

## Week 4: LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

**iVoteCatholic** As a gift from God, every human life is sacred from conception to natural death. The life and dignity of every person must be respected and protected at every stage and in every condition. Human life, as a gift of God, is sacred and inviolable.



**iVoteCatholic**

Life & Dignity of the Human Person

Not only must human life not be taken, but it must be protected with loving concern.

Society as a whole must respect, defend and promote the dignity of the human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person's life. *St John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no. 81*

We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the life and dignity of the human person. *The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, Economic Justice for All, no. 13*

. Find out more about this focus of the LIFE and DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON by checking these sections.



### FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP quotes on LIFE AND DIGNITY



#### CHURCH TEACHING QUOTES:



#### SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS:



#### CONVERSATION STARTERS:



#### FAMILY ACTIVITY:



#### RELATED SOCIAL ISSUES:



#### CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



#### RESOURCES FROM CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES AND USCCB

The right to life is the first and most fundamental principle of human rights and leads Catholics to actively work for a world of greater respect for human life and greater commitment to justice and peace.



To read the full text of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, go to <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf>

## excerpts on **LIFE AND DIGNITY OF HUMAN PERSON**

49. Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met. Every human being has a right to life, the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible, and a right to access those things required for human decency—food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religion and family life. The right to exercise religious freedom publicly and privately by individuals and institutions along with freedom of conscience need to be constantly defended. In a fundamental way, the right to free expression of religious beliefs protects all other rights. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society. Rights should be understood and exercised in a moral framework rooted in the dignity of the human person.

50. The economy must serve people, not the other way around. It is therefore necessary that an economic system serve the dignity of the human person and the common good by respecting the dignity of work and protecting the rights of workers. A “growth in justice,” according to Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth: it requires decisions, programs, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality. I am far from proposing an irresponsible populism, but the economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new poison, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded. (no. 204) Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. Employers contribute to the common good through the services or products they provide and by creating jobs that uphold the dignity and rights of workers—to productive work, to decent and just wages, to adequate benefits and security in their old age, to the choice of whether to organize and join unions, to the opportunity for legal status for immigrant workers, to private property, and to economic initiative. Workers also have responsibilities—to provide a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay, to treat employers and co-workers with respect, and to carry out their work in ways that contribute to the common good. Workers, employers, and unions should not only advance their own interests but also work together to advance economic justice and the well-being of all. Pope Francis has summarized well the Church’s teaching on work in *Laudato Si’*. “Work,” he writes, should be the setting for . . . rich personal growth, where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God. . . . Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfillment. Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work. (*Laudato Si’*, no. 127-128)

64. Our 1998 statement, *Living the Gospel of Life*, declares, “Abortion and euthanasia have become preminent threats to human life and dignity because they directly attack life itself, the

most fundamental good and the condition for all others” (no. 5). Abortion, the deliberate killing of a human being before birth, is never morally acceptable and must always be opposed. Cloning and destruction of human embryos for research or even for potential cures are always wrong. The purposeful taking of human life by assisted suicide and euthanasia is not an act of mercy, but an unjustifiable assault on human life. Genocide, torture, and the direct and intentional targeting of noncombatants in war or terrorist attacks are always wrong.

65. Laws that legitimize any of these practices are profoundly unjust and immoral. Our Conference supports laws and policies to protect human life to the maximum degree possible, including constitutional protection for the unborn and legislative efforts to end abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia. We also promote a culture of life by supporting laws and programs that encourage childbirth and adoption over abortion and by addressing poverty, providing health care, and offering other assistance to pregnant women, children, and families.

66. The USCCB calls for greater assistance for those who are sick and dying, through health care for all and effective and compassionate palliative care and hospice care. The end of life is a holy moment, a moment that marks a preparation for life with God, and it is to be treated with reverence and accompaniment. The end of life is as sacred as the beginning of life and requires treatment that honors the true dignity of the human person as created in the image of the living God. We recognize that addressing this complex issue effectively will require collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors and across party lines. Policies and decisions regarding biotechnology and human experimentation should respect the inherent dignity of human life from its very beginning, regardless of the circumstances of its origin. Respect for human life and dignity is also the foundation for essential efforts to address and overcome the hunger, disease, poverty, and violence that take the lives of so many innocent people.

67. Society has a duty to defend life against violence and to reach out to victims of crime. The Catholic Church has accepted the death penalty in the past for particularly egregious crimes when there was a serious continuing threat to society and no alternative was available. But our nation’s continued reliance on the death penalty cannot be justified. Because we have other ways to protect society that are more respectful of human life, the USCCB supports efforts to end the use of the death penalty and in the meantime to restrain its use through broader use of DNA evidence, access to effective counsel, and efforts to address unfairness and injustice related to application of the death penalty



#### **CHURCH TEACHING QUOTES:**

Society as a whole must respect, defend and promote the dignity of the human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person’s life. *St John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no. 81*

Every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the life and dignity of the human person. *The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, Economic Justice for All, no. 13*

“Human life, as a gift of God, is sacred and inviolable. For this reason procured abortion and euthanasia are absolutely unacceptable, Not only must human life not be taken, but it must be protected with loving concern. ...Respect for life requires that science and technology should always be at the service of the human and their integral development. Society as a whole must respect, defend and promote the dignity of the human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person’s life.” -Pope St. John Paul II, **The Gospel of Life**, 81.

“When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities-to offer just a few examples-it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected.” -Pope Francis, **On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si)**, 117.

Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature. **Pacem in Terris (“Peace on Earth”), Pope John XXIII, 1963, #9.**

Wherefore, whatever the progress in technology and economic life, there can be neither justice nor peace in the world, so long as men fail to realize how great is their dignity; for they have been created by God and are His children. **Mater et Magistra (“Mother and Teacher”), Pope**

This teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so, for men are by nature social beings. **Mater et Magistra (“Mother and Teacher”), Pope John XXII, 1961, #219.**

Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature. **Pacem in Terris (“Peace on Earth”), Pope John XXIII, 1963, #9.**

Women and men are not mistaken when they regard themselves as superior to merely bodily creatures and as more than mere particles of nature or nameless units in human society. For by their power to know themselves in the depths of their being they rise above the entire universe of mere objects. When they are drawn to think about their real selves they turn to those deep recesses of their being where God who probes the heart awaits them, and where they themselves decide their own destiny in the sight of God. So when they recognize in themselves a spiritual and immortal soul, this is not an illusion, a product of their imagination, to be explained solely in terms of physical or social causes. On the contrary, they have grasped the profound truth of the matter. **Gaudium et Spes (“The Church in the Modern World”), Vatican II, 1965, #14.**

Human dignity rests above all on the fact that humanity is called to communion with God. The invitation to converse with God is addressed to men and women as soon as they are born. For if

people exist it is because God has created them through love, and through love continues to keep them in existence. They cannot live fully in the truth unless they freely acknowledge that love and entrust themselves to their creator. **Gaudium et Spes ("The Church in the Modern World"), Vatican II, 1965, #19.**

God, who has a parent's care for all of us, desired that all men and women should form one family and deal with each other as brothers and sisters. All, in fact, are destined to the very same end, namely God himself, since they have been created in the likeness of God, who "made from one every nation of humankind who live on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). Love of God and of one's neighbor, then, is the first and greatest commandment. Scripture teaches us that love of God cannot be separated from love of one's neighbor: "Any other commandment [is] summed up in this sentence: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself...' therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom 13:9-10; see 1 Jn 4:20). It goes without saying that this is a matter of the utmost importance to people who are coming to rely more and more on each other and to a world which is becoming more unified every day. **Gaudium et Spes ("The Church in the Modern World"), Vatican II, 1965, #24.**

There is a growing awareness of the sublime dignity of human persons, who stand above all things and whose rights and duties are universal and inviolable. They ought, therefore, to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing, ... the right to education, and work. **Gaudium et Spes ("The Church in the Modern World"), Vatican II, 1965, #26.**

...this Council lays stress on reverence for the human person; everyone must consider one's every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus. **Gaudium et Spes ("The Church in the Modern World"), Vatican II, 1965, #27.**

... Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. **Gaudium et Spes ("The Church in the Modern World"), Vatican II, 1965, #27.**

Furthermore, while there are just differences between people, their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace. It is for public and private organizations to be at the service of the dignity and destiny of humanity; let them spare no effort to banish every vestige of social and political slavery and to safeguard basic human rights under every political system. And even if it takes a considerable time to arrive at the desired goal, these organizations should gradually align themselves with spiritual realities, which are the most sublime of all. **Gaudium et Spes ("The Church in the Modern World"), Vatican II, 1965, #29.**

The struggle against destitution, though urgent and necessary, is not enough. It is a question, rather, of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion or nationality, can

live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man. **Populorum Progressio (“On the Development of Peoples”), Pope Paul VI, 1967, #47.**

At the center of all Catholic social teaching are the transcendence of God and the dignity of the human person. The human person is the clearest reflection of God’s presence in the world; all of the Church’s work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God’s creative work and the meaning of Christ’s redemptive ministry. **The Challenge of Peace, U.S. Catholic Bishops,, 1983, #15.**

Every perspective on economic life that is human, moral, and Christian must be shaped by three questions: What does the economy do for people? What does it do to people? And how do people participate in it? **Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, #1.**

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). **Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, #28.**

Human persons are willed by God; they are imprinted with God’s image. Their dignity does not come from the work they do, but from the persons they are. **Centesimus Annus (“The Hundredth Year,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1991, #11**

Life, especially human life, belongs to God; whoever attacks human life attacks God’s very self. **Evangelium Vitae (“The Gospel of Life,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1995, #9.**

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 (“The Gospel of Life,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1995, #101.**

It should never be forgotten that the neglect of being inevitably leads to losing touch with objective truth and therefore with the very ground of human dignity. This in turn makes it possible to erase from the countenance of man and woman the marks of their likeness to God, and thus to lead them little by little either to a destructive will to power or to a solitude without hope. Once the truth is denied to human beings, it is pure illusion to try to set them free. Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery. **Fides et Ratio (“Faith and Reason”), Pope John Paul II, 1998, #90.**

Insisting on the importance and true range of philosophical thought, the Church promotes both the defence of human dignity and the proclamation of the Gospel message. There is today no

more urgent preparation for the performance of these tasks than this: to lead people to discover both their capacity to know the truth (124) and their yearning for the ultimate and definitive meaning of life. In the light of these profound needs, inscribed by God in human nature, the human and humanizing meaning of God's word also emerges more clearly. Through the mediation of a philosophy which is also true wisdom, people today will come to realize that their humanity is all the more affirmed the more they entrust themselves to the Gospel and open themselves to Christ. **Fides et Ratio ("Faith and Reason"), Pope John Paul II, 1998, #102.**

ere I would clearly reaffirm what my great predecessor John Paul II wrote in his Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* when he asserted the readiness of the Catholic Church to cooperate with the charitable agencies of these Churches and Communities, since we all have the same fundamental motivation and look towards the same goal: a true humanism, which acknowledges that man is made in the image of God and wants to help him to live in a way consonant with that dignity. **Deus Caritas Est ("God is Love"), Pope Benedict XVI, 2005, #30b.**

Certainly, the restoration of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness are the conditions for building true peace.(243) The recognition of this fact leads to a determination to transform unjust structures and to restore respect for the dignity of all men and women, created in God's image and likeness. Through the concrete fulfilment of this responsibility, the Eucharist becomes in life what it signifies in its celebration **Sacramentum Caritatis ("Apostolic**

Precisely because of the mystery we celebrate, we must denounce situations contrary to human dignity, since Christ shed his blood for all, and at the same time affirm the inestimable value of each individual person. **Sacramentum Caritatis ("Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist"), Pope Benedict XVI, 2007, #89.**

On this earth there is room for everyone: here the entire human family must find the resources to live with dignity, through the help of nature itself — God's gift to his children — and through hard work and creativity. At the same time we must recognize our grave duty to hand the earth on to future generations in such a condition that they too can worthily inhabit it and continue to cultivate it. **Caritas in Veritate ("In Charity and Truth"), Pope Benedict XVI, 2009, #50.**

How many benefits has the gaze of Christian faith brought to the city of men for their common life! Thanks to faith we have come to understand the unique dignity of each person, something which was not clearly seen in antiquity. In the second century the pagan Celsus reproached Christians for an idea that he considered foolishness and delusion: namely, that God created the world for man, setting human beings at the pinnacle of the entire cosmos. "Why claim that [grass] grows for the benefit of man, rather than for that of the most savage of the brute beasts?"[46] "If we look down to Earth from the heights of heaven, would there really be any difference between our activities and those of the ants and bees?"[47] At the heart of biblical faith is God's love, his concrete concern for every person, and his plan of salvation which embraces all of humanity and all creation, culminating in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **Lumen Fidei ("The Light of Faith"), Pope Francis, 2013, #54.**

Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another "seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unending

love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew. Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards! **Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis, 2013, #3.**

To believe in a Father who loves all men and women with an infinite love means realizing that “he thereby confers upon them an infinite dignity”. [141] To believe that the Son of God assumed our human flesh means that each human person has been taken up into the very heart of God. To believe that Jesus shed his blood for us removes any doubt about the boundless love which ennobles each human being. Our redemption has a social dimension because “God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men”. [142] To believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone means realizing that he seeks to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds: “The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, even the most complex and inscrutable”. **Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis, 2013, #178.**

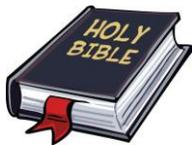
Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down, however much it may talk about social issues or criticize governments. It will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings and empty talk. If anyone feels offended by my words, I would respond that I speak them with affection and with the best of intentions, quite apart from any personal interest or political ideology. My words are not those of a foe or an opponent. I am interested only in helping those who are in thrall to an individualistic, indifferent and self-centred mentality to be freed from those unworthy chains and to attain a way of living and thinking which is more humane, noble and fruitful, and which will bring dignity to their presence on this earth. **Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis, 2013, #207-208.**

Demands involving the distribution of wealth, concern for the poor and human rights cannot be suppressed under the guise of creating a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority. The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised. **Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis, 2013, #218.**

The sheer novelty involved in the emergence of a personal being within a material universe presupposes a direct action of God and a particular call to life and to relationship on the part of a “Thou” who addresses himself to another “thou”. The biblical accounts of creation invite us to see each human being as a subject who can never be reduced to the status of an object. **Laudato Si’ (“Praised Be”), Pope Francis, 2015 #81.**

At times we see an obsession with denying any pre-eminence to the human person; more zeal is shown in protecting other species than in defending the dignity which all human beings share in equal measure. Certainly, we should be concerned lest other living beings be treated irresponsibly. But we should be particularly indignant at the enormous inequalities in our midst, whereby we continue to tolerate some considering themselves more worthy than others. **Laudato Si’ (“Praised Be”), Pope Francis, 2015 #90.**

Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us. **Laudato Si' ("Praised Be"), Pope Francis, 2015 #205.**



#### **SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS:**

- Genesis 1: 26-27 Created in the image of God
- Deuteronomy 30:19 Choose Life
- John 12:32 Christ will draw all to himself
- 1 Corinthians 15:22 Christ died for all



#### **CONVERSATION STARTERS:**

- What does it mean to be made in the image and likeness of God?
- What are ways that people have not affirmed your dignity?
- What are ways that your dignity has been affirmed?
- What are things in our world that do not honor the dignity of the human person?
- What does it mean to be pro-life from conception to natural death?
- How have you fallen short of upholding someone else's dignity?



#### **FAMILY ACTIVITY:**

Activity 1: • Explain to your children how as Catholics we believe in the dignity of every human person, that respect for life expands from birth until natural death. As a family, pray about whose dignity is not being upheld whether it's the elderly, the unborn, the incarcerated, etc.

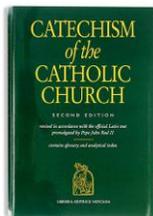
Brainstorm a way that you as a family can affirm their dignity, whether it is writing letters, phone calls, visiting, or serving that group.

Activity 2: • Sometimes, we fall short of respecting the dignity of the other in our relationships, or we do not affirm each other's dignity enough. As a family talk about ways in which you feel like your dignity has been violated or you have violated someone else's dignity? What are ways that you can repair that? Make a resolution as a family how you will work to uphold the dignity of each member starting today. How do we as a family uphold or degrade each other's dignity?



#### RELATED SOCIAL ISSUES:

- addiction
- mental health
- healthcare
- food access
- systems that perpetuate poverty



#### CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH EXCERPTS:

*These paragraphs are direct quotations from Part Three: "Life in Christ" of the Catechism of the Catholic Church which address humanity's vocation to form conscience in shaping our dignity of the human person. Footnote citations have been removed in this listing.*

To read the entire Catechism... text, refer to <http://archeparchy.ca/wcm-docs/docs/catechism-of-the-catholic-church.pdf>

1776 "Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment.... For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God.... His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths."

1777 Moral conscience, present at the heart of the person, enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil. It bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking.

1778 Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law: Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; I mean that it was not a dictate, nor conveyed the notion of responsibility, of duty, of a threat and a promise.... [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.

1779 It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This requirement of interiority is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination or introspection: Return to your conscience, question it.... Turn inward, brethren, and in everything you do, see God as your witness.

1780 The dignity of the human person implies and requires uprightness of moral conscience. Conscience includes the perception of the principles of morality (synderesis); their application in the given circumstances by practical discernment of reasons and goods; and finally judgment about concrete acts yet to be performed or already performed. the truth about the moral good, stated in the law of reason, is recognized practically and concretely by the prudent judgment of conscience. We call that man prudent who chooses in conformity with this judgment.

1781 Conscience enables one to assume responsibility for the acts performed. If man commits evil, the just judgment of conscience can remain within him as the witness to the universal truth of the good, at the same time as the evil of his particular choice. the verdict of the judgment of conscience remains a pledge of hope and mercy. In attesting to the fault committed, it calls to mind the forgiveness that must be asked, the good that must still be practiced, and the virtue that must be constantly cultivated with the grace of God: We shall . . . reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

1782 Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. "He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters."

1783 Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. the education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings.

1784 The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. the education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.

1785 In the formation of conscience the Word of God is the light for our path, we must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. We must also examine our conscience before the Lord's Cross. We are assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church.

1786 Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them.

1787 Man is sometimes confronted by situations that make moral judgments less assured and decision difficult. But he must always seriously seek what is right and good and discern the will of God expressed in divine law.

1788 To this purpose, man strives to interpret the data of experience and the signs of the times assisted by the virtue of prudence, by the advice of competent people, and by the help of the Holy Spirit and his gifts.

1789 Some rules apply in every case: - One may never do evil so that good may result from it; - the Golden Rule: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." - charity always proceeds by way of respect for one's neighbor and his conscience: "Thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience . . . you sin against Christ." Therefore "it is right not to . . . do anything that makes your brother stumble."

1790 A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself. Yet it can happen that moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed.

1791 This ignorance can often be imputed to personal responsibility. This is the case when a man "takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees almost blinded through the habit of committing sin." In such cases, the person is culpable for the evil he commits.

1792 Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad example given by others, enslavement to one's passions, assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience, rejection of the Church's authority and her teaching, lack of conversion and of charity: these can be at the source of errors of judgment in moral conduct.

1793 If - on the contrary - the ignorance is invincible, or the moral subject is not responsible for his erroneous judgment, the evil committed by the person cannot be imputed to him. It remains no less an evil, a privation, a disorder. One must therefore work to correct the errors of moral conscience.

1794 A good and pure conscience is enlightened by true faith, for charity proceeds at the same time "from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith." The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by objective standards of moral conduct.

1795 "Conscience is man's most secret core, and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths".

1796 Conscience is a judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act.

1797 For the man who has committed evil, the verdict of his conscience remains a pledge of conversion and of hope.

1798 A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. Everyone must avail himself of the means to form his conscience.

1799 Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them.

1800 A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience.

1801 Conscience can remain in ignorance or make erroneous judgments. Such ignorance and errors are not always free of guilt.

1802 The Word of God is a light for our path. We must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. This is how moral conscience is formed.



#### **RESOURCES FROM CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES AND USCCB:**

- View 3:30 minute you tube on this week's theme LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON <https://youtu.be/ABRI2ZSs58E>
- print one of these handouts to display in a prominent place in your home

# CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

*The Church's social teaching shows us how to build a just society and live lives of holiness in the 21st century.*

Each person is **SACRED**,  
made in God's image, equal in dignity.

Each person is **SOCIAL**,  
called to participate in family and community.

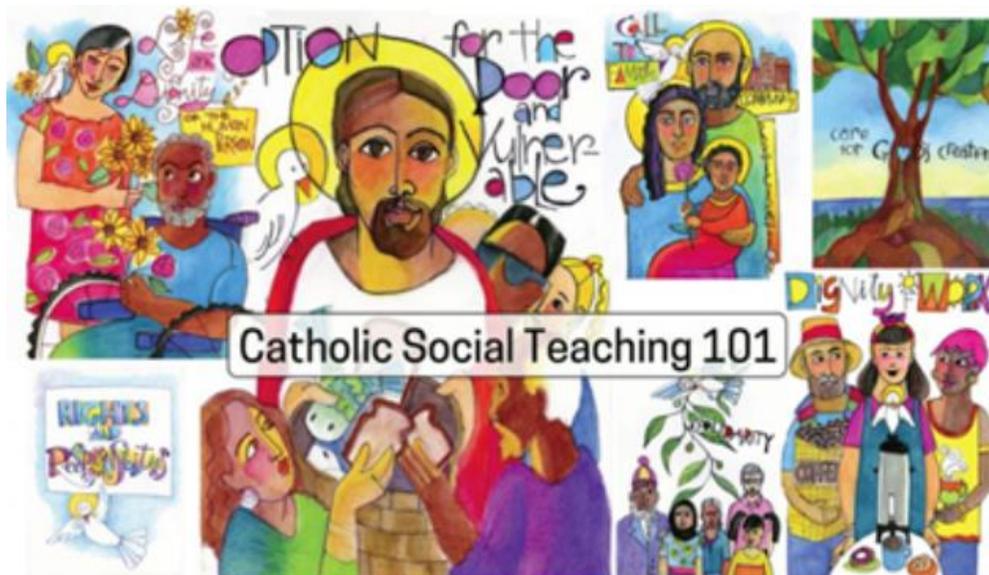
All people have **RIGHTS** and **RESPONSIBILITIES**.  
The right to life and its necessities, the responsibility to respect the rights of others and work for the common good.

We care for people who are **POOR** and vulnerable,  
before all else.

Workers have rights. **WORK** has dignity.  
We are partners with God in creation.

**SOLIDARITY** is our call.  
We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

We care for **CREATION**.  
We live in interdependence with all God has made.



the seven themes of  
**CATHOLIC SOCIAL  
 TEACHING** for children



**1** God made each person, so every life is important and should be protected.



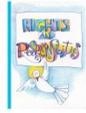
**5** Work is important in God's plan for adults and their families, so jobs and pay should be fair.



**2** God made us to be part of communities, families and countries, so all people can share and help each other.



**6** God made everyone, so we are all brothers and sisters in God's family wherever we live.



**3** God wants us to help make sure everyone is safe and healthy and can have a good life.



**7** The world was made by God, so we take care of all creation.



**4** God wants us to help people who are poor, who don't have enough food, a safe place to live, or a community.



These themes are based on United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Evangelical Social Teaching: Challenges and Opportunities*, and Catholic Relief Services. All rights reserved. Photos courtesy of Brother Philip McHenry, CRS.

- View video resources

### USCCB Catholic Social Teaching

<http://usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/index.cfm>

### USCCB Catholic Social Teaching resources

<https://wearesaltandlight.org/>

### USCCB Catholic Social Teaching prayers

<https://wearesaltandlight.org/pray-together/prayers-dignity-and-life>

### Connecting Catholic Social Teaching & the Ten Commandments

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/human-dignity/teaching-aid-colecchi.cfm>

### CRS on Catholic Social Teaching

<https://www.crs.org/resource-center/CST-101>