



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 we are to share our lives with others and generously give of ourselves, we also have to realise that every person is worthy of our giving. Not for their physical appearance, their abilities, their language, their way of thinking, or for any satisfaction that we might receive, but rather because they are God’s handiwork, his creation. God created that person in his image, and he or she reflects something of God’s glory. Every human being is the object of God’s infinite tenderness, and he himself is present in their lives. Jesus offered his precious blood on the cross for that person. Appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves our love. Consequently, if I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life. It is a wonderful thing to be God’s faithful people. We achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names!

Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, 274.





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?

For more background information visit : catholicsocialteaching.org.uk

Where can you see people unable to live in dignity?

SEE

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

JUDGE

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

ACT

