



Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching:
US Conference of Catholic Bishops:
LIFE & DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

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. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. 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.

Scriptural References

- [Genesis 1:26-31](#) God created man and woman in his image.
- [Psalms 139:13-16](#) God formed each of us and knows us intimately.
- [Luke 10:25-37](#) The good Samaritan recognized the dignity in the other and cared for his life.
- [Romans 12: 9-18](#) Love one another, contribute to the needs of others, live peaceably with all.
- [1 Corinthians 3:16](#) You are holy, for you are God's temple and God dwells in you.
- [Galatians 3:27-28](#) All Christians are one in Christ Jesus.
- [1 John 3: 1-2](#) See what love the Father has for us, that we should be called Children of God.

Tradition

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. (See St. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Year* [[Centesimus annus](#)], no. 11)

"There exist also sinful inequalities that affect millions of men and women. These are in open contradiction of the Gospel: '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'." ([Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), no. 1938 citing *Gaudium et Spes*, 29)

"The dignity of others is to be respected in all circumstances, not because that dignity is something we have invented or imagined, but because human beings possess an intrinsic worth superior to that of material objects and contingent situations. This requires that they be treated differently. That every human being possesses an inalienable dignity is a truth that corresponds to human nature apart from all cultural change. For this reason, human beings have the same inviolable dignity in every age of history and no one can consider himself or herself authorized by particular situations to deny this conviction or to act against it." (Pope Francis, *On Fraternity and Social Friendship* [[Fratelli Tutti](#)], no. 213)

"Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection. We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest

consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty.” (Pope Francis, Rejoice and Be Glad [[Gaudete et Exsultate](#)], no. 101)

"The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner." (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [[Caritas in Veritate](#)], no. 32)

“The world exists for everyone, because all of us were born with the same dignity. Differences of color, religion, talent, place of birth or residence, and so many others, cannot be used to justify the privileges of some over the rights of all. As a community, we have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.” (Pope Francis, *On Fraternity and Social Friendship* [[Fratelli Tutti](#)], no. 118)

For the entire publication of Life and Dignity of the Human Person:

<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/life-and-dignity-of-the-human-person>

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