

Social Action Commission focus for January

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) describes this principle:

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

More on

Life and Dignity of the Human Person:

<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/life-and-dignity-of-the-human-person>



From *Gaudete et Exsultate*

“Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection. We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty.” (Pope Francis, *Rejoice and Be Glad* [*Gaudete et Exsultate*], no. 101)
https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

“The care and protection of man for his neighbour are the fruit of a gaze that is able to recognize, a heart that knows how to listen. They are born of the desire to approach with respect and tenderness, to share the other’s burdens and hopes. It is in taking responsibility for the life of our neighbour that we learn true freedom, that which does not dominate but serves, does not possess but accompanies.”

Pope Leo XIV on Monday, November 17 on the occasion of a workshop promoted by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors on the theme “Building communities that protect dignity,”

What can we do?

Life and Dignity of the Human Person Prayer

God of all life,
Help us to appreciate the great gift that is human life
formed in your image, a reflection of your holiness.
Help us to recognize you
in all whom you have created:
children not yet born,
families affected by poverty and war,
people of different abilities,
people from other lands, and
all who are victims of hatred and racism.
Help us to bear witness to the dignity of all whom you
have created,
regardless of stage of life,
or wealth,
or ability,
or color, or creed,
for every person is fully equal in your loving eyes.
Share with us your holy knowledge
that we are all your children,
each bestowed with inherent dignity.
May your justice reign forever!
Amen.



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Secretariat of
Justice and Peace

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This prayer can be said as part of your daily prayer practice, with your family perhaps at meal time, or with any group you meet with during January.

December in Review Call to Family, Community and Participation Angel Tree Update

St Mary's Angel Tree program's mission is to provide assistance and holiday cheer through several organizations in Pella and the Des Moines metro, 90% of the support staying in Pella. The 2025 campaign consisted of 317 angels with a value average of \$15 and served 5 organizations. St. Mary's regularly review our served organizations and adjust before we kick off in October.

A team of 10 members who all pitched in to make the angels, sort, wrap presents, and make deliveries before Christmas Day.

Contact Jasmine Eisenbarth with questions or suggestions for organizations to support in the future. jmeisenbarth@gmail.com or 641-780-1990.

Discussion Guide

A Discussion Guide is available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services. It Includes:

- Opening Prayer
- YouTube Video
- Scripture Passage for Reflection
- Sharing on Scripture
- Passages from Catholic Tradition for Reflection
- Discussion of Passages
- Call to Action
- Sending Forth

This and other resources can be found at: uscbb.org/cst

Video on Life and Dignity of the Human Person

A video from the USCCB and CRF on this topic can be found on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABRI2ZSs58E>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops January 2026 Pro-Life Events

9 Days for Life

Join the thousands of Catholics across the country praying for the protection of human life. Starting on January 16, participants are invited to pray for, learn about, and offer small sacrifices for the protection of human life.

Sign up to receive the daily prayers via email or text message!

<https://www.respectlife.org/9-days-signup>. Available in both English and Spanish!

National Prayer Vigil for Life & Holy Hour

The National Prayer Vigil for Life is a pro-life prayer vigil held on the eve of the March for Life each January since 1979.

Thousands of pilgrims from across the nation pray for an end to abortion and a greater respect for all human life. It is held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C on January 22nd, 2026.

Or watch the opening Mass live at 5pm Eastern on EWTN or livestreamed via the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

National Day of Prayer for the Protection of Human Life

Did you know? January 22 is a day of prayer and penance called the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children:

For more information: <https://www.respectlife.org/>