



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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The basis for Catholic teaching on the right to life and human dignity

There was a recent editorial cartoon picturing a bishop asking to be excused from a grand jury investigation about clergy sex abuse so that he could lecture legislators about abortion.

The message of the cartoon is clear: on account of the sin and crime of clergy sex abuse, bishops have no moral authority to teach, especially to condemn the violent attack on human life and dignity in abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, and capital punishment.

But I would respectfully beg to differ.

The sanctity of life and respect for human dignity are not true because the Catholic Church and her bishops teach this; rather, the Church teaches this because it is true.

The right to life is inherent, that is, its basis being the mere existence of a person, from the moment of conception to natural death.

The right to life is the first and fundamental human right, and the basis for the right to things needed to live in dignity, such as productive work and fair wages, food and shelter, education and health care, protection from harm and the right to immigrate.

As a consequence of this truth, Catholics will advocate for the things listed above, but also on behalf of someone facing the death penalty, an unborn child, or a person who is terminally ill.

For us, this is not either/or, but both/and. It is illogical to fight for education and health care, for example, but not for the right to life in every instance.

And as a consequence of this truth about human life and dignity, we will also hang our heads in shame because of the sin and crime of clergy sex abuse, and renew our resolve to do all that is humanly possible to protect children and young people from harm and to promote healing.

God help us and have mercy on us.

Michael Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque
