

PERSONHOOD: MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

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“The throwaway culture leads to the elimination of human beings, especially those who are physically and socially weakest. Our response to this mentality is a ‘yes’ to life, decisive and without hesitation. The first right of the human person is his life.” – Pope Francis

*“God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”
– Genesis 1:27*

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.

He calls us to be “blessed” by choosing lifestyles that benefit others and are not based on selfishness, to be sensitive and compassionate to those in pain, to be gentle, forgiving, modest, peaceful, respectful, and courageous in our path of discipleship.

This reality stands in direct contrast to the way some people and some governments treat individuals as objects: human trafficking, certain reproductive technologies, abuse, abortion, the death penalty, sweat shops, euthanasia are all harmful to the human person because they violate the inherent dignity of each person.

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
Mark 12:30-31*

God has given each of us a conscience that reveals the order or natural law which is encoded in each of us. It is not just a physical order that we can sense through scientific methods, but a moral order that is imprinted in each one of our hearts. It is through a genuine love of self and others that we come to an awareness of our unique worth and that of others.

We learn that we are called to care for and be responsible for each person whatever their stage of life: the unborn, the human embryo, the person with a disability, the abandoned, the elderly, the poor and destitute.

“In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation. It is necessary to accompany them with mercy.” – Pope Francis

God has a plan for each and every person and it is our responsibility to be there for each other and help our brothers and sisters recognize their own dignity.

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” – Luke 6:31

For each human person, the fullness of life is reached in their relationship to God and to each other. We learn about relationships by the commandment to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. Treating others as we would want to be treated should be at the heart of all relationships and treatment of human life. Only in realizing that we are temples of the Holy Spirit and treating others in the same way, does each of us satisfy that deep longing for fulfillment.