

The Dignity of the Human Person

I was recently reviewing the Ten principles of Catholic Social Teachings article by Fr. Robert P Maloney, CM as I researched information about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. I would like to focus on the first principle. The principle of the Dignity of the Human Person. "Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family."

Fr. Maloney writes, "This is the bedrock principle of Catholic social teaching. Every person—regardless of race, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, employment or economic status, health, intelligence, achievement or any other differentiating characteristic—is worthy of respect. It is not what you do or what you have that gives you a claim on respect; it is simply being human that establishes your dignity. Given that dignity, the human person is, in the Catholic view, never a means, always an end. The body of Catholic social teaching begins with the human person, but it does not end there. Individuals have dignity; but individualism has no place in Catholic social thought. The principle of human dignity gives the human person a claim on membership in a community, the human family."

This most basic principle fully explains why we need to address the need to encourage, embrace, celebrate diversity, equity and inclusion in our membership, church, and the larger community we live in. We all see what the added burden of discrimination can have on our neighbours in need, whether it is the political rhetoric, housing, employment, criminal justice, or many other areas of concern. Let us be advocates for changes in social and government structures but also in our own personal selves and biases. We are obligated as Vincentians to do more, to speak out, to act whenever and wherever we see such injustices.

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