. The next retreat will be November 1-3. For more information or to register, call 616-340-1824 or email [projectrachel@ccwestmi.org](mailto:projectrachel@ccwestmi.org). All inquiries are strictly confidential.

Protecting life in all stages is and has always been the work of the Church. We must remain engaged, especially after the comprehensive challenges to life that now exist in Michigan.

During this Respect Life Month, let us reflect more deeply on the sacredness of every human life. I invite you to visit the diocesan website ([grdiocese.org](http://grdiocese.org)) for Respect Life Month resources to support your efforts. May our hearts be transformed to protect and cherish all whose lives are most vulnerable. Saint Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak  
Bishop of Grand Rapids