

SEGMENT FIFTEEN

**THEME: Building A Culture Of Life
And Social Justice**

OPENING PRAYER / SCRIPTURE READING:

Psalm 139

Jeremiah 1:5 – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you”

INSTRUCTORS’ SUMMARY STATEMENTS:

Respect for the dignity of the human person involves respect for the rights that flow from that dignity. Created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26) all human beings are endowed with rational souls, all have the same human nature and same origin and destiny. Redeemed by Jesus Christ, all are invited to enjoy equal dignity as children of God.

The Church affirms the sacredness and dignity of the life of every human person. The church teaches that we are human beings from the moment of conception to natural death. Our origin and destiny is in God our Creator.

Social justice can become a reality only when the transcendent dignity of each person is respected, safeguarded and promoted. During the past century the Church has articulated a systematic body of moral teachings on social issues. This body of social teaching constitutes an essential part of Christian moral life based on the Gospel demands of love and justice.

In Catholic social teaching the Church develops principles to evaluate social structures that serve the good of the person and the common good. The Church’s moral and spiritual guidelines are offered to us to guide both personal morality and as a means to evaluate just or unjust social structures.

- ❖ The equality of human beings rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it (CCC, 1934 – 1938)
- ❖ Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow individuals or groups to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of every human person. The person represents the ultimate end of society. (CCC 1929 – 1933)
- ❖ Socio-economic problems can be resolved with the help of all forms of solidarity: solidarity among the poor, between rich and poor, among workers, between employers and workers and solidarity among nations and peoples. Solidarity, or “social charity” is a direct demand of the Gospel. The Christian virtue of solidarity involves the sharing of both material and spiritual goods. (CCC 1939 – 1942)
- ❖ When Jesus proclaims the coming of God’s kingdom he speaks of salvation from sin and injustice (Luke 4: 14-21). Throughout his ministry, Jesus speaks against the unjust practices of the Pharisees and tax collectors. The Beatitudes ((Matthew 5: 3-12), the parables of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29 – 37), and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19 – 31) show Jesus’ concern and compassion for the poor and the outcast. By healing the sick, the abandoned and the poor Jesus teaches us the value of each human life.
- ❖ From its conception, the child has the right to life. Direct abortion and intentional euthanasia are grave contradictions of the dignity of human life and the respect due to God, our Creator. Because it should be treated as a person from conception, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed like every other human being. (CCC 2258 – 2330)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The following questions may be used by the RCIA team to guide large or small group discussions during weekly RCIA meetings. They may also be given to the participants as a basis for personal reflection during the week.

1. Discuss the scriptural basis for respecting human life and dignity.
2. What are the consequences of affirming the dignity of every human person?
3. What part could you or do you play to promote social justice and the dignity of human life?

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES/QUOTATIONS:

Exodus 20:13, Deut 5:17

Matthew 5: 43-44; 25: 40

Matthew 6: 33

Galatians 3: 28

Ephesians 2:14

“All things are of your making, all times and seasons obey your laws, but you choose to create man in your own image, setting him over the whole world in all its wonder” *Preface V for Sundays in Ordinary Time*

“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world 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.” Introduction to *Justice in the World*, 1971

“What is at stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment in history are strictly and responsibly in debt.” Pope John Paul II, On Social Justice, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987

“Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatibly with God’s design” Universal Catechism, 1934-1935

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

Universal Catechism, 2258 - 2330

Pope Leo XIII, On the Condition of Labor, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891

Pope Pius XI, On the Fortieth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*,
Quadragesimo Anno, 1931

Pope John XXIII, Peace on Earth, *Pacem in Terris*, 1963

Pope John Paul II, On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life,
Evangelium
Vitae, 1995

Documents of the Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the
Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*

CLOSING PRAYER

Luke 10: 29-37 - Parable of the Good Samaritan