

# Rights and Freedom: Information to accompany “Virtues & Values and how they impel us to do good” PPT.

## Remember these key questions:

- What are rights?
- What are responsibilities?
- What is freedom?
- How does free will affect us?

## What does the Catholic Church teach us about HUMAN RIGHTS?

- 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.
- 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.

### Scripture passages supporting Catholic beliefs

- **Genesis 1:26-31**  
God created man and woman in his image.
- **Deuteronomy 10:17-19**  
God loves the orphan, the widow, and the stranger.
- **Psalms 139:13-16**  
God formed each of us and knows us intimately.
- **Proverbs 22:2**  
The Lord is the maker of both rich and poor.
- **Luke 10:25-37**  
The Good Samaritan recognized the dignity in the other and cared for his life.
- **John 4:1-42**  
Jesus broke with societal and religious customs to honour the dignity of the Samaritan woman.
- **Romans 12: 9-18**  
Love one another, contribute to the needs of others, live peaceably with all.
- **1 Corinthians 3:16**  
You are holy, for you are God's temple and God dwells in you.
- **Galatians 3:27-28**  
All Christians are one in Christ Jesus.
- **James 2:1-8**  
Honour the poor.
- **1 John 3: 1-2**  
See what love the Father has for us, that we should be called Children of God.
- **1 John 4:7-12**  
Let us love one another because love is from God.

## Catholic Tradition

The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner. *Charity in Truth* ([Caritas in Veritate](#)), #32

Human persons are willed by God; they are imprinted with God's image. Their dignity does not come from the work they do, but from the persons they are. *On the Hundredth Year* ([Centesimus annus](#)), #11

The basis for all that the Church believes about the moral dimensions of economic life is its vision of the transcendent worth -- the sacredness -- of human beings. The dignity of the human person, realised in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured.

All human beings, therefore, are ends to be served by the institutions that make up the economy, not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals. Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God ([Gn 1:27](#)). [Economic Justice for All](#), #28

Every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God who was made flesh (cf. [Jn 1:14](#)), is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church. Therefore every threat to human dignity and life must necessarily be felt in the Church's very heart; it cannot but affect her at the core of her faith in the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God, and engage her in her mission of proclaiming the Gospel of life in all the world and to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15). *The Gospel of Life* ([Evangelium vitae](#)), #3

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. *The Gospel of Life* ([Evangelium vitae](#)), #54

This teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so, for men are by nature social beings. *Mother and Teacher* ([Mater et Magistra](#)), #219

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. [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #1938

Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison

human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. *The Church in the Modern World* (**Gaudium et Spes**), #27

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/life-and-dignity-of-the-human-person.cfm>

## What does the Catholic Church teach us about FREEDOM?

**1730** God created man a **rational being**, conferring on him the **dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions**. "God willed that man should be 'left in the hand of his own counsel,' so **that he might of his own accord seek his Creator** and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him."<sup>26</sup>

**Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts.**<sup>27</sup>

**1731** Freedom is the **power, rooted in reason and will**, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. **By free will one shapes one's own life**. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude.

**1732** **As long as freedom has not bound itself definitively to its ultimate good which is God, there is the possibility of choosing between good and evil**, and thus of growing in perfection or of failing and sinning. This freedom characterizes properly human acts. It is the basis of praise or blame, merit or reproach.

**1733** **The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin."**<sup>28</sup>

**1734** **Freedom makes man responsible for his** acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and asceticism enhance the mastery of the will over its acts.

- Asceticism: the practice of severe self-discipline, typically for religious reasons.

**1736** Every act directly willed is imputable (attributed) to its author:

**1739** *Freedom and sin*. **Man's freedom is limited and fallible**. In fact, man failed. He freely sinned. **By refusing God's plan of love, he deceived himself and became a slave to sin**. This first alienation engendered a multitude of others. From its outset, human history attests the wretchedness and oppression born of the human heart in consequence of the abuse of freedom.

**1741** *Liberation and salvation*. **By his glorious Cross Christ has won salvation for all men. He redeemed them from the sin that held them in bondage. "For freedom Christ has set us free."**<sup>34</sup> In him we have communion with the **"truth that makes us free."**<sup>35</sup> The Holy Spirit has been given to us and, as the Apostle teaches, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."<sup>36</sup> Already we glory in the "liberty of the children of God."<sup>37</sup>

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a3.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a3.htm)