

Calls for protection of human life continue as March for Life events move online

This year's national and Alberta March for Life events have been cancelled because of COVID-19 crowd restrictions, but not their timeless plea to protect life from "womb to tomb." It's now online.

The March for Life is the largest single pro-life event in Canada each year. It is held on May 14, marking the passing on that day in 1969 of the omnibus bill that allowed abortion on demand in Canada.

The physical marches have been replaced by online events at both the diocesan and local levels.



Rev. Antony Cruz Michael

"Every life has to be respected, from womb to tomb," said Rev. Antony Cruz Michael, the pastor of St. Anthony's Parish in Lloydminster, who will be celebrating a local Mass for Life.

"We, as a community and believers in Jesus, need to be really supportive of this view. Our Virgin Mother Mary has given us a role model that any life has be respected because it's God's own creation and it should not be terminated for any cause."

For years now, churches in Lloydminster have come together for a local March

for Life in October at city hall, posters are affixed throughout the city, and parishioners pray the rosary for pro-life causes. The local Catholic Women's League sells candles and proceeds are given to pro-life groups.

The plan is to continue that this fall, depending on COVID-19 crowd restrictions.

Father Michael said pro-life activities are so "ingrained in the life of the parish" of St. Anthony's that he plans to celebrate a livestreamed Mass for Life at 11:30 a.m. on May 14 with prayer intentions for children who were born in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It comes right after a number of Alberta's bishops celebrate Mass for Life in their respective dioceses at 10 a.m.



Pro-life events are "ingrained" in the St. Anthony's parish community in Lloydminster. Courtesy of St. Anthony's Catholic Church

Edmonton Archbishop Richard Smith will celebrate the Mass for Life at St. Joseph's Basilica, livestreamed on grandinmedia.ca/livestream and Telus Optik TV Channel 876.

In St. Paul, Bishop Paul Terrio's celebration will be livestreamed on the diocesan website. . Bishop David Motiuk of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton will celebrate the Divine Liturgy, livestreamed on the St. Josaphat Cathedral website.

Archbishop Gerard Pettipas of Grouard-McLennan celebrated the Mass for Life on May 13. Calgary Bishop William McGrattan celebrated the Mass for Life on Mother's Day, May 10.

Nationally, this year's virtual March for Life events will include the National Mass for Life from Ottawa's Notre-Dame Cathedral. The *Be Not Afraid* Canadian Pro-Life Special will be broadcast on the EWTN TV network and a virtual pro-life rally later that day.

Access to abortion varies by province. The Canadian Institute for Health Information reports that 94,030 abortions were recorded across Canada in 2017, including 12,706 in Alberta. In the last decade, the highest number reported in any year was 108,844, in 2011.

Less than one per cent of all abortions in Canada are linked to rape and incest, according to the Campaign Life Coalition. The numbers are similar in the U.S.

Back in Lloydminster, Father Michael said the parish wanted to support the March for Life in any way it could.

"We also thought we should have something in our parish locally in order that people will still recall and remember that even in this time of pandemic, we could really pray for – and support in whatever way through social media – March for Life."

"We're asking people who have given birth to a newborn baby, in this time especially, and we'll pray for children who born at this time and babies who were conceived at this time."

Father Michael is asking parishioners to send those prayer requests which will be part of the local March for Life Mass, and his homily will focus on the protection of life from birth to natural death.

"Life has to be secured and protected."

In addition, Father Michael foresees the COVID-19 pandemic – and the resulting downturn in the world economy – as having a profound effect on life in developing countries in particular.

"If the people don't have money, how will they be able to raise children? A lot of people may choose to terminate life if they know they are pregnant. If they're not able to support themselves financially, there is the danger that threatens life."