

Anna's Lenten Prayer

REQUEST:

Every day, on average, 44 children are aborted in Virginia. These children are not given a chance at life and are terminated without ever having been held or even given a name. To complement your other daily prayers during Lent we are asking 44 people (one for each child who is at daily risk of being aborted) to give each one of these children a name and pray one decade of the rosary for that child. Each day, pick a name at random and gift it to a child that is at risk of being aborted that day. We ask that you alternate genders so that we pray for an equal number of boys and girls.

Please reflect on that child and on the name that you have given them. Reflect on who that child is and what they might become. What is God's plan for that child? Think of the loss to the world, to God's plan, if that child is aborted. Think of the joy of Christ in that child being saved from abortion.

We give each child dignity by giving them a name. Names have significance. They have power and contain meaning for people. Names can define who we are. God made Adam, then God gave him the power to name. Adam named the animals. And he named Eve. We are reminded of the Lord saying in Isaiah 43:1, ". . . *I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine.*" That is the goal of Anna's Lenten Prayer.

By saying just one decade each day over the course of the 40 days of Lent, with up to 44 people praying one decade of the rosary we will be saying a total of at least 8 rosaries each day for 44 children. That is more than 320 rosaries for over 1,760 children in Virginia over the course of Lent who otherwise may have no one to pray for them.

That is the simple mission of Anna's Lenten Prayer: to name, pray and think of that child. No lists, no readings and no check-ins. Just do this each and every day. Pray as if you are the only one praying for that child. A more detailed explanation of the reason for this mission is below as is Anna's story, if you are interested.

To sign up and join a group of 44 - please go to this link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090A48A5A722A13-47374211-annas> .

Anna's Story

For over 16 years I have attended the Lady of Fatima Men's Retreat at Malvern Retreat House [<https://www.malvernretreat.com/>]. At one of our retreats, Mike Skinner of Baltimore, Maryland, provided an incredible witness to the horrors of abortion and the importance of prayer. He introduced a rosary resource in the Gratia Reflections' Precious Life Rosary [Precious Life Rosary Booklet](#).

I had prayed a rosary every few weeks at various abortion clinics in Richmond, Virginia. After hearing Mike Skinner, I dedicated myself to at least one rosary each week (Saturdays at 10:30 at the Planned Parenthood on Hamilton Street; you are welcome to

join me when you are available) using the Precious Life Rosary Booklet. Many brothers and sisters join our prayer in front of Planned Parenthood. It is during these moments of prayer that I often have some of my most meaningful and intimate spiritual experiences. The time spent with a small group of dedicated friends praying outside, together, is powerful. I also find that when I pray alone in front of the abortion clinic, in silence, I can more clearly hear the voice of God. It may seem counter intuitive, but it is here in this place of sorrow that I feel the true presence of God, and in particular, our Blessed Mother.

It is not uncommon for folks to drive or walk by and provide their opinion, both good and bad, regarding our presence, praying in front of an abortion clinic. One of my favorites is a gentleman that drives by in a convertible and yells "Get a job!" I am not sure what it means but it cracks me up everytime. We have also had people stop and encourage and support us. It is almost as if the Holy Spirit sends people our way when we need it most.

It was on a similar occasion that I met Anna. It was 2 weeks after Thanksgiving, 2022. It was cold and misting, with just the right amount of breeze to blow the rain in your face no matter which way you stood. I was alone at the clinic with no one even working there as it was closed. The usual hecklers drove by loudly voicing their opinion. As I started my 2nd decade of the sorrowful mysteries, the doubts began to creep up again. "What good am I doing? No one is coming today and no one else is around. I am miserable, cold, and I should just go home." It was right then that a car drove by and the driver leaned out to yell the typical obscenity and to tell me where I should go. I was getting frustrated by the senselessness of it all, how hopeless it all really was. It was not just about being there alone, in the rain, with no one around, but the whole debate (this is pre Dobbs v. Jackson) and people's attitude and aggressiveness; the inability to even have a conversation about this issue. I remember asking God, "Why am I even here?"

It was exactly then that I saw a red Toyota Corolla driving by, slow down and the driver looked like she was going to say something. She then kept going but drove around the traffic circle and drove back toward me. She parked at an odd angle right in front of me and jumped out quickly. I prepared myself for the usual onslaught of opinions and anger. She walked up quickly and asked, "What are you doing?" Before I could answer, she asked, "Are you praying in front of this abortion clinic?" I said "Yes, I am praying the rosary."

Then she said, "I thought that was what you were doing. I drove by and saw you and wanted to stop. When I got to the light, I said to myself 'When this light turns green and if there is no one coming I will do a u-turn and go back and talk to him.'" She continued, "When the light turned, I didn't see anyone and I really didn't want to, but I turned around and drove past you again. I had decided not to stop but when I saw you there all by yourself I knew I had to stop to tell you what you are doing is really important."

I thanked her for stopping and asked if she would like to pray with me. She answered no, but then told me why she stopped.

Two weeks ago my mother told me when she was pregnant with me she decided she was going to get an abortion. She had gone to the abortion clinic and was walking in when she saw someone outside praying. She asked my mom to come over and to pray or just to talk. When my mom walked to her, others encircled my mother and they all prayed over her, to ask her not to have this abortion. It was all overwhelming to my mother and she immediately left. But she decided not to have an abortion because of those people praying in front of the clinic.

That is why I am even alive today, standing in front of you. If it wasn't for that woman praying at that abortion clinic I would not even be in existence right now; I wouldn't even be in existence. I drove by and I just had to tell you that what you are doing is so important. You are saving lives; lives like mine and you have to keep doing it. I just had to stop and tell you that.

At this point we were both crying. It was such an incredible story and she shared it with such raw authenticity. Her mother had told Anna her story only a few weeks before and Anna was still struggling to come to terms with the entire situation. I thanked Anna for telling me her story and I told her a little bit of what I had just been thinking before she stopped and how amazing it was, like she was literally answering my prayer. I then introduced myself. She shook my hand and said "My name is Anna. I don't even know what I am doing here." I told her "What a witness you are to the importance of giving life. It took a lot of courage for you to stop and tell me your story. Thank you for that." We talked a little bit about her life, like that she was married and really has been struggling about what her mother almost did and how, but for those praying in front of the abortion clinic, she would not even be here today.

During the conversation, I tried to soak in as much of what was going on as possible. Anna wore a wedding ring and had a necklace with a small medal with a cross. While she looked sad and was clearly sorting through her feelings, I couldn't help but keep thinking how beautiful she was. The more she talked, the more I sensed this was something very important, at least for me. I kept thinking to myself "She looks like an angel but I don't think angels come to us in a Toyota Corolla." I know that is silly but it's just a thought that kept running through my mind.

After Anna left, I became very overwhelmed by the impact of this encounter. I bent over and had trouble catching my breath. I then gathered myself and started to feel a real sense of peace and joy. I turned to the abortion clinic and continued praying my sorrowful mysteries. I remember not wanting to do that and so began the joyful mysteries. I closed my eyes, praying to myself without a sound and found myself entering into a deeper prayer than I ever have before. I was saying the rosary prayers, but it was as if I was watching myself say the prayers. They were being said so slowly and they seemed to hold such weight. It was as if I could hear every word of each and every prayer in a very different way than ever before and understood what each word meant and why it was a part of that prayer. It was an incredible feeling and it gave me such a closeness to those prayers but also to Mary and Jesus. It was then that I began to have a vision of Mary, dressed in blue, kneeling down and gathering all of the babies who had been aborted at that Planned Parenthood. She was gathering them all in her arms and showing such joy to hold each one of them. This was a kind of joy and love a

parent feels after having found a long lost child and knowing they are now safe in your arms. It was an incredible sight to witness. It was as if she was right there above me holding each child with such care and love that none of us have ever felt.

I then suddenly opened my eyes and found the sky was still gray, but the rain had stopped and the sun was peeking out of the clouds. I was breathing quickly, my heart was racing and I was shaking. While I don't remember saying the rosary during these visions I found myself saying the Hail Holy Queen (Salve Regina) when I opened my eyes.

I of course rarely miss a Saturday Rosary at Planned Parenthood after that experience. I had hoped to see Anna again, but never have.

Each of the last few Lents I have tried unsuccessfully to write down 44 names each day and pray for those children. It is a lot of work and I continue to fail to take the time each day to accomplish this during Lent. I had heard a simple reflection on Matthew 9:37-38 about the compassion of Christ. "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest'." Stephanie Grey (you should watch her videos) commented that when she asks people about this reflection and asks them what is said after the first part - most people think we should go into the vineyard and help. But, instead, Jesus instructs us to pray for more workers. Over the course of praying at Planned Parenthood, this prayer has developed in my heart as I continue to think about Anna. That which I can't do alone, I pray for others to help me. That is, for me, Anna's Lenten Prayer.

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Anna's Lenten Prayer Narrative:

We are a church that is pro-life, in all of its forms.¹

Every person has value and should be treated with the same dignity and love that God provides to each and every one of us. As Catholics, we also believe human life begins at conception², the spark of life at which precious life begins. As such, each child, from the moment of conception must be recognized as having the rights of a person – among which is the inviolable right to life.³

God's love and longing for us have long been understood. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." Jeremiah 1:5. Every life is precious, and like the life of Jesus Christ, is designed from conception to fulfill God's intentions. "You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb; my days were shaped before one came to be" Psalm 139:13,16.

¹ [The-Catholic-Church-is-a-Pro-Life-Church-FINAL.pdf \(usccb.org\)](#) [Why are Catholics pro-life? | Duke University Catholic Center](#)

² [Respect for Unborn Human Life: The Church's Constant Teaching | USCCB](#)

³ Catholic Catechism Paragraph 2270 [Catholic Church Clear on When Human Life Begins | EWTN](#) [When does human life begin? — Pro-Life Wisconsin \(prolifewi.org\)](#) [Chronology of a new life — Pro-Life Wisconsin \(prolifewi.org\)](#)

Yet, every day, on average, 44 children in Virginia are aborted.⁴ These abortions, whether by surgical or chemical means, occur, it seems, without an understanding that the aborted child was intended by God, as a miracle of life, as a part of His design for that child, that family, and our community, and certainly without any acknowledgment that it is a human life that is being terminated.

These children's lives are terminated without taking their first breath, without ever knowing a mother's touch, without being swaddled and loved, and without ever having been given a chance at life.

This prayer request is to gather 44 people (for each child) to pray during the 40 days of Lent specifically focused on the victims of abortion, who are the most vulnerable and defenseless members of our human family. Along with your other daily prayers, we ask that each and every day during Lent you give dignity to each one of these children by giving them a name and praying one decade of the rosary for that child. Each day, pick a name at random and gift it to a child that is at risk of being aborted that day. We ask that you alternate genders so that we pray for an equal number of boys and girls.

Please reflect on that child, on their name that you have given them. Reflect on who that child is and what they might become. What is God's plan for that child? Think of the loss to the world, to God's plan, if that child is aborted. Think of the joy of Christ in that child being saved from abortion.

One of the most important things we can do to counter the cruelty and destruction of abortion is to pray. If we proclaim abortion is an atrocity that should not be tolerated, we can give witness, through prayer, to the dignity of the baby whose life is at risk or has already been terminated. *"Only with prayer—prayer that storms the heavens for justice and mercy, prayer that cleanses our hearts and souls—will the culture of death that surrounds us today be replaced with a culture of life."*⁵

Recently at adoration at St. Mary's, the choir sang the song "So Will I (100 Billion X)" by Hillsong UNITED. That song includes the following lines: "I can see Your heart, eight billion different ways; Every precious one, a child You died to save; And if You gave Your life to love them so will I; Like You would again a hundred billion times." I am not sure anything is more fitting for the reason for our prayers.

We can let that child know that they are not forgotten through our prayers. It is in prayer that we can beg the Lord for justice for the unborn and ask the Holy Spirit to change people's hearts. While we cannot physically hold that child and love them, we can do so spiritually through prayer. Our prayer may be the only opportunity for this child to know what it means to be loved in this life and to give dignity to that child.

We can also give each child the dignity by giving them a name. Names have significance. They have power and contain meaning for people. Names can define who

⁴ See Abortion Information at the end of this Prayer Request.

⁵ [Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities](#)

we are. God made Adam, then God gave him the power to name. Adam named the animals. And he named Eve. I am reminded of the Lord saying in Isaiah 43:1, "*. . . I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine.*" That is the goal of Anna's Lenten Prayer.

By saying just one decade, over the course of the 40 days of Lent, with up to 44 people praying one decade of the rosary we will be saying a total of at least 8 rosaries each day for 44 children. That is more than 320 rosaries for over 1,760 children in Virginia over the course of Lent who otherwise may have no one to pray for them.

There is nothing else to do. That is the simple mission of Anna's Lenten Prayer: to name, pray and think of that child. No lists, no readings and no check-ins. Just do this each and every day. Pray as if you are the only one praying for that child.

If helpful, additional prayers, as well as information and resources specific to the issue of abortion, are provided below.

Thank you for being willing to participate in Anna's Lenten Prayer. Please know that there are also people praying for you to help end the tragedy of abortion in this country and throughout the world.

RESOURCES:

Prayers:

There are many opportunities to support the pro-life movement. One of the most important is prayer which spiritually joins those children who have had their life terminated by abortion; those who are in danger of being aborted; and those who are deciding whether to permit their child to be aborted. We can also pray for those who have already made the decision to terminate their pregnancy. We can pray for those that are making laws to protect all children, for those working against the sin of abortion. But most of all, we need to pray for the most vulnerable, the innocent children whose lives are terminated because of abortion.

Rosaries

[How to Pray the Rosary | USCCB](#)

[Pro-Life Rosary Prayer Intentions | USCCB](#)

[Gratia_PreciousLifeRosary_printable.pdf \(gratiareflections.com\)](#)

[Precious-Life-Rosary.pdf \(stjamesthelesschurch.org\)](#)

Litines

[A Litany for Life | USCCB](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Life | USCCB](#)

Novenas

Prayers

[A Prayer to St. Joseph, Defender of Life | Respect Life](#)

[A Prayer for Pregnant Mothers | Respect Life](#)

[Pro-Life Prayers & Resources — My Catholic Life!](#)

[Pro-Life Prayer | USCCB](#)

[Word of Life | Respect Life](#)

[Pro-Life Activities | USCCB](#)

Additional Specific Prayers and Reflections:

- Eternal Father, Author of all life, at this very moment a precious human life is in danger. Lord, I offer as a sacrifice all my labors, thoughts, prayers, inconveniences, sufferings, and pains of this day for just one precious life, in the hope that even one precious infant's life might be saved, that one mother might hold her child the day of his birth, that one father might carry his offspring even as your Son Jesus Christ was carried by His earthly father, St. Joseph. I join my voice with the silent urgings of the Holy Spirit that labors for your birth. We pray for a hope that no precious infancy of God, like yourself, will have her life taken this day. I offer these prayers to You, Holy Father, through the merits of Your Son Jesus Christ, who with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns forever and ever.
- I praise You and give You thanks for all the gifts that you have bestowed upon me. I offer you my whole being and in particular all my thoughts, words and deeds, and even all the trials that may occur today. Our Creator, we, your daughters and sons provide, in love, these prayers so that our pre-born brothers and sisters will not die without love and prayer.

We believe you are always present, particularly in the midst of sorrow and suffering.

Have mercy on the babies who today are sentenced to death in the womb, by the verdict of their own fathers and mothers. Have mercy on the mothers and fathers who caved into the temptation of the sin of avoiding difficulty, and choosing their own desire, for their own convenience.

We pray for mothers, like Your Blessed Mother, to have the courage to accept their child as a gift from God and if they do go through with the abortion, an understanding of the infinite mercy of God and of His love.

- Lord God, I thank you today for the gift of my life, and for the lives of all my brothers and sisters. I know there is nothing that destroys more life than abortion, yet I rejoice that You have conquered death by the Resurrection of Your Son. I am ready to do my part in ending abortion. Today I commit myself never to be silent, never to be passive, never to be forgetful of the unborn. I commit myself to be active in the pro-life movement, and never to stop defending life until all my brothers and sisters are protected, and our nation once again becomes a nation with liberty and justice not just for some, but for all, through Christ our Lord.

Amen

- Let us pray that the truth of the humanity of the unborn child will be revealed to all, but particularly, mothers.
- Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten and strengthen the resolve of this child's mother and father. Not to see their child as an unwanted burden to be removed, but as an opportunity to pour out their love and to see all God's love.
- "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." Jeremiah 1:5.
- "We are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand." Isaiah 64:8.
- "You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb; my days were shaped before one came to be." Psalm 139:13,16.
- "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Psalm 100:3.
- The very God who formed the infinite universe likewise "created us in His image." (Genesis 1:27).
- "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

Abortion Information:

Nearly 1 in 4 women in the United States will have an abortion procedure by the age of 45, according to the Guttmachere Institute⁶, an abortion rights group. It also estimates that 18 percent of U.S. pregnancies end in induced abortions.

15,167 abortions occurred in Virginia during 2020 according to the Virginia Department of Health.⁷ The Centers for Disease Control (the CDC) reports that 15,606 abortions took place in Virginia in that same period.⁸

While it has been determined that the number of abortions in Virginia remained relatively flat in 2021 compared to 2020, chemical abortions increased by 28.3% and Planned Parenthood was responsible for more than 37.3% of all abortions occurring in Virginia.⁹

Based on these sources, in essence then, approximately 44 abortions occur, on average, each day in Virginia. Think about that. The lives of 44 children, on average, each and every day in Virginia, are intentionally ended by a decision by his parents.

To put it bluntly, as Mother Teresa pointed out, “It is a poverty to decide that a child must die, so that you may live as you wish.” Think on that statement. Pray on that statement. We can realize it is harsh, but it is a reality.

Read the full text of Mother Teresa’s address at the National Prayer Breakfast (Sponsored by the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives) on February 3, 1994 here: [Mother Teresa at the National Prayer Breakfast | EWTN](#). It is an amazing witness and is invaluable in understanding the Catholic position against abortion.

In its recently updated quadrennial "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" teaching document for the 2024 presidential elections, the USCCB reaffirmed that the threat of abortion remains the bishops' “pre-eminent priority because it directly attacks our most vulnerable and voiceless brothers and sisters”and destroys more than a million lives per year in the United States alone.

<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-introductory-letter>

⁶<https://www.guttmacher.org/news-release/2017/abortion-common-experience-us-women-despite-dramatic-declines-rates>

⁷ [itop_1-2_2020.xls \(virginia.gov\)](#) This number includes abortions performed on out-of-state residents but does not include abortions performed on Virginia residents in other states.

⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/ss/ss7110a1.htm>

⁹ <https://lozierinstitute.org/abortion-reporting-virginia-2020/>

Pursuant to the USCCB, the Church in the United States observes on January 22 as a “Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children.”

<https://www.usccb.org/january-22>