



## DIGNITY AND EQUALITY OF EACH HUMAN PERSON

“ It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to become brothers and sisters.”

Pope Francis, On Fraternity and Social Friendship



The dignity of every human person, whoever they are, is the starting point for the Church's teaching around social justice. The Church clearly states that we are all made lovingly in God's image and likeness. We are all sisters and brothers of one another. If we truly believe this principle, then we are challenged to firstly realise that we ourselves are made in God's image and likeness. We are lovingly created by God. We are beautiful. This can be difficult for many of us to accept.

What flows from this is that every person we meet - family, friends, neighbours, strangers, people on the other side of the world - are also made in God's image and likeness. They deserve our respect. They must be treated fairly.

“ When the dignity of the human person is respected, and his or her rights recognized and guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the creativity of the human personality is released through actions that further the common good”.[18] Yet, “by closely observing our contemporary societies, we see numerous contradictions that lead us to wonder whether the equal dignity of all human beings, solemnly proclaimed seventy years ago, is truly recognized, respected, protected and promoted in every situation.”

Pope Francis, On Fraternity and Social Friendship

Pope Francis talks of “learning to find Jesus in the face of others, in their voices, in their pleas” (Joy of the Gospel, 91). Remember the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, where at the end of time Jesus is asked when those entering eternal life have actually helped him. He says it's whenever they have helped anyone in need, whether hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, or in prison.



Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Prayer for Peace 2014

In God's family, where all are sons and daughters of the same Father, and, because they are grafted to Christ, sons and daughters in the Son, there are no “disposable lives”. All men and women enjoy an equal and inviolable dignity. All are loved by God. All have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who died on the Cross and rose for all. This is the reason why no one can remain indifferent before the lot of our brothers and sisters.”

The principles around solidarity, our role within community, the way we treat one another, and work for peace, all flow from this concept of human dignity. Over the coming weeks, human dignity will provide the backdrop as we explore the other principles of Catholic social teaching, and how we can live as a Caritas people, namely the call to participation and community; the preferential option for the poor; the dignity and rights of workers; solidarity among people and the promotion of peace; and the care of creation.

### HYMNS

- One bread, one body – John Foley
- All are welcome – Marty Haugen
- Awake from your slumber (City of God) – Dan Schutte
- Here I am, Lord – Dan Schutte
- Brother, Sister - Richard Gillard
- Lord - Timothy Dudley-Smith



1 Corinthians 12:12-13

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.



Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

## SCRIPTURE



## HOMILY NOTES

As it's the first week you may wish to give a brief introduction to Catholic social teaching first:

- CST is a set of guidelines that help us make decisions about how we live our lives as Catholics in the world.
- All of CST is based in Scripture – both Old and New Testaments – and developed by Church leaders (Popes, bishops and bishops' conferences, theologians) throughout the last two thousand years.
- It looks at how we should treat one another and the planet; how we should respond to situations; how we should live our lives to enable all people to "live their lives to the full". (cf John 10:10).
- At the heart of CST is the guideline, or principle, of human dignity.
- Genesis 1: 26-27 tells us that we are all made in God's image and likeness. We believe we are all God's children: whatever our race, belief, gender, sexual orientation, job, income, we are made in God's image.

- We speak about being "sisters and brothers" of one another. If we truly believe this, how do we show it? How do we truly treat one another – our family, friends, and colleagues; the strangers in our community here in our parish and on the streets; those we may never meet who live thousands of miles away, but are still our brothers and sisters?
- Remember the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, when Jesus says: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40).
- Christ is present in all of us. How do we show our love of Christ in all those we meet? And those we don't see, but who feel the impact of our choices and decisions?
- These principles help us to reflect on how we can be a Caritas people. The Latin word "Caritas" means love, justice, and charity. We are called as people of faith to live as Caritas people, being love in action. The coming weeks will help us decide how we will do this in our own lives, and as our community.



## PRAYER

- For the Church throughout the world; that it will always be a place that respects all people as children of God.
- For people in positions of leadership in society; that they will always uphold the dignity of every person throughout the world.
- For people whose dignity is not upheld in any way; that they will feel God's love through the support of others.
- For people in our own community who are not respected, and unable to live their lives to the full; that they will be filled with courage and strength.



## ACTION

Over the coming weeks you may wish to create a focal point in the sanctuary, or somewhere else in your church, which can be added to and represent the six principles of Catholic social teaching. It could be set up in advance of the weekend's liturgies, or the symbol could be brought up in the entrance procession and put in place.

Suggestions:

- A set of images of people from around the world
- A mirror