

St. Raphael Respect for Life Committee

Presents

“The Tree of Life”

The concept of the “Tree of Life” evolved out of The Spiritual Adoption Program (SAP), which was initiated in April 2013. SAP began as an educational opportunity for the parishioner to learn about the miracle of fetal development throughout pregnancy, with the goal of understanding the rationale behind the Sanctity of Human Life and our responsibility as Catholic Christians to preserve life, especially for the unborn. The structure of the educational component includes a monthly update on the physical development from conception until birth with a stress on prayer for successful delivery of a healthy baby boy or girl.

Today’s culture of death sadly fails to acknowledge the humanity of unborn children, resorting to description of tissue rather than the human person the pregnancy is supporting. Allowing all parishioners to witness the stages of development and the miracle of life illustrates the importance of uplifting life and protecting the unborn. The RFL Committee’s mission to preserve life was clear; yet we needed to look for more effective ways to make it tangible and visible within our Parish. The committee members agreed that we needed a visible sign of our efforts.

Within the last year, the committee discussed ways to meet this goal. As a way to create and display a symbol of life, a cross that was purchased in Lyon, France and the Basilica of Fouvière was shown to the committee and the concept of the “Tree of Life” was born. On the structure of a cross grew a vine with leaves. The symbolism is not lost to us as we recall the Gospel reading of Jesus being the vine and we are His branches, nor is the realization of the Cross being the image of the Resurrection and New Life. As we see new life, as in springtime when the barren trees unfold fresh, young leaves of green, the growth of the human person is brought to full life in Him at birth. We found that when we name the child/children for whom we have been praying, they are indeed brought to life and spring into flower as do the trees.

As a way of acknowledging the nine month period of prayer for our Spiritually Adopted child/children, their names will be written on each leaf of the newly formed tree, reminding us of their value and their potential, which

must be protected and nourished. The culmination of the prayer period is a "Baby Shower", at which we celebrate the birth of many innocent masterpieces of God. We collect layettes, diapers, infant and toddler clothing and any other items needed for new mothers in need. We celebrate with cake and party favors (pins of baby feet) as a token of our gratitude for helping mothers choose life for their babies. Now in the third year of a baby shower being held, we continue to be surprised at the generosity and love poured over our beneficiaries with so many gifts.

For our 2016 SAP Program & Tree of Life promotion, the RFL Committee has decided to hold the program so it culminates at Eastertime, when Jesus our Savior has proven victory over death through His Resurrection, thereby emphasizing the Sanctity of Life. We begin our observation August 2016 and have the Baby Shower in mid-April, 2017. The leaves of our Tree of Life will go through the natural progression of the seasons of summer to fall, winter bareness to the full canopy of springtime foliage.