

THE MEANING OF LIFE

"We must all care for life, cherish life, with tenderness, warmth ... caring for life from the beginning to the end." -Pope Francis

OVERVIEW

We are created to know, love, and serve God, our Heavenly Father, and to love each human being on a deep level. We encounter the Lord through his Word, the Sacraments, and through a life of community.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Sacredness of Life

Respect for human life, the unborn, the elderly, the poor, the disabled, and the marginalized, is often lost and forgotten amid the selfish desires of today's society where "it's all about me."

- How do we turn selfishness to selflessness?
- How do we cherish and demonstrate respect for human life in all its stages?
- What leads people to fail to cherish the lives of other human beings?
- What can we do as individuals, as a family, and as a Church to help society value human life in all its stages?

The death penalty ends an offender's opportunity for conversion and using violence to discourage violence serves no good purpose and contributes to a culture of death. God can and does transform their lives.

- How do we get past feelings of anger, hurt and wanting retribution in the form of the death penalty to embrace forgiveness?
- How can we influence and change the hearts of those who espouse a philosophy of an "eye for an eye"?

A new human being comes into existence at conception and in the Gospel of Life, Blessed John Paul II writes "Life is always good..."

- How do we respond to those who defend and support abortion using slogans such as "keep your laws off my body" and "mind your own uterus"?
- How could a Catholic Christian respond when a friend or family member is experiencing an unwanted pregnancy?
- How could we respond as a community?, as a ministry?, as a church?

"To trust in God's timing for our passing into eternity requires courage, humility, and sometimes great spiritual strength." Euthanasia is the hastening of death for those who are terminally ill.

- What are ways we can help those who are suffering from terminal illness or a chronic condition to recover their joy of life and appreciate the gift of each day?
- How can we address those who proclaim "death with dignity" with the message that life is dignity?

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The Life of the Church

In Scripture God speaks to us. "The words of Sacred Scripture are unlike any other texts we will ever hear, for they not only give us information, they are the vehicle God uses to reveal himself to us, the means by which we come to know the depth of God's love for us and the responsibilities entailed by being Christ's followers, members of his Body." (USCCB)

- Do we take the time to truly savor the Living Word of God? In what ways do we do this? How can we improve our efforts?
- How do we listen so that we are open to hearing the voice of God?

If people truly understood and believed that God was present at Mass in in the form of the Eucharist one would think that the pews would be full at every service. Yet they are not.

- What do people see as barriers to or more important priorities than attending Mass?
- What can be done to engage those who have fallen away from attending Mass to come back?
- How do we experience the Real Presence in the form of Holy Eucharist?
- How do we experience this through the other Sacraments of the Church?

A Life of Faith

Those who are single are called into service, answering the call "Whom shall I send?" with "Send me!" God gives each person in their unique vocation the opportunity to live a full and God centered life, fulfilling the call to pray, to love God, to live Gospel values and to serve others.

- What opportunities are available for those called to single life to serve the Church?

Marriage is a blessing and a gift from God.

- How can the grace of the Sacrament of Marriage help to nourish and sustain couples in difficult times?
- In what ways can Marriage be a gift to other people and a benefit to society?

In order to pass on to our children the riches and understanding of our Catholic faith, parents are called to be evangelizers to their children and to be involved in teaching the faith to them.

- How is this accomplished?
- What examples do/should parents set for children for attending Mass, for being engaged and involved in the faith and sacramental life of their children?

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A Life of Faith

St. Francis said “Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words.”

- How do we demonstrate that we are living Gospel values and that we are created to know, love, and serve God?
- What actions demonstrate that we love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul?
- In what ways do we show that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life?
- What attitudes and practices show that our lives are in harmony with God? In harmony with other people?

A Life of Community

- What does it mean to live in community with others? How do we do this?
- Why is it important that we live in community with one another?
- What does it feel like to be separated from community?
- In what ways can we/do we show opposition to racism, bigotry, and injustice?
- What message do we send when we don’t say something, take a stand, or take action?
- What can you do to affirm the sacredness of all persons, especially the unborn?
- How does the Church help us lead a good and responsible life?
- What is it in life that matters most to me?
- Name a quality in yourself that is of God’s image.
- How do we learn the difference between right and wrong?

*“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment”
Matthew 22: 37-38*

