

## ***Life & Dignity of the Human Person***

These can be used for publication in parish bulletins, catechetical newsletters, etc.

The basis for all that the Church believes about the moral dimensions of economic life is its vision of the transcendent worth -- the sacredness -- of human beings. *The dignity of the human person, realized in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured.* All human beings, therefore, are ends to be served by the institutions that make up the economy, not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals. Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God (Gn 1:27). Wherever our economic arrangements fail to conform to the demands of human dignity lived in community, they must be questioned and transformed.

*Economic Justice for All, USCCB, 1986*

The Second Vatican Council stated: "The right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The fathers and doctors of the Church held this view, teaching that we are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of our superfluous goods". Minimum material resources are an absolute necessity for human life. If persons are to be recognized as members of the human community, then the community has an obligation to help fulfill these basic needs unless an absolute scarcity of resources makes this strictly impossible. No such scarcity exists in the United States today.

*Economic Justice for All, USCCB, 1986*

The ultimate source of human rights is not found in the mere will of human beings, in the reality of the State, in public powers, but in man himself and in God his Creator. These rights are "universal, inviolable, inalienable." Universal because they are present in all human beings, without exception of time, place or subject. Inviolable insofar as "they are inherent in the human person and in human dignity" and because "it would be vain to proclaim rights, if at the same time everything were not done to ensure the duty of respecting them by all people, everywhere, and for all people." Inalienable insofar as "no one can legitimately deprive another person, whoever they may be, of these rights, since this would do violence to their nature." (quoting John Paul II, World Day of Peace, 1999)

*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, Pontifical Council, 2005*

All people are sacred, made in the image and likeness of God. People do not lose dignity because of disability, poverty, age, lack of success or race. This emphasizes people over things, being over having.

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, U. S. Catholic Bishops, 1999*

Most of us probably take for granted (at least some of the time) that we are *created, loved and redeemed by God*. Yet, distracted as we are by the noise and activities of daily life, we need to make time to reflect on this central truth of life - and the answer to the universal human question: Who am I, and what am I doing here?

*Created, Redeemed, Loved by God*, USCCB Respect Life, 2006

...we are called to do more. As the U.S. Catholic bishops explained in *Living the Gospel of Life*: “The common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights - for examples, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture - is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition of all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination.”

*Created, Redeemed, Loved by God*, USCCB Respect Life, 2006

Pope Benedict reminds us in *God Is Love* that, as Catholics we are called to make God’s love present in the world. ...he emphasized, it is the responsibility of lay Catholics to work for a “just ordering of society” and “to take part in public life in a personal capacity.”

*Created, Redeemed, Loved by God*, USCCB Respect Life, 2006

The LAW is the law of God as proclaimed in Psalm 19, that brings joy to the heart, that refreshes the soul, and that brings wisdom to the simple. Such a law has not been written in any human law book, but on the human heart. The Psalmist tells us this law lasts forever; it is born of fear of the Lord, pure, true and just. Jesus tells us about this law. It begins with the love of the Ten Commandments and the command that we love the Lord our God with our whole heart and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves.

*Created, Redeemed, Loved by God*, USCCB Respect Life, 2006

Ambition, selfishness and ego are the opposite of the humility, love and self-sacrifice which we learn from Christ Jesus upon the altar of the cross. The Gospel of Life is not about what we achieve, or get, or accomplish. It is about being like Jesus, and being willing to give our lives for the littlest and the least among us.

*Created, Redeemed, Loved by God*, USCCB Respect Life, 2006

Who is blessed in the kingdom of God? Is it those who make the cover of news magazines? Those who receive a Nobel prize or an Academy Award? Those with big salaries or advanced degrees? No. In the kingdom of God it is the poorest, the littlest, the most forgotten who are truly blessed. And that’s why we work to save their lives.

*Created, Redeemed, Loved by God*, USCCB Respect Life, 2006

We work for life. We work to promote what is true, honorable, just and pure. There are many ways to achieve this goal. There is political action, teaching, and lobbying. But let us never forget that the most effective way to achieve justice for those unjustly deprived of life is by prayer and petition.

*Created, Redeemed, Loved by God*, USCCB Respect Life, 2006

It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop. A society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized. Only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential goods of society, such as democracy and peace.

*Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II

A wide spectrum of issues touches on the protection of human life and the promotion of human dignity. As Pope John Paul II has reminded us: "*Where life is involved, the service of charity must be profoundly consistent. It cannot tolerate bias and discrimination, for human life is sacred and inviolable at every stage and in every situation; it is an indivisible good*".

*Pro-Life Activities*, USCCB, 200

Through the words, the actions and the very person of Jesus, we are given the possibility of "knowing" the complete truth concerning the value of human life. From this "source" we receive, in particular, the capacity to "accomplish" this truth perfectly, that is, to accept and fulfill completely the responsibility of loving and serving, of defending and promoting human life.

*The Gospel of Life*, Pope John Paul II

The question "Where does one begin?" is easy to answer: "We must begin with a commitment never to intentionally kill, or collude in the killing, of any innocent human life, no matter how broken, unformed, disabled or desperate that life may seem."

*Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*, USCCB

...the value of democracy stands or falls with the values which it embodies and promotes. Of course, values such as the dignity of every human person, respect for inviolable and inalienable human rights, and the adoption of the "common good" as the end and criterion regulating political life are certainly fundamental and not to be ignored.

*The Gospel of Life*, Pope John Paul II

Respect for the dignity of the human person demands a commitment to human rights across a broad spectrum: "Both as Americans and as followers of Christ, American

Catholics must be committed to the defense of life in all its stages and in every condition.

*Living the Gospel of Life, USCCB*

For the theme of this 2005 World Day of Peace I have chosen St. Paul's words in the Letter to the Romans: "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*" (12:21). Evil is never defeated by evil; once that road is taken, rather than defeating evil, one will instead be defeated by evil.

*World Day of Peace 2005, Pope John Paul II*

From the beginning the Church has lived and understood the Death and Resurrection of Christ as a call by God to conversion in the faith of Christ and in love of one another, perfected in mutual help ever to the point of a voluntary sharing of material goods.

*Justice in the World, USCCB*

Peace is a good to be promoted with good: it is a good for individuals, for families, for nations and for all humanity; yet it is one which needs to be maintained and fostered by decisions and actions inspired by good.

*World Day of Peace 2005, Pope John Paul II*

The mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world. For unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of peace through justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the people of our times.

*Justice in the World, USCCB*

Many problems darken the horizon of our time. It is in this world that Christian hope must shine forth. For this reason too, the Lord wished to remain with us in the Eucharist, making his presence in meal and sacrifice the promise of a humanity renewed by his love. The Apostle Paul, for his part says that it is "unworthy" of a Christian community to partake of the Lord's Supper amid division and indifference towards the poor.

*Ecclesia de Eucharistia, Pope John Paul II*