



LIFE MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Rockford
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No Human Person Forgotten By Kimberly Baker

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Charitable outreach has always been part of the Church's apostolic activity and has occurred throughout the centuries - the founding of schools and hospitals, care for the poor and homeless, etc. There are two spiritual principles animating this activity. First is the awareness of the inherent dignity of the person, and the conviction that every person deserves to have this dignity respected. Second is the awareness that the Church (especially through the laity) is meant to contribute to building up the world and improving society. This concept is beautifully expressed in the Second Vatican Council document, *Gaudium et Spes*: "Through her individual members and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly to making the family of man and its history more human" (#40).

Though written nearly fifty years ago, *Gaudium et Spes* captures the positive ideal of the Catholic Church's apostolic outreach and its ability to unlock the mystery and complexity of the human condition. Those who work in the various ministries of the Church help to alleviate suffering in this world and provide a witness to society. The document continues: "Since it has been entrusted to the Church to reveal the mystery of God, Who is the ultimate goal of man, she opens up to man at the same time the meaning of his own existence, that is, the innermost truth about himself. The Church truly knows that only God, Whom she serves, meets the deepest longings of the human heart, which is never fully satisfied by what this world has to offer" (#41).

It is no coincidence, then, that the dignity of the human person is so often cited throughout Church teaching documents and papal encyclicals since the time of the Council. It seems to be a recurring theme – no – a fundamental trait, linking all moral teachings and charitable activities of the Church.

Pope Benedict XVI has spoken of the dignity of human life as a connecting, foundational thread for all other elements which contribute to a manner of living in keeping with respect for the person: "My dear friends, God's creation is one and it is good. The concerns for non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for humanity. They cannot, however, be understood apart from a profound reflection upon the innate dignity of every human life from conception to natural death: a dignity conferred by God himself and thus inviolable" (Speech at Barangaroo, Sydney Harbour, July 17, 2008).

Let us remember the spiritual and human dimensions that will brighten our Catholic witness and contribute to a positive presence of the Church in the world. There is no human being who does not count, there is not one person ever forgotten by God, there is no human life that is not worth living. As members of the Church, each one of us has the capacity to affirm the dignity of our neighbor, and lead others closer to Christ in ordinary, everyday activities. Each one of us can be a humanizing presence in a sometimes inhuman world.

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For additional commentary on life issues, check out "Life Lines" on the first Friday of each month in *The Observer*.

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Please consider making a lasting gift to the Respect Life Office by remembering the office in your will, naming it as a beneficiary of a Charitable Gift Annuity, and/or making a donation to the Respect Life Office Endowment. If you are interested in more information about these gifts, you can contact Dave Hougan at 815-399-4300 or learn more at www.foundationrockford.org and clicking on the folder titled "Planned Gifts". For information about other ways you can help the Respect Life Office contact Mitch Striedl at 815-399-4300 or at mitchstriedl@rockforddiocese.org