



DIGNITY AND EQUALITY OF EACH HUMAN PERSON



“Every person is immensely holy and deserves our love”

Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel, 274

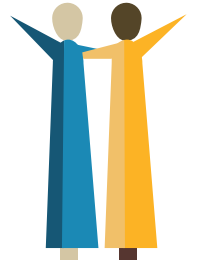


The dignity of every human person, whoever they are, is the starting point for the Church’s teaching around social justice. The Church clearly states that we are all made lovingly in God’s image and likeness. We are all sisters and brothers of one another. If we truly believe this principle, then we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



SEE

- If someone was to ask someone who knew you well what good qualities you have, what would they say?
- Do you see these good qualities in yourself? Where do they come from?
- Do you see yourself as a child of God?
- When is it difficult to accept that you ‘are beautiful and lovingly made’?



JUDGE

What flows from this divine truth is that every person - family, friends, neighbours, strangers, people on the other side of the world - is made in God’s image and likeness. They deserve our respect. They must be treated fairly. 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 by people entering eternal life when they have actually helped him. He says it’s whenever they have helped anyone in need, whether hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, or in prison.

“If I encounter a person sleeping outdoors on a cold night, I can view him or her as an annoyance, an idler, an obstacle in my path, a troubling sight, a problem for politicians to sort out, or even a piece of refuse cluttering a public space. Or I can respond with faith and charity, and see in this person a human being with a dignity identical to my own, a creature infinitely loved by the Father, an image of God, a brother or sister redeemed by Jesus Christ. That is what it is to be a Christian! Can holiness somehow be understood apart from this lively recognition of the dignity of each human being?”

Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, 274

“Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 357





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.

Genesis 1:26-27

- When do you encounter the image and likeness of God in others?
- What do you think Pope Francis means by achieving 'fulfilment when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names'?



ACT

The principle of human dignity – that we all have a unique worth not because of anything we do, but because we are made by God – is central to Catholic social teaching. Over the coming weeks, human dignity will provide the backdrop as we explore the other principles of Catholic social teaching, to help us 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.

For this first week, consider how each individual is made in God's image and likeness and the truth that Christ is present in everyone. Journalist and social activist Dorothy Day reflected on the consequences, saying: "I really only love God as much as I love the person I love the least."

- How can you show how much you love God, through the love you show to others whom you meet? And those you don't see, but who feel the impact of your choices and decisions?
- How can you promote the God-given dignity of human beings this week?

Where can you see people unable to live in dignity?

As people of faith, how are we called to love our sisters and brothers?

What concrete action can you take to enable all people to flourish?

SEE

JUDGE

ACT

