

A CONSISTENT ETHIC OF LIFE

On Dec. 6, 1983, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, in a lecture at Fordham University, first articulated what he referred to as the "consistent ethic of life."

1 The consistent ethic is grounded in the conviction that all human life is sacred, a sacredness rooted in the belief that human beings are created in the image of God. Although Bernardin most often spoke of the sacredness of human life, he also, quite often, used the language of human dignity — the inviolable dignity of the human person and the need to respect persons. To defend human life is to protect the human person ... the core reality in Catholic moral thought."

2 In light of the sacredness of human life and human dignity, Bernardin believed profoundly that life issues, broadly understood, are of one piece (a "seamless garment"). "Those who defend the right to life of the weakest among us must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the undocumented immigrant and the unemployed worker." Respect for human life and dignity require a concern for and commitment to both, while recognizing that the issues under each category are different and require separate analysis. Abortion or war are not the same as capital punishment or providing health insurance to the uninsured, or caring for the elderly or the dying, even though each of these has to do with the sacredness of human life and human dignity.

3 Bernardin maintained that a consistent ethic of life has direct implications for public policy. A commitment to the right to life and to quality of life should translate into specific political and economic positions and should influence assessments of policies, party platforms and political candidates.

PRAYER

GOD, OUR CREATOR,
all life is in your hands from conception to natural death. May all people live and die in dignity and love. Bless all those who defend the rights of those who cannot speak for themselves. Enlighten and be merciful toward those who fail to love, and give them peace. Let freedom be tempered by responsibility, integrity and moral values. Amen.

Grey Nuns
of the Sacred
Heart

ACTION STEP

Read a passage from the gospels every day and let the words of Jesus Christ convert us. Let the Gospel of Jesus have a higher priority in our lives than our political views.

Bishop Daniel Flores,
Diocese of Brownsville, TX

This information comes from an article written by Ron Hamel, Ph.D., *Journal of the Catholic Health Association of the United States*, November-December 2008.

RESPECT FOR THE UNBORN AND THOSE NEARING THE END OF LIFE

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

“In his encyclical on the Gospel of life, Pope St. John Paul II recognizes the full range of threats against human life, from poverty and malnutrition to murder and war. He places particular emphasis, however, on threats to life at its beginning and end—precisely when it is most in need of protection. In modern times, children in their mothers’ wombs and those approaching the end of their lives are certainly among the “least of these” in our world’s estimation.

Practices such as abortion and assisted suicide tragically reject the truth that human life is always to be cherished and defended with loving concern.”

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Respect Life Month 2020

ACTION STEP

Contact the Human Rights Office about getting involved with the Gabriel Project. Use your talents and gifts to help women facing crisis pregnancies. Help provide support to mothers with specific needs such as car seats, diapers, formula, baby cribs; professional services (legal, medical, dental, counseling); resume assistance; fundraising... and more.

If you would like to lend your support, please contact Teresa Hoepfner at 816.714.2375 or thoepfner@diocesekcsj.org. You can make a difference!

PRAYER

That the life of every person, from conception to natural death, will be protected in our laws and cherished in our hearts;

We pray to the Lord:

For women and men suffering after abortion: May the Church’s abortion healing ministry, Project Rachel, help them find peace and healing through Christ’s endless mercy;

We pray to the Lord:

For those nearing the end of life: May they receive care that respects their dignity and protects their lives as they place their hope in the promise of eternal life;

We pray to the Lord:

Grey Nuns
of the Sacred Heart

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

“RECOURSE TO THE DEATH PENALTY...”

...on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good. Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state.

Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption. Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person”,[1] and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2267

ACTION STEP

Go to Catholic Mobilizing Network website (catholicmobilizing.org) to learn what you can do to help end capital punishment in the United States.

PRAYER

MERCIFUL FATHER, we ask your blessing on all we do to build a culture of life. Hear our prayers for those impacted by the death penalty.

We pray for victims of violence and their families, that they may experience our love and support and find comfort in your compassion and in the promise of eternal life.

We pray for those on death row, that their lives may be spared, that the innocent may be freed and that the guilty may come to acknowledge their faults and seek reconciliation with you.

We pray for the families of those who are facing execution, that they may be comforted by your love and compassion.

We pray for civic leaders, that they may commit themselves to respecting every human life and ending the use of the death penalty in our land.

COMPASSIONATE FATHER, give us wisdom and hearts filled with your love. Guide us as we work to end the use of the death penalty and to build a society that truly chooses life in all situations.

We ask this Father through your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Amen.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

RACISM

“RACISM ARISES WHEN...

—either consciously or unconsciously—a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. When this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons on the basis of their race or ethnicity, it is sinful. Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39).

Racism occurs because a person ignores the fundamental truth that, because all humans share a common origin, they are all brothers and sisters, all equally made in the image of God. When this truth is ignored, the consequence is prejudice and fear of the other, and—all too often—hatred.”

Open Wide Our Hearts: the enduring call to love,
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
2018

“RACISM IS NOT MERELY

...one sin among many; it is a radical evil that divides the human family and denies the new creation of a redeemed world. To struggle against it demands an equally radical transformation, in our own minds and hearts as well as in the structures of our society.”

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979

PRAYER

WAKE ME UP LORD, so that the evil of racism finds no home within me. Keep watch over my heart Lord, and remove from me any barriers to your grace, that may oppress and offend my brothers and sisters.

Fill my spirit Lord, so that I may give services of justice and peace. Clear my mind Lord, and use it for your glory.

And finally, remind us Lord that you said, "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

Amen.

United States Conference
of Catholic Bishops,
usccb.org

ACTION STEP

Read *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, a pastoral letter against racism at
<https://www.usccb.org/resources>

POVERTY

“IN TODAY’S WORLD,

...voices are being raised which we cannot ignore and which implore our Churches to live deeply our identity as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first of these voices is that of the poor. In the world, there are too many women and men who suffer from severe malnutrition, growing unemployment, the rising numbers of unemployed youth, and from increasing social exclusion. These can give rise to criminal activity and even the recruitment of terrorists.

We cannot remain indifferent before the cries of our brothers and sisters. These ask of us not only material assistance – needed in so many circumstances – but above all, our help to defend their dignity as human persons, so that they can find the spiritual energy to become once again protagonists in their own lives. They ask us to fight, in the light of the Gospel, the structural causes of poverty: inequality, the shortage of dignified work and housing, and the denial of their rights as members of society and as workers.

AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE CALLED TOGETHER to eliminate that globalization of indifference which today seems to reign supreme, while building a new civilization of love and solidarity.”

Pope Francis, Address at Patriarchal Church of St. George, Istanbul, 11/30/14

PRAYER

GOD OF JUSTICE, open our eyes to see you in the face of those in poverty.

Open our ears to hear you in the cries of those exploited.

Open our mouths to defend you in the public squares as well as in private deeds.

Remind us that what we do to the least ones, we do to you.

Amen.

From Being Neighbor: The Catechism and Social Justice, USCCB, April 1998

ACTION STEP

According to Bread for the World, in the United States, 1 in 6 families struggles to get enough to eat. Bread for the World Institute’s Racial Wealth Gap Learning Simulation will help you learn more about connections among racial equity, hunger, and poverty.

To learn more, visit bread.org/simulation

MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

“DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

...our response to the challenges posed by contemporary migration can be summed up in four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. Yet these verbs do not apply only to migrants and refugees. They describe the Church’s mission to all those living in the existential peripheries, who need to be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated. If we put those four verbs into practice, we will help build the city of God and man.

We will promote the integral human development of all people. We will also help the world community to come closer to the goals of sustainable development that it has set for itself and that, lacking such an approach, will prove difficult to achieve. In a word, it is not only the cause of migrants that is at stake; it is not just about them, but about all of us, and about the present and future of the human family.”

Pope Francis’ message for 2019 World Day of Migrants and Refugees

ACTION STEP

REFLECT on the following questions:

1. What is my circle of influence?
2. What is one thing that I can do to help promote a greater respect for all life?

PRAYER

LORD GOD, help us to remember those who tonight will go to sleep unfed and unwelcome, strangers in foreign lands, people who have fled for their lives and are far from their homes. We lift up to you those who are escaping persecution and conflict, having fled death, torture or ruthless exploitation.

So many carry wounds, mental and physical. So many have suffered greatly. Lord Jesus, give us more of your compassion for their plight, soften our hearts to their situation, and help us follow your lead in seeking justice and mercy on their behalf.

We pray for an end to the wars, poverty and human rights abuses that drive desperate people to become refugees in the first place.

We give thanks for people working in troubled countries and ask for more of your blessing so we can bring life, dignity and hope to those that remain.

We thank you that you are Lord of all the earth and all its people are loved by you.

We pray these things in the name of your Son who was himself born into the troubled life of a refugee.

Amen.

- Author Unknown

JUSTICE - AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF THE GOSPEL

“ACTION ON BEHALF OF JUSTICE...”

...and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.” (par. 6)

“According to the Christian message, therefore, our relationship to our neighbor is bound up with our relationship to God: our response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in his love and service of people. Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love.” (par. 34)

Justice in the World,
U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1971

PRAYER

GRANT US, LORD GOD, a vision of your world as your love would have it:

a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;

a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;

a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;

a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.

Give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Author Unknown

ACTION STEP

Get involved with one of our outreach ministries at St. Thomas More such as One City Café, Uplift, reStart, or Community LINC.

See the parish Guidebook and Directory for more information.

SIXTH SUNDAY LENT 2021