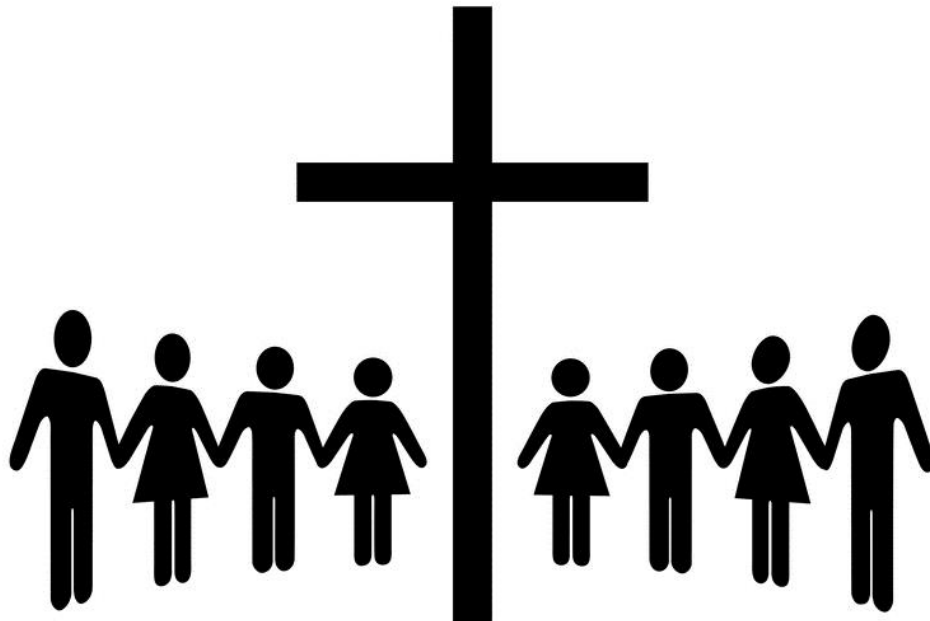


# A Bible Study on the Life and Dignity of the Human Person



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## A Brief Overview

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) have identified seven core themes in Catholic Social Teaching (CST). This seven session bible study, “Life and Dignity of the Human Person,” is the first of these seven themes. This study may be adapted to meet the needs of a given group to meet weekly or monthly. Each session can be run approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Leaders of this study act more as facilitators rather than teachers. Knowledge of the material is not a prerequisite for a good study. The discussion questions in each section are meant to be thought provoking, used to open up a discussion into practical ways to live our faith. The facilitator of the group is a fellow learner. If questions arise, the facilitator can refer them to a pastor, members of parish staff, or the Parish Social Ministry Office of Catholic Charities, and bring answers back to the next meeting. If time allows, a study group could incorporate social time, which could include refreshments or a meal.

### Components of the Bible Study

1. **Opening Prayer: Prayer of Diversity.** Groups are free to adapt or use a different opening prayer.
2. **Bible Passage and Discussion Questions:** Each week a bible passage related to the given theme is read. Questions are provided to prompt group discussion and reflection, but members should feel free to discuss whatever questions or insights the passage raises for them. It is not a requirement that all questions be used in the discussion.
3. **USCCB Teaching or Catholic Catechism.** A brief teaching from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on each theme with discussion questions is provided. Feel free to discuss other questions that may arise apart from the prepared questions.
4. **Challenge Activities.** This activity is provided to put the session’s theme into action. Group members may decide to do something together, or they may decide what they will do as individuals. Some people may already be doing what is suggested, so it may only be a challenge to continue what they are already doing. If you are doing a weekly study, it will probably be too much to add another challenge activity each week. Instead, encourage members to commit to one or two things a month.
5. **Closing Prayer.** The closing prayer changes with each session. Groups can use the prepared prayer or use a different prayer that the group agrees to.

## Session 1: Life and Dignity of the Human Person

### **Opening Prayer:** Prayer of Diversity

#### **Psalm 139**

LORD, you have probed me, you know me:

    you know when I sit and stand;

    you understand my thoughts from afar.

You sift through my travels and my rest;

    with all my ways you are familiar.

Even before a word is on my tongue,

    LORD, you know it all.

Behind and before you encircle me

    and rest your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,

    far too lofty for me to reach.

Where can I go from your spirit?

    From your presence, where can I flee?

If I ascend to the heavens, you are there;

    if I lie down in Sheol, there you are.

If I take the wings of dawn

    and dwell beyond the sea,

Even there your hand guides me,

    your right hand holds me fast.

If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me,

    and night shall be my light"

Darkness is not dark for you,

    and night shines as the day.

    Darkness and light are but one.

You formed my inmost being;

    you knit me in my mother's womb.

I praise you, because I am wonderfully made;

    wonderful are your works!

    My very self you know.

My bones are not hidden from you,

    When I was being made in secret,

    fashioned in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw me unformed;

    in your book all are written down;

    my days were shaped, before one came to be.

How precious to me are your designs, O God;  
how vast the sum of them!

Were I to count them, they would outnumber the sands;  
when I complete them, still you are with me.  
(Psalm 139: 1-18) (NABRE)

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. What is one thing that you take from this passage?
2. How does this passage speak to the dignity of the human person?
3. What is one thing that is wonderful about you?
4. How does God call you to help others see their own goodness?
5. Since God has known you since before you were born, what mission do you think he has for you? What gift have you been given to serve?

## **USCCB Teaching: Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person. (USCCB)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What issues of Life and Dignity are important to you?
2. What are ways you can personally address these issues?
3. The problems in our society are immense. What can we do to face these problems without losing heart?
4. Since we can't personally fully cover all issues of Life and Dignity, how can we support the work of others who are engaged in issues that we are not?

### **Challenge Activities:**

- Contact your Congressmen/Senators about important issues regarding Life and Dignity.
- Join the local organizations that are committed to the Life and Dignity (Birthright peacemaking groups, joining or forming a parish social justice group, etc.)
- Pray for the issues that affect the Life and Dignity of people in your community and culture.
- Donate to causes that promote the Life and Dignity of the human person.
- Participate in other activities that are unique to your local community.

**Closing Prayer:** Lead with petitions and the Our Father. Finish by praying together the "Prayer for the Life and Dignity of the Human Person" found on the prayer handout.

## **Session 2: Abortion and End of Life**

**Opening Prayer:** Prayer of Diversity

### **CALL OF JEREMIAH**

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The word of the LORD came to me:  
Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
before you were born I dedicated you,  
a prophet to the nations I appointed you.  
“Ah, Lord GOD!” I said,  
“I do not know how to speak. I am too young!”  
But the LORD answered me,  
Do not say, “I am too young.”  
To whomever I send you, you shall go;  
whatever I command you, you shall speak.

Jeremiah Chap 1: 4-7 (NABRE)

#### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. How does this passage speak to you? What in this passage do you focus on?
2. What does this passage say to you about our God the Creator?
3. If God knows us before we are born, what does that say to us about our own sacredness?
4. God had a plan for Jeremiah before he was born. What is God’s plan for you?
5. What are the ramifications of this passage for both the beginning and end of life issues?

## Passage from The Gospel of Life

As explicitly formulated, the precept “You shall not kill” is strongly negative: it indicates the extreme limit which can never be exceeded. Implicitly, however, it encourages a positive attitude of absolute respect for life; it leads to the promotion of life and to progress along the way of a love which gives, receives and serves. (St. John Paul II, The Gospel of Life - *Evangelium Vitae no. 54*)

### Discussion Questions:

1. This passage from the Gospel of Life makes a strong statement on what it means to be pro-life. How can you promote a culture of life?
2. Our culture supports the right to abortion and it is often a polarizing issue. What are the issues that arise whenever we discuss abortion? What role does the unborn child play in the debate?
3. Our culture has begun to promote euthanasia for people who are suffering or near the end of their lives. How do you respond to this issue?
4. What do all of the issues above have in common? How do you promote a consistent ethic of life?
5. What groups in our community promote a culture of life?

### Challenge Activities:

\*Think of organizations in our community. What groups are you a part of or could join that promote the culture of life?

\*There are many groups that promote life including Birthright, Feminists for Life, Human Life Alliance, local family organizations, etc. Consider monetary support of one these organizations.

\*Be advocates in the political realm, by contacting politicians when important pro-life legislation is up for debate.

\*Support the culture of life by how you live.

**Closing Prayer:** Open with petitions and Our Father. Close with “A Prayer for Life”



## **Session 3: Poverty: God's Option for the Poor**

### **Opening Prayer:** Prayer of Diversity

### **Sin of Partiality**

My brothers, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here, please," while you say to the poor one, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs?

Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him? But you dishonored the poor person. Are not the rich oppressing you? And do they themselves not haul you off to court? Is it not they who blaspheme the noble name that was invoked over you? However, if you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law, but falls short in one particular, has become guilty in respect to all of it. For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not kill." Even if you do not commit adultery but kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as people who will be judged by the law of freedom. For the judgment is merciless to one who has not shown mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. (James Chap 2: 1-13 NABRE)

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What challenges or intrigues you about this passage?
2. What does this passage have to say about the life and dignity of the human person?
3. What is your reaction to the statement "whoever keeps the whole law, but falls short in one particular, has become guilty in respect to all of it"?
4. How are we doing in terms of treating everyone with mercy in our society and as individuals?

## Passage from the Joy of the Gospel

Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape. Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a "throw away" culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the "exploited" but the outcast, the "leftovers". (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* [Evangelii Gaudium], no. 153)

### Discussion Questions:

1. What statement in the passage above most intrigues you?
2. What is your reaction to Pope Francis' assertion that "Such an economy kills"?
3. Who are the excluded in our society?
4. What can we do to combat poverty in our community/in the world?
5. What responsibility do we personally have for the poverty in the world?

### Challenge Activities:

\*What are the local community agencies that help in the area of poverty? What role have you or can you play in these organizations?

\*What are the national and international agencies that are doing good work in the area of poverty? How can you participate in their work?

\*What other ways can you advocate for those who are in greatest need?

\*Stay informed. Contact your local and national politicians on issues of poverty.

**Closing Prayer:** Prayer of St. Basil followed by petitions and the Our Father.

## **Session 4: Peace: Committing to a life of non-violence**

**Opening Prayer:** Prayer of Diversity

### **God's Love and Christian Life.**

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.

If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 1 John Chap 4: 7-12, 20 (Nabre)

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What in this bible passage intrigues or interests you?
2. What is challenging to you about this passage?
3. What are examples in our society where this call to love has failed?
4. What are the success stories that you are aware of?
5. Name someone you know who best exemplifies this call to love.

### **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

2304 Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquility of order 98 Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity. 992307 The fifth commandment forbids the intentional destruction of human life. Because of the evils and injustices that accompany all war, the Church insistently urges everyone to prayer and to action so that the divine Goodness may free us from the ancient bondage of war. 105

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98 St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 19, 13, 1: PL 41, 640.

99 Cf. *Isa* 32:17; cf. *GS* 78 §§ 1-2

105 Cf. *GS* 81 § 4

2308 All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war.

However, "as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed." 106

2309 The strict conditions for *legitimate defense by military force* require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time:

- the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain;
- all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
- there must be serious prospects of success;
- the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.

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106 GS 79 § 4

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What line or teaching within the catechism stands out to you?
2. The Catechism seems to tell us that war is a last resort. What wars in our history would you say were justified? When are we justified to wage war?
3. Why have we failed so often in the past to come to a peaceful solution?
4. What can our country do to create good will in the world and within our own boundaries? How do we respond to national gun violence?
5. What can we do, personally, to foster peace?

### **Challenge Activities:**

\*Is there anyone you have a grudge against? Try to reconcile with them or pray for them if this is not possible.

\*Ask forgiveness of anyone you have wronged.

\*Contact your legislative representatives to support diplomacy and development within our foreign policy.

\*Be a voice of peace when you are faced with anger and conflict. Do not fuel the situation.

**Closing Prayer:** Prayer of St. Francis followed by petitions and the Our Father.

## **Session 5: Immigration: Welcome to the Alien and Oppressed**

**Opening Prayer:** Prayer of Diversity

### **The Lord's Majesty and Compassion**

Now, therefore, Israel, what does the LORD, your God, ask of you but to fear the LORD, your God, to follow in all his ways, to love and serve the LORD, your God, with your whole heart and with your whole being. For the LORD, your God, is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who has no favorites, accepts no bribes, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the resident alien, giving them food and clothing. So you too should love the resident alien, for that is what you were in the land of Egypt. The LORD, your God, shall you fear, and him shall you serve; to him hold fast and by his name shall you swear. He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you those great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen. (Deuteronomy: Chap 10: 12 & 17-21 NABRE)

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What line in the passage above stands out to you? Why?
2. Who does God "execute justice for"? What do they have in common? What does this say about God? What does this call us to do?
3. God calls us to "love and serve the Lord." What does this call from us?
4. God says in the passage that He "has no favorites." Do we in our society have favorites, valuing some over others?
5. What must we do to follow the directives God gives us in this passage?

### **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

The Catholic Catechism instructs the faithful that good government has two duties, both of which must be carried out and neither of which can be ignored. The first duty is to welcome the foreigner out of charity and respect for the human person. Persons have the right to immigrate and thus government must accommodate this right to the greatest extent possible, especially financially blessed nations: "The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the *foreigner* in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him." Catholic Catechism, 2241.

The second duty is to secure one's border and enforce the law for the sake of the common good. Sovereign nations have the right to enforce their laws and all persons must respect the legitimate exercise of this right: "Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens." Catholic Catechism, 2241.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, our first duty is to "welcome the foreigner out of charity and respect for the human person." How do you feel about that teaching? What does it call you to do?
2. "The second duty is to secure one's border and enforce the law for the sake of the common good." How do we balance the second duty with the first?
3. What further does the catechism say in regard to the second duty?
4. In your opinion, what should our government be doing in terms of the immigration and refugee situation?
5. What do you feel called to do?

### **Challenge Activities:**

- Pope Francis calls us to an "encounter" with an immigrant or refugee. If you know an immigrant, talk to them and learn their story.
- If you want justice for the immigrant, contact your legislators about this issue.
- Join or form a local social concerns committee to work as a community on this issue.
- Go to the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to receive bulletins and updates on this issue.

**Closing Prayer:** A Prayer for the Human Tragedy Behind Immigration. End with the Our Father.

## **Session 6: Overcoming Racism**

**Opening Prayer:** Prayer of Diversity

### **The Good Samaritan**

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."

But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." Luke Chap 10: 25-37 (NABRE)

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What in this story most interests you?
2. What is significant about the use of a Samaritan as the hero of this story?
3. Who is the neighbor most neglected in our society?
4. What group or individuals do you find difficult to befriend and help?
5. What are concrete ways that you can be a good neighbor?
6. Do you have an example of an incident of someone like the Good Samaritan?

## **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

No. 1938 There exist also *sinful inequalities* that affect millions of men and women. These are in open contradiction of the Gospel:

Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How do you respond to the above teaching from the Catechism?
2. Does Racism still exist?
3. The “Black Lives Matter” movement is prevalent right now. Do black people have a legitimate cause here?
4. What other groups do you see facing discrimination?
5. What can we do to affect systemic changes to the discrimination in our society.
6. How do you make room for those who think, act and/or look differently than you?

### **Challenge Activities:**

\*Participate with diverse groups to come to a better sense of the dignity God gives to all people.

\* Whenever we see racism or other forms of discrimination, speak up to the injustice.

\*Make friends with people from different cultures and different social circumstances.

\*Contact your legislative representatives on issues of discrimination.

**Closing Prayer:** Pray prayers of petition, follow with the Our Father and close with “Prayer for Racial Healing.”



## **Session 7: The Death Penalty- Choosing Life**

**Opening Prayer:** Prayer of Diversity

### **Judging Others**

“Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.” And he told them a parable, “Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,’ when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother’s eye.” Luke Chap 6: 37-42 (NABRE)

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What part of this passage strikes you most?
2. How can we determine about what is moral without judging? What is the distinction with judging what is right, and judging others?
3. As parents, we correct our children? How do we reconcile this with the passage above?
4. When others have wronged us or done something we find objectionable, what is the proper way to respond to this person?
5. When we go to reconciliation is this not a form of judging ourselves? How should we respond to ourselves when we have done something we are ashamed of?
6. Is holding a grudge ever justified?

## Words of Pope John Paul II

The new evangelization calls for followers of Christ who are unconditionally pro-life: who will proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of life in every situation. A sign of hope is the increasing recognition that the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil. . . . I renew the appeal I made . . . for a consensus to end the death penalty, which is both cruel and unnecessary.

—Pope John Paul II Papal Mass, *St. Louis, Missouri*, January 27, 1999

### Discussion Questions:

1. How do you respond to this homily Of Pope John Paul II?
2. The Catholic Church has only recently spoken against the death penalty. Why is this?
3. Justice might lead some to believe the death penalty is justified, while mercy leads us to spare the life of the person who did evil. Which is more compelling, mercy or justice?
4. Is the death penalty unnecessary as Pope Paul II asserts?
5. Is the death penalty an issue of “Life and Dignity of the Human Person”?

### Challenge Activities:

- Reflect on how to respond to someone who has done great evil.
- Contact a governor of a state where the death penalty is legal to commute the death sentence of someone on death row.
- Write a letter to the editor on this issue voicing your view.
- Pray for those who have lost loved ones to murder for healing.

**Closing Prayer:** Prayer to end the Use of the Death Penalty. Finish with prayers of petition and the Our Father.

# **Appendix**

Prayer of Diversity

Prayer for Life and Dignity of the Human Person

A Prayer for Life

Prayer of St. Basil

Prayer of St. Francis

Prayer for the Human Tragedy Behind Immigration

Prayer for Racial Healing

Prayer to end the Death Penalty

# Prayer of Diversity

We praise You, God, for the diversity we see all around us. We rejoice in the complex beauty of your creation. Help us to celebrate the wonderful blend of cultures and peoples in this world by actively seeking solidarity with one another. Amen. Sojourners

## **Prayer for Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

Lord and giver of all life, help us to value each person, created in love by you.

In your mercy, guide and assist our efforts to promote the dignity and value of all human life, born and unborn. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen. (Catholic on-line)

## A PRAYER FOR LIFE

Catholics are called to respect and treasure life from conception through natural death. (USCCB)

Father and maker of all,  
you adorn all creation  
with splendor and beauty,  
and fashion human lives  
in your image and likeness.

Awaken in every heart  
reverence for the work of your hands,  
and renew among your people  
a readiness to nurture and sustain  
your precious gift of life.

Grant this through our Lord  
Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in  
the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God forever and ever.

Amen

## **The Prayer of St. Basil**

The bread which you do not use is the bread of the hungry;

The garment hanging in your wardrobe is the garment of him who is naked;

The shoes that you do not wear are the shoes of the one who is barefoot;

The money that you keep locked away is the money of the poor;

The acts of charity that you do not perform are so many injustices that you commit.”

# Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;  
where there is hatred let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

-St. Francis of Assisi



VA Prayer for the Human Tragedy Behind the Immigration  
<http://oga.pcusa.org/immigration/liturgical-resources.htm>

Holy God,

Your presence transcends all human made borders and your love crosses all boundaries. Help us join you at the borders and help us to extend some hope to those who live without future and dignity at the border. We pray that you help us to promote laws that protect the rights and dignity of everyone, especially those most vulnerable.

God of justice

Your loves transcends our limitations and our unfair rules that discriminate human beings and divide the humankind. We pray that the dignity of all God's children will be acknowledged and protected in every country of the world but especially in our country.

God of mercy

Your wisdom transcends our limited understanding and our conditioned charity. Help us to end the violence and poverty that displaces so many people from their homes and homelands to find new dreams and horizons. We pray that employers and corporations may choose the dignity and worth of each human person over profit and power.

God of all peoples

Your merciful compassion transcends our unlimited selfishness that condemns millions of people around the world to lives of misery, hungry, sick and utterly without hope.

Creator and Sustainer

We offer our prayer... For the children who cross the border looking for a better education because of the lack of opportunities in their own countries. For those victims of human trafficking forced to slave labor and prostitution while they pursuing the American dream. For the multitude of refugees, forced from their homes to alien places through war or through the destruction of their environment. For the migrant workers, who are forced to travel to other countries looking for better salaries because there are not fair remunerated jobs in their countries.

God of all nations

We are indeed a nation of nations. Help us to incorporate newcomers into the ever growing and diverse body we call the United States of America. You made us different yet all bearing your image. As we work to live in community with our brothers and sisters help us to discern that image in those around us.

God of all cultures, races and languages

Give us the wisdom to find the way to proclaim a Comprehensive Immigration Reform to restore the dignity of millions of men and women who live in darkness and to reshape the image of the country that is proud to be the land of free and the house of braves. In your Holy Name we pray. Amen

Submitted By: The Rev. Jose Luis Casal

## **Prayer for Racial Healing**

God of justice,  
In your wisdom you create all people in your image, without exception.

Through your goodness, open our eyes to see the dignity, beauty, and worth of every human being.

Open our minds to understand that all your children are brothers and sisters in the same human family.

Open our hearts to repent of racist attitudes, behaviors, and speech which demean others.

Open our ears to hear the cries of those wounded by racial discrimination, and their passionate appeals for change.

Strengthen our resolve to make amends for past injustices and to right the wrongs of history.

And fill us with courage that we might seek to heal wounds, build bridges, forgive and be forgiven, and establish peace and equality for all in our communities.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. (Catholic Charities USA)

## **PRAYER TO END THE USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY**

Merciful Father, we ask your blessing on all we do to build a culture of life. Hear our prayers for those impacted by the death penalty.

We pray for all people, that their lives and dignity as children of a loving God may be respected and protected in all stages and circumstances.

We pray for victims of violence and their families, that they may experience our love and support and find comfort in your compassion and in the promise of eternal life.

We pray for those on death row, that their lives may be spared, that the innocent may be freed and that the guilty may come to acknowledge their faults and seek reconciliation with you.

We pray for the families of those who are facing execution, that they may be comforted by your love and compassion.

We pray for civic leaders, that they may commit themselves to respecting every human life and ending the use of the death penalty in our land.

Compassionate Father, give us wisdom and hearts filled with your love. Guide us as we work to end the use of the death penalty and to build a society that truly chooses life in all situations.

We ask this Father through your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

**Amen**

Taken from the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)