

PERSONHOOD: MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

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OVERVIEW

Each one of us has tremendous dignity because each of us is created in the image of God. We are more than a mass of cells reacting to environmental stimuli. We are more than what we can see – more than skin, teeth and muscles. We are children of God created to love one another. We learn through the Gospel, and specifically the Ten Commandments that our identity is formed by our relationship with God and with one another. In the Gospel, Jesus uses the Beatitudes to teach what qualities we should embody in our relationships.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Beatitudes express the vocation of the faithful, they are a framework for living a God filled life.

- Which beatitude do you identify with most strongly?
- Which of the beatitudes do you find most challenging?

A foundation for Catholic social thought is understanding the value and dignity of the human person.

- How do we demonstrate that we value others?
- In what ways does society violate the sanctity of human life?
- How do we balance respect for the individual with respect for the common good?

God has given us a conscience, a barometer revealing the moral rightness of our decision making. Our actions give voice to our conscience, to doing the right thing for ourselves and others.

- How do we know that we are doing the right thing?
- What guidance do we have to show us what is right in the eyes of God?
- How do we develop our conscience?
- Is it possible for someone to have no conscience?

We are familiar with the phrase, “If you want peace, work for justice.”

- How does peace come from justice?
- What is justice in terms of respecting the dignity of the human person?
- Is justice the same as fairness?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In the words of St. Francis, "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me." Personal responsibility is intrinsic for respecting self in order to respect others. We individuals are part of a greater community of people, the Body of Christ. As unique individuals, created in the image and likeness of God, we are morally bound to respect the life of others – human rights – to care for and protect one another in all stages and forms of life.

- Who do we know that needs our help?
- How have we helped them?
- What is gained by helping the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, the young, the old?
- What is lost if we don't help and protect?

When love is unselfish it creates openness in our hearts to nurture and offer true love for others. Letting go of self-interest allows us to see another person as our brother and sister deserving of respect and mercy.

- Discuss an experience where you were shown mercy from another person.
- When have you show mercy to another?

Dorothy Day once said that "it is most surely an exercise of faith for us to see Christ in each other."

- What challenges are there to seeing Christ in others?
- What gives people their dignity?
- What does the teaching that we are all created in the image and likeness of God mean to you?
- What implications does this teaching have for the way we live our lives?
- How can we use this teaching to live out our lives as faithful disciples and members of the human family?
- What is more important, the person or society?