

November 2018

+ Generations of Faith +

FAITH NOTES

+ Enriching, Educating, Engaging All Ages +



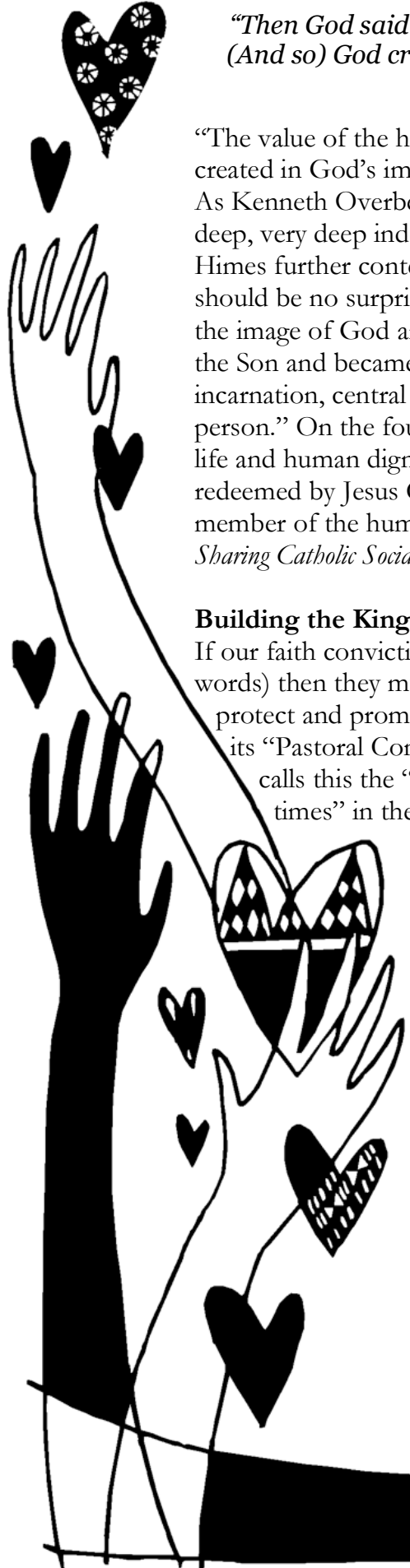
Life and Dignity of the Human Person The Heart of Catholic Social Teaching

“Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness ... (And so) God created humankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” –Genesis 1:26-27

“The value of the human being is at the heart of Catholic social teaching. We’re created in God’s image, and our value is rooted in who we are, not in what we do.” As Kenneth Overberg’s insights suggest, the scriptural roots of this principle are deep, very deep indeed, reaching all the way back to the story of creation. Kenneth Himes further contends: “that human dignity is the point of departure for CST should be no surprise to people who confess two beliefs: that humans are made in the image of God and that the God who is Creator of all entered into history through the Son and became human. In other words, the doctrines of creation and incarnation, central affirmations of our creed, lead us to affirm the dignity of each person.” On the foundation of these central faith convictions is built the principle of life and human dignity: “Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family.” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, #4)

Building the Kingdom Jesus Proclaimed: Transforming Values into Action

If our faith convictions are “not to be reduced to pious sentimentality,” (Fr. Himes words) then they must propel us into action; inspiring us to live our lives in ways that protect and promote the dignity ... of *all* people. The Second Vatican Council, in its “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” (*Gaudium et Spes*) calls this the “irresistible requirements of dignity.” Reading the “signs of the times” in the light of the Gospel, the Council contends that “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.” But who is my neighbor? Once again the Council turns to the Gospel, grounding its answer in the witness of Jesus’ ministry and message: “In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, **‘As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me’.** (Matt. 25:40)”



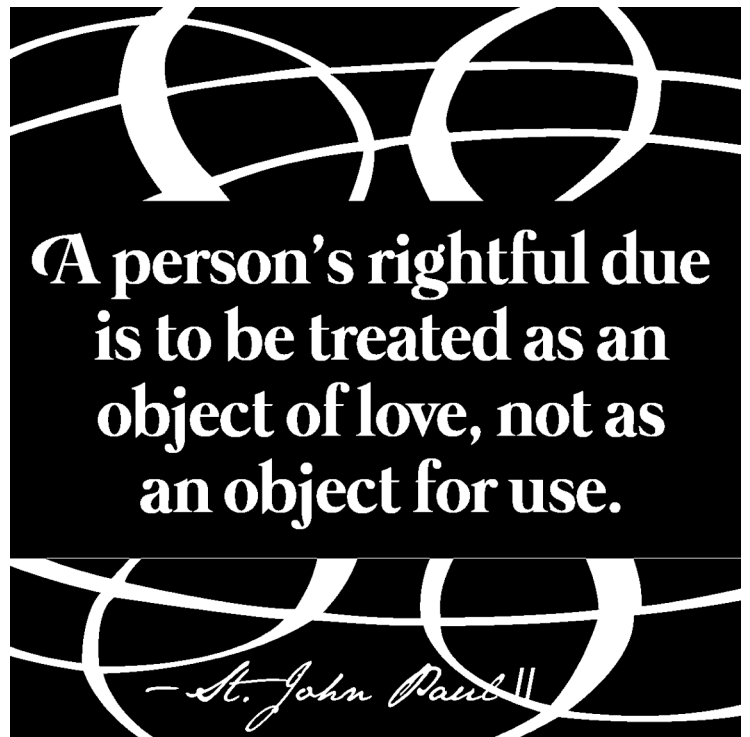
A Closer Look at the Lord's Prayer: "Who art in heaven..."

The Lord's Prayer is the only prayer formula attributed to Jesus himself in the Gospels. You'll find it in two places: Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes it as a "summary of the whole Gospel." (CCC, 2761) When understood properly and embraced fully, it is our clearest blueprint for building the kingdom Jesus proclaimed. Let's take a look at these words:

Who art in heaven: What does "art" mean? It is an old way of saying "is," so we are saying, "Our Father, who is in heaven." Where is heaven? Some people think of heaven as up in the sky or among the stars. That's one way to think of heaven, as a place. We can also think of heaven as being with God. We are with God when we love each other and do the kind things God wants us to do. Heaven is wherever God is.



"You must, I must, we must say 'Our Father, who art in heaven,' but not with a sense of humiliation. I am reminded of a time when I was five or six years old, and they operated on my throat to take out my tonsils. At that time, they performed this procedure without anesthesia. The doctor would show you the ice cream you would get afterward, then they put something into your mouth to keep it open, and then the nurse held you. You could not close your mouth. The doctor, then, with a pair of scissors, took out both of your tonsils. Moments later, they gave you the ice cream and that was it. After the operation, I could not speak because of the pain, and my dad called a taxi and we went home. Once we arrived at home, Dad paid the driver and I was shocked: Why does Dad pay this man? As soon as I was able to talk, two days later, I asked him, 'Why did you pay that man with the car?' He explained to me that it was a taxi. 'But wait, wasn't the car yours?' I asked him. You see, at the time, I thought my dad owned all the cars in the city! The memory of this childhood experience with a father who teaches and explains, especially when we are experiencing pain, gives us an idea of our relationship with God, his greatness but also his closeness. God is a God of glory, but he walks with you and when it is necessary, he even gives you ice cream." —Pope Francis



Examination of Conscience

- ✚ How and where is human dignity being diminished in our world? Where is human dignity being uplifted and protected? Do I work to protect the dignity of others when it is being threatened?
- ✚ In whom it is easy for me to see God's image? Are there people who I struggle to believe are made in God's image? Why?
- ✚ How would my daily interactions be different if I saw others through God's eyes? How would the world be different if, when I looked into the eyes of another person, I saw the face of Christ reflected back at me?

**Adapted in part from "CST 101: Life and Dignity of the Human Person," a resource produced by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in collaboration with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB); and from the USCCB's "Examination of Conscience in Light of Catholic Social Teaching."*