

Topic: The Dignity of the Human Person - page 1 of 4

I. Learning Objectives

Objectives for deeper understanding:

- The participant will recognize that every single human life, no matter whether or not it seems “defected,” shares an immense dignity.
- The participant will understand that defending life must be a movement of love, or it is nothing at all.

Objectives for Inviting Learners to a change of heart:

- The teens will commit to building a culture of life and a civilization of love in our world. Specifically, that they will dedicate themselves to one concrete, pro-life action and consider attending the March for Life.

II. Materials/Resources Needed:

Laptop, projector and screen; opening prayer handout; Bibles for each of the youth to use; prayer cards and pens; cupcakes; cymbal or gong; whiteboard and markers; Photos of the unborn, poor, elderly, disabled, as well as teens from the youth group; *Total Surrender* by Mother Theresa.

“99 Balloons” Video: <http://youtu.be/th6Njr-qkq0>

“The Butterfly Circus” Video Clip (beginning to 4:27): http://www.recoverygraphics.com/albums/spiritual_1/creatorBiblical.png

In His Hands Picture: http://www.recoverygraphics.com/albums/spiritual_1/creatorBiblical.png

“Wonderfully Made” song by Danielle Rose: <http://youtu.be/iXaPwHPqJi4>

III. Catechetical Foundations:

A. *CHRISTOCENTRICITY:*

- We need to see Jesus in every person, created in the image and likeness of God, possessing worth and dignity.
- Whatever we do to our brothers and sisters, we do to Christ.

B. *SCRIPTURAL DRIVING FORCE:*

- Genesis 1:26-27 - Image and likeness of God
- Mt. 25 - What you did to the least of these, you did to me
- Proverbs 24:11 - Rescue those being led away to death
- 1 Peter 4:8 - love covers a multitude of sins
- 1 Cor. 13 - Description of love

C. *PRIMARY CATECHISM SECTIONS:*

- CCC 2258-2283 - Respect for human life
- CCC 2284-2301 - Respect for the dignity of persons
- CCC 355-361 - Image and likeness of God

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Preparation (12 minutes)

- Start by showing how the “99 Balloons” video, which shows the love and care that a mother and father showed their little baby boy, who was sick and miraculously lived for 99 days.

- Opening Prayer (pass out handouts and have everyone pray together):

“Blessed be life - I tell you it's good to be alive! Blessed is she who bore me and tenderly nurtured me. Blessed is the fruitful seed in the womb. Blessed is the growing embryo destined to be born this Day. Blessed is every child of God come to full term. Blessed are all the children of the universe. Blessed are those whose special needs magnify God's glory. Blessed are the elderly whose life journey is drawing them nearer to a reunion with the Author of Life. Blessed be the Virgin Mary who shows us how to nurture life and did not refuse to bear the Son of God. Blessed be the Lord Jesus who humbled himself to take on our flesh and glorified every stage of human life as he lived it with us. Blessed be the miracle of LIFE and the God of LIFE who provides for every living creature.”

(Adapted from “Blessed Be” by Brother Martin)

- The leader can conclude the prayer with:

“Heavenly Father, your cosmic gaze focused on dust and you fashioned in your image and likeness every man and woman, every child conceived within the womb: give us, we beg you, a keen eye to recognize that image so that respect for all human life becomes our way of life. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Proclamation (5 minutes):

- Have everyone come up to the whiteboard and write down the most expensive, most valuable, or most rare thing that they can think of.
 - On the screen, flash an image of an unborn child – he/she is worth more than everything written on that board, plus all the rest of the stuff in the world combined!
 - Repeat with pictures of the poor, disabled, elderly, and pictures of teens from the youth group, too.
- Proclaim: **“...the value of one person transcends all the material world.”** (- Ven. Pope John Paul II) Have this proclamation visually represented as a reinforcement. Repeat it often throughout the night to tie in your explanation to the overall topic - this is a short, memorable statement to help them remember the message of this lesson - it should stick with them!)

Explanation (20 minutes):

1. Unique among all creation, God creates the human person in His image & likeness by endowing him with the unity of soul and body.
 - Have a student read Genesis 1:26-27
 - At the moment of conception, God creates a unique, eternal soul.
 - CS Lewis: “You don’t have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.”
 - “The soul is what makes every individual person a man: his spiritual life-principle and inmost being. The soul causes the material body to be a living human body. Through his

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soul, man is a creature who can say “I” and stand before God as an irreplaceable individual.” (*Youcat* 62)

- “Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. *Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator.* For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day.’ (*Guadium et Spes* 14)
- St. John Chrysostom: “What is it that is about to be created, that enjoys such honor? It is man that great and wonderful living creature, more precious in the eyes of God than all other creatures! For him the heavens and the earth, the sea and all the rest of creation exist. God attached so much importance to his salvation that he did not spare his own Son for the sake of man. Nor does he ever cease to work, trying every possible means, until he has raised man up to himself and made him sit at his right hand.”
- “The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence.” (*Guadium et Spes* 19)

2. Offenses against life vs. respect for life

- Have students read Matthew 25:31-46, broken up in parts.
- Ask them what are some offenses against life.
- Contrast respect for life shown to baby Elliot in opening video with Abortion - CCC 2270-2275, abortionfacts.com
- Address dignity of the elderly & evil of euthanasia - CCC 2276 - 2279
- What about Gossiping/Bullying/Judging Others? what does not build up or honor, tears down & desecrates

3. Standing up for life - building a “culture of life” and a “civilization of love

- Contrast the attitude of anti-abortion fanatics that kill abortionists or condemn women who’ve had abortions with the response of Jesus to sinners and murderers. We’re called to love like Christ.
- Have one student read Proverbs , and immediately another read 1 Peter 4:8.
- “We are asked to love and honor the life of every man and woman and to work with perseverance and courage so that our time, marked by all too many signs of death, may at last witness the establishment of a new culture of life, the fruit of the culture of truth and of love.” - Ven. Pope John Paul II
- We must respond in love to anyone who has offended life by murder, abortion, euthanasia or other evil - they too are children of God and need to know His love/forgiveness through us. They are not the enemy - Satan is.
- Have a student read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 (on what love truly is), immediately when they are finished, hit a gong or symbol and allow the shock value to set in. Then repeat the verses slowly.

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- if we don't love people, if we only "defend life" to feel good about *ourselves*, then we are like that loud, empty noise!
- We must not be afraid to take up the cross in love for our brothers and sisters, to stand against the culture of death and build a civilization of love.

Application (20 minutes):

- Show clip of the butterfly Circus, a short film that tells the story of a man without arms and legs. He is in the circus, and taunted and treated very poorly, until he meets a man who looks him in the eye and treats him with respect. (If you have time, show the whole 20 minute film...eventually, he comes to see his worth and dignity.)
- Either break into small groups for discussion or have the teens journal. Have them think about the battle between the culture of life and the culture of death in the movie. Have them reflect on that battle going on around them in their daily life. Have them identify concrete things they can do to build a culture of life and civilization of love (spiritual adoption of an unborn baby, volunteer with a crisis pregnancy center, visit the elderly in the nursing home).
- Bring them all together again and promote the March for Life Pilgrimage - show video for youth rally and Mass for Life, pass out registration forms.

Celebration (10 minutes):

- Project the In His Hands picture and ask the teens to meditate with it while the song "Wonderfully Made" by Danielle Rose plays in the background.
- Pray together: "Loving God, I thank you for the gift of life you gave and continue to give to me and to all of us. Merciful God, I ask your pardon and forgiveness for my own failure and the failure of all people to respect and foster all forms of human life. Gracious God, I pray that with your grace, I and all people will reverence, protect, and promote all human life and that we will be especially sensitive to the life of the unborn, the abused, neglected, disabled, and the elderly. I pray, too, that all who make decisions about life in any form will do so with wisdom, love, and courage. Living God, I praise and glorify you as Father, Source of all life, as Son, Savior of our lives, and as Spirit, Sanctifier of our lives. Amen!"
- Give out cupcakes to celebrate everyone's birthdays - emphasizing thankfulness for each of their lives as a unique creation of God.