



The Roman Catholic Diocese of  
**BATON ROUGE**  
OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL

## CLERGY COMMUNIQUE

*Wednesday, 25 September 2024*

Dear Brothers:

Offer a few prayers for our friends in Florida as they prepare for the impact of Helene later this week. I know I'm looking forward to some cooler days!



Fr. Jamin

### **IVF Workshop**

On August 8, the Office of Life, Peace, and Justice hosted Dr. Christopher Ragusa, Professor of Theology at the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University (FranU) in Baton Rouge to present on the Catholic Church's teaching on In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF). While the IVF technology has existed for many years, the recent ruling by the Supreme Court of the State of Alabama declaring that embryos created through IVF are to be considered children (persons) has brought its use into the forefront again and prompted opinions from politicians on every side and society in general. Additionally, since this past February, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has sent close to a dozen letters and statements to lawmakers and the public in general summarizing the bishops' moral, ethical and practical objections to IVF. Dr. Ragusa's talk, which was very good and well attended, was aimed at clarifying the issue and helping those present and parishioners in general to understand the Church's position.

The link to the talk: <https://youtu.be/xzQvXuMptn4>

Since this teaching is significant, the Office of Life, Peace, and Justice encourages our Catholic Parishes to make this video available to our parishioners. A representative of the parish can show the video and invite the parishioners to participate. The video link can also be shared with parishioners through the parish bulletin, social media, or other communication means.

To help the discussion we offer these questions. Please select a few or as many as are helpful in your discussion:

1. What does it mean to say that the Church's teaching is about "seeking the truth in love and to love in the truth" and that "every person has an inestimable dignity, made in the image and likeness of God"? In your view, how do these statements apply to IVF?
2. In his talk, Dr. Ragusa explains that the Ten Commandments (The Law) were seen as the pinnacle of freedom and goodness by the Hebrew people. He comments that the Hebrews saw "the law as the guarantor of freedom and life". How should this influence the way we Catholics view the Church's teachings, especially those that are difficult to understand and accept?
3. Several times during the presentation, Dr. Ragusa makes this statement: "if the teaching seems hard, stay with us". What is the meaning of this invitation? Does the Church teaching on IVF seem hard to accept? If so, how can we respond to the invitation to "stay with the Church"?
4. How do these statements, "life is a gift" and "a child is a gift, not a right" influence our view of IVF and other artificial reproductive technologies?
5. The Church recognizes two innate meanings of sexuality, namely unity and procreation. Which of these meanings is violated by IVF and why?
6. What are some examples of medical procedures that the Church approves in response to the problem of infertility? How do these procedures fit within the "rule of thumb" presented? How does this rule of thumb apply to IVF?

*Rule of thumb: "Any treatment which either facilitates the natural act of marital intercourse or assists it in reaching its procreative potential is moral. Procedures which add a "third party" into the act of conception, or which substitute a laboratory procedure for marital intercourse, are not acceptable."*

7. How can our parish and parishioners be more supportive of couples struggling with infertility?

Any questions please contact Jorge Lavastida, Coordinator of the Office of Life, Peace & Justice and Diocesan Prison Ministry Coordinator at [jlavastida@diobr.org](mailto:jlavastida@diobr.org) or 225-242-0222

### **September 30 – Feast of the Dedication of St. Joseph Cathedral**

You are reminded that in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, the anniversary of the Dedication of St. Joseph Cathedral on September 30 is observed with the

rank of Feast (see the 2013 *Pagella*, p. 126, and the Paulist Press *Ordo* for 2024, p. 236). In the Cathedral itself the observance has the rank of Solemnity. (This means that the Memorial of St. Jerome is perpetually impeded—not celebrated—on that day in our diocese, but is transferred to the next open ferial day, October 3.)

White vestments are worn on September 30. Texts of the Mass for the observance are taken from the *Roman Missal* section on "Common of the Dedication of a Church (Outside of the Easter Season)," and include the Gloria and the Preface II of the Dedication of a Church. In the *Lectionary*, the readings are selected from nos. 701 and 703-706. The proper texts in the *Liturgy of the Hours* also are taken from the "Common of the Dedication of a Church (Outside of the Easter Season)."

It is a good idea to inform the reader(s) for Mass ahead-of-time of the unique Scriptures chosen; likewise, it might be good to announce to the congregation assembled that these special texts will not be found in missalettes and likely not in other optional worship aids.

Thank you for helping to make this celebration of our diocesan Cathedral church a special one for the entire community of the faithful.

### **October is Respect Life Month**

Since 1973, the Catholic Church in the United States has observed October as "Respect Life Month." This year, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Pro-Life Activities, invites Catholics to commemorate Respect Life Month by embracing this moment of Eucharistic Revival to direct and strengthen our efforts to defend human life. Bulletin inserts can be found here:

[Bulletin Insert \(English, PDF\)](#)

[On letterhead \(English, PDF\)](#)