

Remembering the Core Catholic Value of Human Dignity

The sanctity of human life is a core principle of Catholicism.

Human beings are created by God in God's image.[1]

Human dignity is bestowed upon us by God.

It is not measured by our ability or competence to care for ourselves.



Dignity cannot be forfeited, especially in situations when we might be dependent on others. Dignity is God's gift and it remains with us from the moment of conception to natural death. Each person possesses inherent dignity and immeasurable worth,[2] including preborn children, elderly individuals, those with special needs and others marginalised by society. Christians, then, are called to defend, protect, and value all human life.

Our understanding that human life is sacred from the moment of conception means that respect for human life should be at the centre of all we do.

The Sanctity of life calls for a response in prayer and action, reminding those around us, including our elected community leaders of the value of all human life by speaking out for *"those who cannot speak for themselves"* [3]

There will be opportunities to talk about and act upon our pro-life views, especially by demonstrating respect for life in our words and actions. Together we can live out and communicate the beauty, wonder and reverence our Creator intended for each person in the human family.

“ This Sunday we reflect on the gift of human life and our responsibility to care for it, from its very beginning, throughout life and until the very end. Our respect for human life is a sacred obligation - to ensure its safety and its protection. For our young people this is through safeguarding and through legislation.

Let us pray for one another and for all life and its protection ”

- Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton



Gaudium et Spes on Human Dignity

The Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, expressed the Church's strong condemnation of attacks against the dignity of human life. Though lengthy, this quote helps us to understand what diminishes or destroys the dignity of the human person:



“Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or wilful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; 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 people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed. They poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practice them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonour to the Creator. [4]

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References:

- [1] Book of Genesis 1:27.
- [2] Pope John Paul II *Evangelii Vitae* 2.
- [3] Book of Proverbs 31:8
- [4] *Gaudium et Spes* 27.