

LABOR AND DRONES AND CONSUMERS, OH MY



When the Great Recession enveloped the citizens and corporations of the United States to save themselves, for some, or to retain their financial attractiveness to Wall Street, for others, many corporate leaders quickly reduced expenses. Specifically labor expenses. But what was merely a labor expense on the balance sheet to some was neighbor Samantha, mother of three, to others. She's now unemployed.

To reduce the risk of harm to our combat troops in Afghanistan, and to save costs, the U.S. Government has increasingly relied on drones—guided, unmanned airplanes—to bomb strategic sites. Sometimes civilians are killed as a result. What is merely collateral damage—an unintended consequence—to some is neighbor Khalil to others.

Economists and politicians mostly agree that for the economy to improve that we need people to buy more. Seventy percent of our economy is based on consumerism—buying, consuming, buying more. Consumers aren't individuals but one economic tool in the toolbox. But when 26% of Oregonians can't save the recommended three months of expenses for emergencies, what is an economic tool for our economists and politicians is someone else deciding that having all this stuff hasn't given them happiness.

Nearly half of pregnancies among American women are unintended, and four in 10 of these are terminated by abortion. Most babies are nameless until late in their mothers' pregnancies. But what is an inconvenient pregnancy to some is a unique and special person—though nameless—in the eyes of God.

The crux of many of the problems we face as a society is that we have become desensitized to the individual notes of individuals that when played together create this glorious symphony of humanity. Without thought and often without intention we classify individuals as expenses, consumers, collateral damage, as a choice rather than the individual deserving of human dignity as a God-given right.

October is **Respect Life Month** and the U.S. Bishops highlight seven pro-life concerns that illustrate the “womb to grave” spectrum of life that they ask Catholics to respect: infertility treatments, population control, the promise of pro-life youth, depression and suicide among youth, sexual trafficking, the death penalty and Divine Mercy, and end-of-life care.

As one reads the pamphlet for each issue, once notices that an identical theme emerges: the preciousness of human life whose human dignity must be respected. When we hear the music, however, we tend not to listen and notice what individual notes actually contribute to the song.



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