

The Consistent Life Ethic & the Dignity of Life



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Important Sources

- Example of Jesus through sacred scripture
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (official Church doctrine)
- Papal Encyclicals (Letters to the Faithful on matters of Faith) such as *Humane Vitae*
- Tradition and experience of Christ's followers and the mission of Christ's Church on earth

What does having a 'consistent life ethic' mean?

- Recognizing the sacredness of all life as God's gift of creation
- Demonstrating an all-embracing reverence for life, both its preservation and its quality
- Recognizing intrinsic evils that are in opposition to the value of human life (such as abortion, euthanasia and nuclear holocaust)

Earlier Times VS Modern Era

(Setting the scene...)

Earlier Times

- Fertility was a blessing
- High infant mortality, life was more precious
- The sick or elderly did not survive into later life
- Weapons of war were more primitive and their consequences localized

Modern Era

- We live in a more 'individualistic' culture – “I want what I want”
- Medical advancements in treatments for the sick, pre-natal testing, fertility and stem cell research
- 'Entitlement' era ,babies as 'products' or 'accessories'
- The arms race and the advent of nuclear weapons

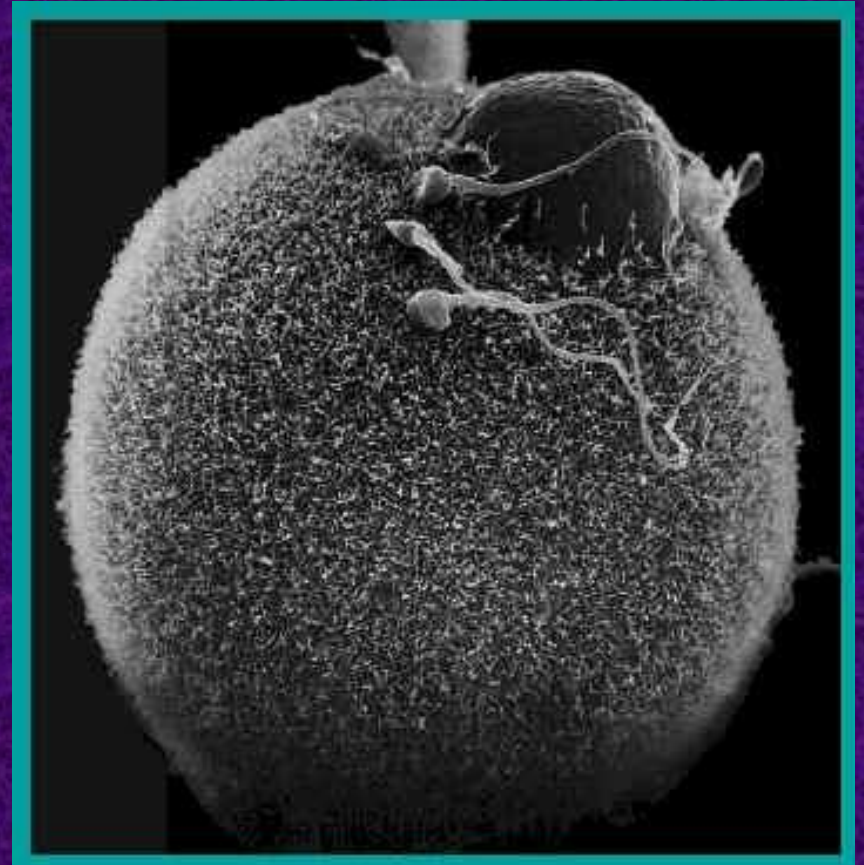
Why do Catholics denounce abortion?

- Mark 9: 36-37
“(Jesus & little children)
- Psalm 139: 13
(you knit me in my mother’s womb)
- Ex 20: 13 & Deut 5:17
(6th Commandment)
- Jeremiah 1; 5 (before I formed you in the womb...)



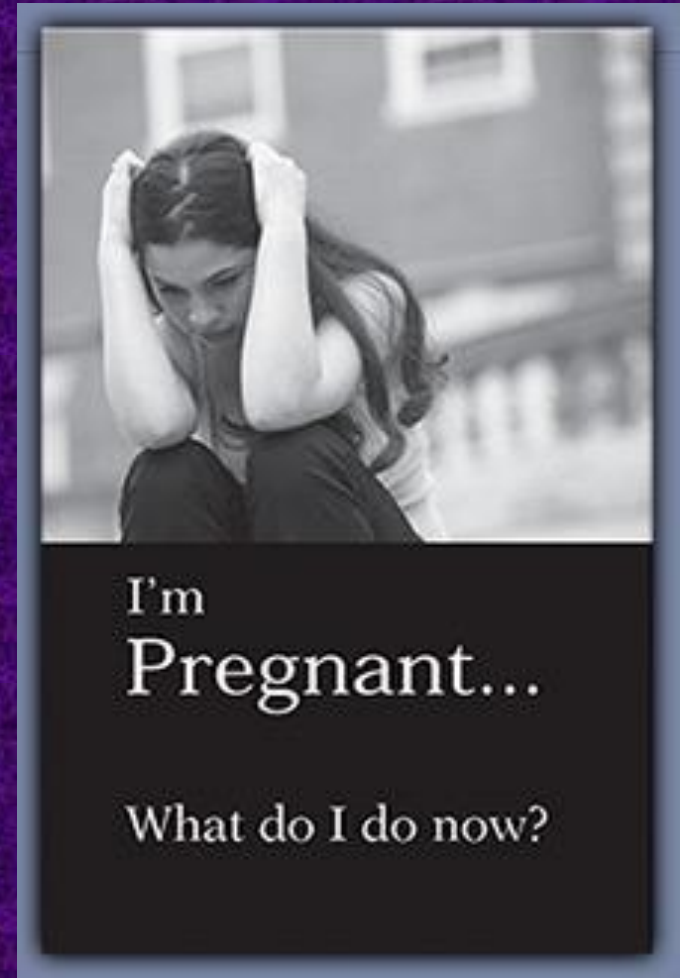
When does life begin?

- From the moment of conception
- Life must be respected and protected as a gift from God
- Since the first century, the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion
- Unchangeable teaching of the Church



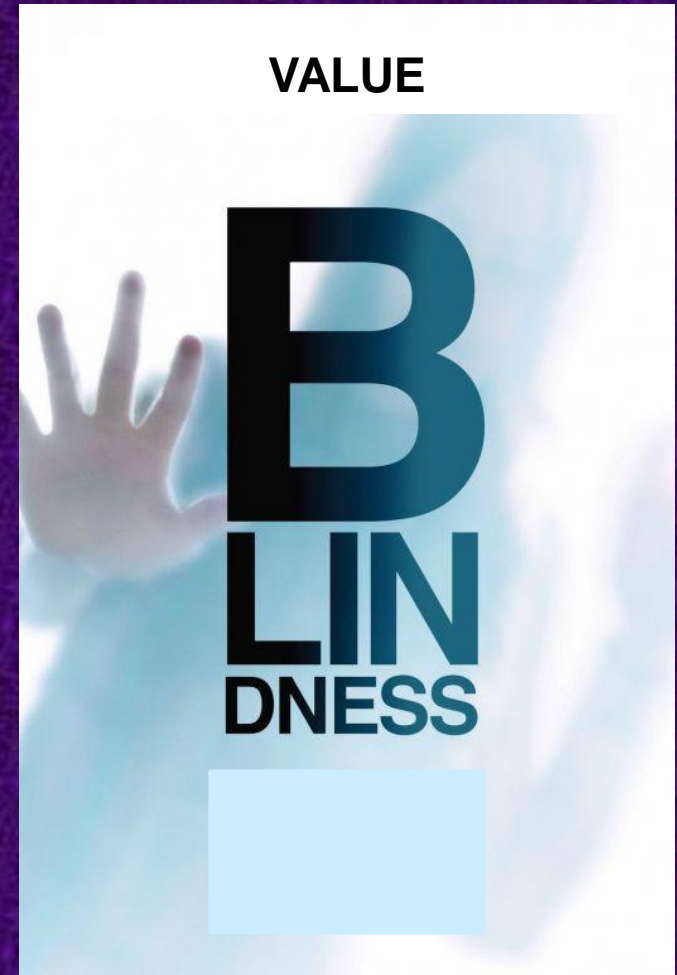
What are we called to do?

- Witness to the preciousness of the baby in the womb
- Refrain from judgement of the person, rather than the situation
- Provide practical assistance after birth
- Witness to God's providence as those willing to share the burden



What is 'value blindness'?

- Focusing on one aspect of a moral dilemma to the exclusion of the whole picture, negating the reach of God's limitless, providential love



What are the causes of 'Value Blindness'?

- Upbringing
- Life experience
- Cultural conditioning
- Self-indulgence
- De-sensitization



Why do Catholics denounce euthanasia?

- Life is sacred, even in its final moments
- Deliberate killing of the sick or disabled is intrinsically morally evil
- Withholding ordinary means of treatment is evil (i.e. IVs, food, water, common surgical procedures)



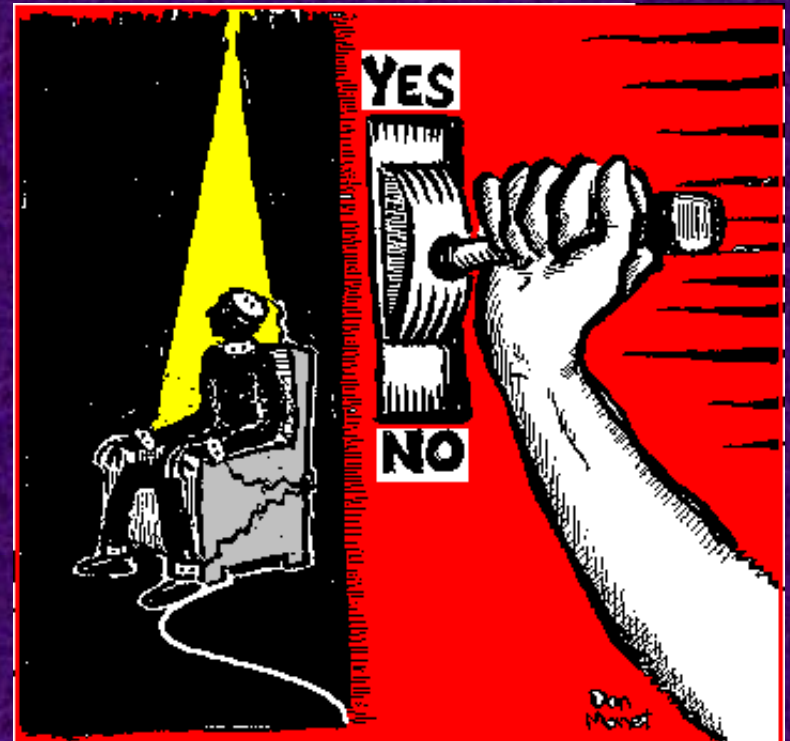
How do we then care for the sick and dying with mercy?

- Relieve pain as much as possible with medication, even if this hastens death (an unwanted consequence)
- Rely on the sacraments as a way to strengthen faith and hope during the dying process
- Helping the dying bear their cross
- Not prolonging life indefinitely, wrongly identifying any removal of life-sustaining equipment as an indirect form of killing



What is the Church's Teaching on Capital Punishment?

- The State has a duty to protect the innocent and safeguard the good, capital punishment is an option
- If however, there is non-lethal means to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, it should be limited to such means as to protect the common good but also the dignity of the human person (e.g. life imprisonment)



Balancing Justice and Mercy

- Matthew 25: 36
“I was in prison
and you visited
me.”
- Recognizing the
dignity of the
human person in
prisoners



What is the Church's Position on Suicide?

- God remains the sovereign Master of life
- We accept life gratefully and preserve it for God's honour
- We are stewards and not the owners of life, therefore life is not ours to dispose of



War & the Rights of the Innocent

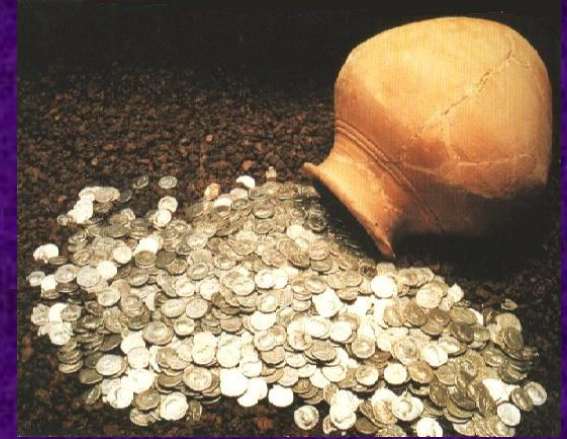
- God created us to live in harmony
- Protection of the innocent, national defence is legitimate
- Modern warfare goes far beyond the bounds of legitimate defence (indiscriminate destruction)

Church in the Modern World #60



Economic Justice

- Valuing life goes beyond preserving life, to ensuring that each person can live in dignity
- We must take a stand against anything that dehumanizes, represses or denies people's rights & dignity



The Dignity of Life Through Work

Definition:

- Manual or intellectual
- Management or financial activity
- Paid or unpaid services



Moral Significance:

- Principal way that people exercise the distinctive capacity for self-expression & self-realization
- Ordinary way to fulfill material needs
- Contribute to the well-being of the larger community



Equality of All People

Equal dignity of all people regardless of:

- Race, creed, sex, colour, social conditions, language, religion habit of thought, etc.



In Conclusion

Job 12: 10

In [God's] hand is
the life of every
living thing and the
breath of every
human being.”



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