



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Communications • *The Long Island Catholic* • *Fe Fuerza Vida*

50 North Park Avenue, Rockville Centre, NY 11570

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE NAMES NEW RESPECT LIFE OFFICE TEAM

- *Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D., to assume expanded role as director*
- *Donna Crean named assistant director/program coordinator*



Pictured from left: Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D., director and Donna Crean, assistant director. Photo credit: Diocese of Rockville Centre, Communications office.

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NEW YORK – December 20, 2019 – The Diocese of Rockville Centre (drvc.org) announced today that Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D., has been appointed director of the renamed Diocesan Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics, effective immediately. In addition, Donna Crean has been appointed assistant director/program coordinator for the office. Ms. Crean’s appointment is also effective immediately.

“I am grateful to Dr. Honkanen for agreeing to serve as director of the Diocesan Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics,” said the Most Reverend John O. Barres, Bishop of Rockville Centre. “As a highly distinguished physician of Geriatric Medicine with a deep Catholic faith that is at the center of her work, Dr. Honkanen has the experience and understanding necessary to lead this office and carry out its mission to uphold the sanctity and dignity of all human life created by God in His image,” said Bishop Barres.

“The Lord has blessed me in so many ways,” said Dr. Honkanen. “I am truly honored, humbled and grateful to serve Him in return under the leadership of His Excellency Bishop Barres whose vision, wisdom and passion are transforming the Diocese of Rockville Centre.”

Dr. Honkanen continued: “With a renewed dedication to meet the increasingly complex challenges of daily life in which Catholic moral teaching clashes with the culture and scientific



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progress, the Respect Life Office is likewise undergoing a revitalization that is best reflected by a new name, “The Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics.” In this name, we hope to convey a renewed vigor and expanded breadth of our mission; one that goes beyond stating a directive to *give* direction.

The Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics enunciates and promotes the principle that human life, at all stages from natural conception to natural death, is a gift from God, worthy of respect and protection. Most immediately, the office is working on the upcoming diocesan participation in the March for Life in Washington, D.C., on January 24, 2020.

“We are blessed to have an individual with Dr. Honkanen’s expertise at a time in our state where the killing of innocent human beings through abortion, up to the moment of actual birth and beyond, has now been enshrined into law by the recent passage of the infamous ‘Reproductive Health Act’. Furthermore, newly proposed legislation hostile to human life is currently queued up, including: physician-assisted suicide, gestational surrogacy and the prohibiting of New York State employers from making any ‘discriminatory’ employment decisions based on an employee’s ‘reproductive health decisions,’” said Bishop Barres.

“I expect that with this incredible team, the Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics will continue to vigorously protect and defend the sanctity of every human life and celebrate the family as it intimately reflects Divine Love,” said Dr. Honkanen. “At the same time, we want to deepen and expand our mission with a new emphasis on Catholic bioethics. Our call is to genuine holiness despite these challenging times; our goal is to reach all those suffering with a true compassion – to enlighten, heal and inspire. With God, all things are possible.”

About Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D.

Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D., M.A., is a lifelong Catholic and a physician of Geriatric Medicine. After receiving a Bachelor’s degree and Master of Arts in Economics, she pursued a Doctorate of Medicine, all from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She completed her residency in Internal Medicine at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center as well as a fellowship in Geriatric Medicine at Weil Medical College of Cornell University. She remained at Cornell as an attending physician conducting clinical research, publishing, teaching and practicing geriatrics in the long term care, home care and hospital environments. She was the recipient of several grants and awards of excellence. In 2006, she began a solo private practice with a primary focus on the delivery of care to the most frail geriatric population – the homebound. In this, she has had the greatest opportunity in her daily work at the bedside and through education and advocacy efforts, to uphold the dignity of all human life as created by God in His image. A deep Catholic faith is unmistakably center and foremost in her work.



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Dr. Honkanen is an active parishioner at Saint Matthew Roman Catholic Church in Dix Hills, New York. She has been co-leader of its Respect Life Committee and has coordinated First Friday Eucharistic Adoration for the last ten years. Previously, while residing in Manhattan, she received an award for outstanding service to the parish of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini on Roosevelt Island. She is a member of the National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) and is a longtime member of the Catholic Medical Association (CMA); she is now a founding member and treasurer of the newly formed Long Island Guild of the CMA. Until this past year, she served as Vice President and member of the Board of Directors of the Life Center of Long Island (a crisis pregnancy center) as well as Secretary and a founding member of the Board of Directors of Personhood New York.

Most recently, she completed the NCBC's National Catholic Certification Program in Health Care Ethics, awarded with distinction. She has lectured extensively on end-of-life and other health issues, has been published in scholarly journals and has been actively involved in opposing physician-assisted suicide.

About Donna L. Crean, o.f.s.

Donna graduated Summa Cum Laude from Saint Joseph's College, Patchogue with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Relations and certifications in Youth Counseling and Human Services. After graduation, she spent four years with a missionary religious order in Argentina and became fluent in Spanish. During her time in Argentina she furthered her studies in Thomistic Theology and Philosophy with a focus of becoming more effective in the "New Evangelization" called for by Pope Saint John Paul II. She was also involved in numerous apostolic works including: hospital visits, religious education, parish missions, serving the poor, youth ministry, and home visits to immigrants.

For the past nineteen years, Donna had served as Center Director for the Life Center of Long Island (Pregnancy Care Center), in Deer Park, serving some 300 clients a month. In this role she managed all aspects of program operations including recruitment and supervision of staff, consultants and volunteers; fundraising; providing direct support and counseling to clients; and networking, particularly within the Hispanic community, to bring awareness of the emotional, material and spiritual supports available to individuals struggling with crisis pregnancies and other life issues. Additionally, she regularly provided education to parishes and Catholic organizations throughout the diocese regarding the dignity of all human life and was a guest on Catholic Faith Network's *Building Bridges* program with Bishop Robert Brennan, and also appeared on *Total Praise* with Darcel Whitten-Wilamowski. She has worked with Catholic Youth groups including The Gianna Club at St. John the Baptist High School, West Islip, to promote awareness of human life issues.



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In addition to her role as Center Director, Donna organized and conducted quarterly Rachel's Vineyard Retreats, a program for post abortion trauma, helping those in need to experience God's mercy and healing. She has served as an official liaison of the Spanish community to the National Headquarters of Rachel's Vineyard Retreats and has collaborated in other states to implement Rachel's Vineyard Retreats for the Hispanic Community. She holds a certification as a Hope Alive Counselor for post abortion trauma healing.

Donna was born and raised on Long Island and grew up in a devout Catholic family. She is a member of the Secular Franciscan Order and is consecrated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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CONTACT: Sean P. Dolan
Director of Communications
(p) 516-678-5800, ext. 625
(c) 516-510-0473
E-mail: sdolan@drvc.org



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The Diocese of Rockville Centre Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics

The “Respect Life Office” of the Diocese has a new name: The Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics. What is the reason for this change?

Lisa Honkanen, M.D., the new Director of the Office, explained the reason for the change of name: “With a renewed dedication to meet the increasingly complex challenges of daily life in which Catholic moral teaching clashes with the culture and scientific progress, the “Respect Life Office” is likewise undergoing a revitalization that is best reflected by a new name, “The Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics.” In this name, we hope to convey a renewed vigor and expanded breadth of our mission; one that goes beyond stating a directive to *give* direction.

The Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics enunciates and promotes the principle that human life, at all stages from natural conception to natural death, is a gift from God, worthy of respect and protection. Each of the three terms used in the new name has special meaning and relevance for the work of the Office.

Human Life

Defending and protecting all phases of human life through prayer, concrete support services, legal advocacy and education efforts will remain the primary focus of the Office. However, in a world where the very concept of “personhood” seeks to be redefined, we emphasize *human* life because we are created in the image and likeness of God and in this we receive His most precious gift.

Family

Pope St. John Paul called the family, the “Sanctuary of Life”. The cultural assaults on this most important unit that reflects God’s infinite love for us are an attack on life itself. Therefore, we are called to promote the good of the family through a firm understanding of traditional marriage, a universal call to chastity as befits one’s station in life, and healing the wounds of sexual sin, disordered identity and relations to the greater community including parental responsibility.

Bioethics

To meet the increasingly complex challenges we face when Catholic moral teaching clashes with the culture and scientific advancement, the Office will have a significantly expanded emphasis on applying Catholic bioethics. It is appropriate that our title communicate this. Most specifically, in nurturing a close relationship with the National Catholic Bioethics Center,



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we hope to build a strong foundation of Catholic moral teaching throughout the Diocese – in our parishes, our health care system and most especially in our youth who represent the future of our Church.