

Human Rights or Human Life?

This outline is available for download at www.RespectLifeMissouri.org

Welcome & Opening Prayer for Life

Facilitator opens meeting with a “thank you” to all who have attended and a prayer and leads the meeting ensuring all members feel welcomed and are participating within their own comfort level.

Opening Prayer “Prayer for Human Rights”

*O God, You have called us to love you and our neighbor in every aspect of life and therefore we pray:
For people who are harassed and discriminated against for their beliefs -
that they will be guaranteed equality according to the law. God of love and grace, hear our prayer.
For people who are lacking the necessities of food, water, homes and health care -
that they may live life in its fullness. God of love and grace, hear our prayer.
Merciful God, Give us grace so that we dare not condone abuse or resign ourselves to indifference!
Grant us the courage to protect and defend the vulnerable from the tyranny of the strong.
For people that are held captive in slavery by human trafficking -
that they will find freedom and justice. God of love and grace, hear our prayer.
For those who are brutally tortured and treated in cruel and inhumane ways -
that they may be liberated and raised to life again! God of love and grace, hear our prayer.
For refugees and people seeking asylum who are fleeing violence and persecution -
that they may be welcomed and feel safe among us. God of love and grace, hear our prayer.
This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ
who died neglected and rejected but who lives now
in the joy and liberating compassion of your Holy Spirit, God forever. Amen*

Email us at prolife@uscgb.org

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Presentation – Human Rights or Human Life?

NOTE: The Powerpoint presentation is available online for download.

- ❖ The presentation file has been updated into the same PDF format as this session outline so it should be just as easy to access. If no laptop/projector is available, a printout of individual slides can also be copied/printed and used as both a presentation and as a handout for participant notes.
- ❖ The content in the slide presentation is designed to be straight-forward but also to allow flexibility.
- ❖ The comprehensive nature of the written facilitator notes below has been provided to allow for diversity among groups, for an extended and on-going education, and for later reference on the topic. **Therefore, it is possible that all the content included in the facilitator notes will *not* be covered in a single session. Please review the information below for each slide and then create a presentation that is your own based on the needs of your group.**
- ❖ If necessary, the Respect Life Office can answer any questions or provide guidance on any topics in the slide deck. Please contact the Respect Life Office at (816) 756-1850 or francis@diocesksj.org if you cannot access the on-line files.

Slide 1 **Introduction** Human Rights or Human Life?

Slide 2 **Topics for Discussion**

- ❖ Is it a topic for the Respect Life Office or the Human Rights Office?
- ❖ Conflicts in the areas of sanctity of human life and dignity of the human person
- ❖ Catholics cannot be either “pro-life” or “pro-peace & justice”, *they must be both*.
- ❖ Opportunities to work together to defend the sanctity and dignity of all God’s children

Exercise: For Slides 3 thru 21 ask the participants to determine if the issue depicted is more of a Respect Life issue or more of a Human Rights issue. Some will result in a consensus while others will require more thought. Some may

result in participants contradicting what they just said on previous slides and some may result in participants changing their previous responses entirely.

There is no right answer; the intent of this exercise is to illustrate that although the Church's teaching is consistent and has been consistent for 2000 years, when people's experiences and attitudes and ideas are factored in, things are not always black and white. The important message is that we are all a little deficient when it comes to understanding Church teaching and many of the debates we find ourselves in are the result of preconceived notions, stereotypes, assumptions, emotions, and "the blind trying to lead the blind".

Do not get bogged down with one or two slides but take time to discuss each slide. At a minimum, discuss situations where each issue could potentially be either a Respect Life issues or a Human Rights issue.

- Slide 3** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – 4D Sonogram
- Slide 4** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Elderly man in hospital bed
- Slide 5** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Holocaust concentration camp
- Slide 6** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – March for Life
- Slide 7** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Transportation Workers Union rally
- Slide 8** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Troy Davis execution protest rally
- Slide 9** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Large Caucasian family
- Slide 10** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Hispanic immigrants
- Slide 11** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Large Hispanic family
- Slide 12** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – HHS and food stamps
- Slide 13** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – HHS and contraception mandate
- Slide 14** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Two women arguing
- Slide 15** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Threats to Black Americans
- Slide 16** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Threats to marginalized Americans
- Slide 17** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Party Democrats and Republicans
- Slide 18** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Sudanese girl and vulture
- Slide 19** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Mother Teresa
- Slide 20** **Respect Life or Human Rights?** – Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

Exercise: For Slides 22 thru 25 ask participants to explain why the stereotype depicted is not valid, why people may have that particular stereotype, and what they can do to help others break the stereotype.

- Slide 21** **Common Stereotypes** – Violence Toward Abortionists
- Slide 22** **Common Stereotypes** – Pro-War
- Slide 23** **Common Stereotypes** – Anti-Healthcare
- Slide 24** **Common Stereotypes** – Only Pro-Life for the Pre-Born

Evangelization/Catechesis

- Slide 25** **The "Seamless Garment"**

In 1983 Joseph Cardinal Bernardin developed the "Consistent Ethic of Life" (or CLE) ideology, which expressed his response to living in an age in which he believed modern technologies threatened the sanctity of human life.

Bernardin's CLE philosophy is sometimes called the "seamless garment", a reference from John 19:23 to the seamless robe of Jesus.

The term "consistent ethic of life", was coined to express an ethical, religious, and political ideology based on the premise that all human life was sacred and should be protected by law. The ideology opposes abortion, capital punishment, assisted suicide, economic injustice, and euthanasia. Initially, Bernardin spoke out against nuclear war and abortion. However, he quickly expanded the scope of his view to include all aspects of human life according to the Church's definition

Bernardin said that although each of the issues was distinct (euthanasia, for example, was not the same as abortion), nevertheless the issues were linked since the valuing and defending of human life according to the Catholic definition were, he believed, at the center of both issues. Cardinal Bernardin told an audience in Portland, Oregon, "When human life is considered 'cheap' or easily expendable in one area, eventually nothing is held as sacred and all lives are in jeopardy."

Bernardin drew his stance from New Testament principles, specifically of forgiveness and reconciliation, yet he argued that neither the themes nor the content generated from those themes were specifically Christian. By doing this, Bernardin attempted to create a dialogue with others who were not necessarily aligned with Christianity.

According to some critics, the seamless garment argument has turned out to be nothing but a "loophole for hypocritical Catholic politicians" to justify supporting legalized-abortion since war and the death penalty are currently legal. In other words, it has allowed them to be inconsistent and unprincipled about the very issues that Cardinal Bernardin said demand consistency and principle.

According to other critics, the seamless garment ethic is an effort to impose a particular set of theological values onto the entire society for a broader range of issues because abortion is such a controversial political issue.

Still other critics contend that by broadening the scope of the limited number of issues we previously consider to be truly "sanctity of life" issues, the door was opened to subsequently include additional items like treatment of homosexuals and same-sex marriage since these topics were being promoted more and more as "civil rights" issues.

Slide 26 **The Truth About Church Teaching – The Magisterium**

- ❖ The Church's universal religious mission does not allow her to be identified with any particular political, economic or social system, yet at the same time, this mission serves as a source of commitment, direction and strength which can contribute to establishing and consolidating the human community in accordance with God's law
Gaudium et Spes, 42 – Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965 Vatican II.
- ❖ By virtue of our sharing in Christ's royal mission, our support and promotion of human life must be accomplished through the service of charity, which finds expression in personal witness, various forms of volunteer work, social activity and political commitment. ...in our service of charity, we must be inspired and distinguished by a specific attitude: we must care for the other as a person for whom God has made us responsible. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to become neighbors to everyone (cf. Lk 10:29-37), and to show special favor to those who are poorest, most alone and most in need. In helping the hungry, the thirsty, the foreigner, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned-as well as the child in the womb and the old person who is suffering or near death-we have the opportunity to serve Jesus. He himself said: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40)...Where life is involved, the service of charity must be profoundly consistent. It cannot tolerate bias and discrimination, for human life is sacred and inviolable at every stage and in every situation; it is an indivisible good. We need then to "show care" for all life and for the life of everyone. Indeed, at an even deeper level, we need to go to the very roots of life and love.
Evangelium Vitae, 87 – The Gospel of Life, Pope John Paul II, 1995
- ❖ Man is capable of knowing the truth! He has this capacity with regard to the great problems of being and acting: individually and as a member of society, whether of a single nation or of humanity as a whole...one cannot speak of peace in situations where human beings are lacking even the basic necessities for living with dignity. Here my thoughts turn to the limitless multitudes who are suffering from starvation. They cannot be said to be living in peace, even though they are not in a state of war: Indeed they are defenseless victims of war. Immediately there come to mind distressing images of huge camps throughout the world of displaced persons and refugees, who are living in makeshift conditions in order to escape a worse fate, yet are still in dire need. Are these human beings not our brothers and sisters? Do their children not come into the world with the same legitimate expectations of happiness as other children? One thinks also of all those who are driven by unworthy living conditions to emigrate far from home and family in the hope of a more humane life. Nor can we overlook the scourge of human trafficking, which remains a disgrace in our time. Faced with

these “humanitarian emergencies” and other human tragedies, many people of good will, along with different international institutions and non-governmental organizations, have in fact responded. But a greater effort is needed from the entire diplomatic community in order to determine in truth, and to overcome with courage and generosity, the obstacles still standing in the way of effective, humane solutions. And truth demands that none of the prosperous states renounce its own responsibility and duty to provide help through drawing more generously upon its own resources. On the basis of available statistical data, it can be said that less than half of the immense sums spent worldwide on armaments would be more than sufficient to liberate the immense masses of the poor from destitution. This challenges humanity’s conscience. To peoples living below the poverty line, more as a result of situations to do with international political, commercial and cultural relations than as a result of circumstances beyond anyone’s control, our common commitment to truth can and must give new hope.

Pope Benedict XVI in an address to an international corps of diplomats, Jan. 10, 2006

Slide 27 The Truth About Church Teaching – Faithful Citizenship

In light of ethical principles, the USCCB offers the following policy goals that should guide Catholics as they form their consciences and reflect on the moral dimensions of their public choices. Not all issues are equal; these ten goals address matters of different moral weight and urgency. Some involve matters of intrinsic evil that can never be supported. Others involve affirmative obligations to seek the common good. These and similar goals can help voters and candidates act on ethical principles rather than particular interests and partisan allegiances.

- ❖ Address the preeminent requirement to protect the weakest in our midst—innocent unborn children—by restricting and bringing to an end the destruction of unborn children through abortion.
- ❖ Keep our nation from turning to violence to address fundamental problems—a million abortions each year to deal with unwanted pregnancies, euthanasia and assisted suicide to deal with the burdens of illness and disability, the destruction of human embryos in the name of research, the use of the death penalty to combat crime, and imprudent resort to war to address international disputes.
- ❖ Define the central institution of marriage as a union between one man and one woman, and provide better support for family life morally, socially, and economically, so that our nation helps parents raise their children with respect for life, sound moral values, and an ethic of stewardship and responsibility.
- ❖ Achieve comprehensive immigration reform that secures our borders, treats immigrant workers fairly, offers an earned path to citizenship, respects the rule of law, and addresses the factors that compel people to leave their own countries.
- ❖ Help families and children overcome poverty: ensuring access to and choice in education, as well as decent work at fair, living wages and adequate assistance for the vulnerable in our nation, while also helping to overcome widespread hunger and poverty around the world, especially in the areas of development assistance, debt relief, and international trade.
- ❖ Provide health care for the growing number of people without it, while respecting human life, human dignity, and religious freedom in our health care system.
- ❖ Continue to oppose policies that reflect prejudice, hostility toward immigrants, religious bigotry, and other forms of discrimination.
- ❖ Encourage families, community groups, economic structures, and government to work together to overcome poverty, pursue the common good, and care for creation, with full respect for religious groups and their right to address social needs in accord with their basic moral convictions.
- ❖ Establish and comply with moral limits on the use of military force—examining for what purposes it may be used, under what authority, and at what human cost—and work for a “responsible transition” to end the war in Iraq.
- ❖ Join with others around the world to pursue peace, protect human rights and religious liberty, and advance economic justice and care for creation.

Outreach Opportunities

Slide 28 Life & Justice Campaign

The Life & Justice Campaign is a program co-sponsored by the Diocese of Kansas City—St. Joseph Human Rights and Respect Life Offices through which our faithful have the opportunity to support local organizations dedicated to defending the dignity of the person and the sanctity of human life.

- Donations may be made to the Life & Justice Campaign at any time. A special second collection is taken up in parishes throughout the diocese in the month of August.
- Applications for grants may also be submitted at anytime. To be considered for a grant in a given year, applications must be received no later than Dec. 31 of the previous year.
- All grant decisions are made locally in the month of March by the diocesan Life & Justice Campaign Committee.
- 100% of all donations received by the Life & Justice Campaign each calendar year are distributed

- locally.
- Only organizations that meet all of the published criteria are eligible to receive a grant.
- Every organization that meets all of the criteria receives a grant based on a weighted rating scale.
- Grant recipients are invited to an awards reception in the month of May where they have the option to discuss and to display information about their organization for the rest of the recipients.

To learn more, please go to www.lifeandjusticekcsj.org .

Slide 29 Summary

- ❖ Many topics are both “respect life” and “human rights”
- ❖ Conflicts in the areas of sanctity of human life and dignity of the human person are mostly perception
- ❖ Catholic are “pro-life” and “pro-peace & justice”
- ❖ There are many opportunities to work together

Closing Prayer

Slide 30 Prayer for All Life

Lord,

We pray for all whose basic needs for food, shelter, clothing and healing are not met. Stir up the consciences of peoples and governments, to re-arrange the world's unjust systems; teach us all to live more simply, that others may simply live.

We pray for those who have been exiled from their native land, refugees, who have been forced to leave behind their heritage and possessions, their families and their friends, and those who have had to begin life anew in a foreign culture and among strangers.

We pray for those who are discriminated against on grounds of their race or sex, who offer the gifts of their presence, culture and personality, but find them despised or rejected.

We pray for those who at this moment are suffering because of the convictions they hold so dear, that their pain may be eased and that the peace of God may bring them release even in the midst of suffering.

We pray for all leaders and those who hold positions of authority in the state and in institutions of our society that they may use their power for good and not for evil, that the rights of men and women may no longer be abused.

Amen