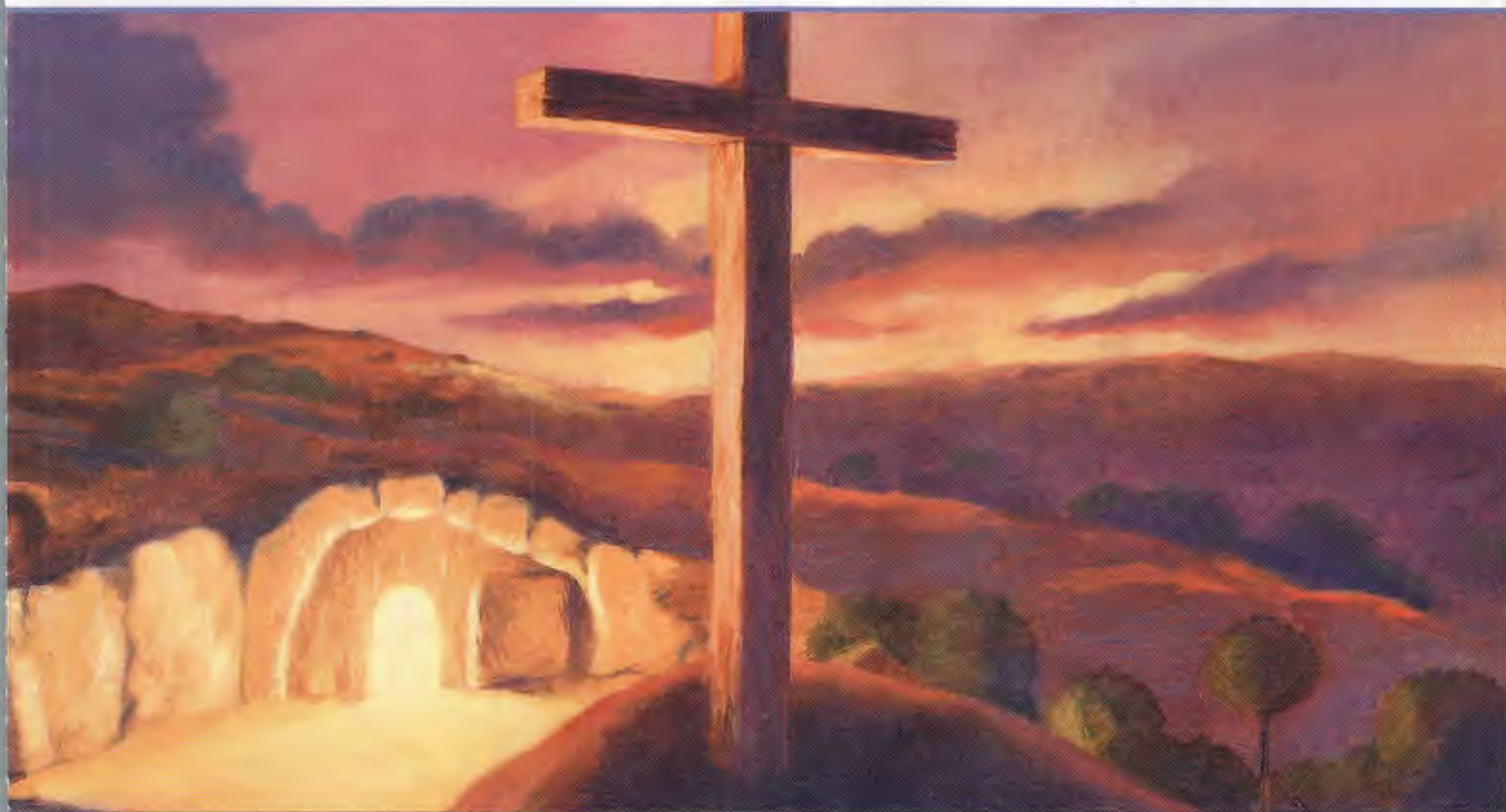


ALIVE IN CHRIST

GRADE 7

Jesus Christ and the New Testament

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Our Sunday Visitor

Respecting Life

♥ Let Us Pray

Leader: God of all life, we thank and praise you for the many gifts you have given us. Your care and love for us goes deeper than the human mind can comprehend. Even before we came to be you have loved us. May we choose life!

“Who is the man who delights in life,
who loves to see the good days?” **Psalm 34:13**

All: Lord, thank you for your blessings and the abundance you share with us.

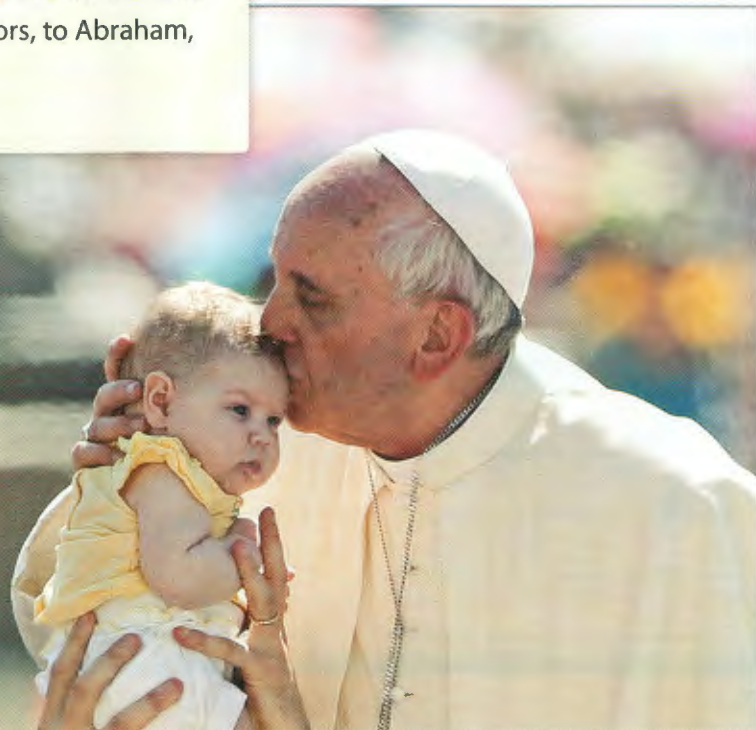
📖 Scripture

“I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then that you and your descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you, a long life for you to live on the land which the LORD swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give to them.”

Deuteronomy 30:19–20

Have you ever thought...

- What does it mean to *always* choose life?
- What does it mean to respect and value *all* human life?



A Sacred Gift from God

Why does human life have value?

If we could choose how we look and what abilities we have, we might change some things. But it's not up to us to choose our challenges. We do not enter this world on our own. Each of us owes his or her life to God. So one life is not more valuable than another. We are all equally valuable because we are each made in God's image.

Human beings are so unique and beautifully made because God designed us. For this reason, the author of the psalm praises God:

Scripture

"You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb.
I praise you, because I am wonderfully made."

Psalm 139:13–14

Go to the Source

Read *Psalm 139:13–20*. What does this song of praise tell you about your relationship to God—past, present, and future? What good can come from praising God for creating and knowing you?

Now, we really don't know what the man who wrote that psalm looked like or what his limitations were. But he praised God for the way he was made. He believed God had a plan for his life that he was made to fulfill.

Not only are we made by God, but of all the creatures, humans alone have the capacity for "self-awareness"—we know we are individuals, separate from the world around us. We are able to recognize God's presence and to freely choose to know, love, and serve him.

For these reasons, each human life has a sacred value from conception to death. This **human dignity** cannot be taken away or lessened by any condition or situation.

The Creation of Adam in stone, based on Michelangelo



Usefulness

We tend to get rid of things when they're not useful anymore. Usefulness determines their value to us. Human beings, however, are different. Our value is not determined by our usefulness. It comes from God, who made us and for whom we exist. We have that value when we are healthy or sick, young or old. Even when dying, our life has worth. When we die, our existence continues. We continue to fulfill our purpose with our Creator.

We who are sacred should not be discarded, judged useless, or killed. Those decisions are not ours to make. The Fifth Commandment instructs us not to kill another person.

Murder is the deliberate killing of another person. It is always gravely sinful. It shows the contempt the murderer has for human dignity as well as for the holiness and goodness of God.

Sometimes life is so difficult that people don't feel valued or respected; they may feel helpless, and forget that life is a gift from God, who wants us to stick with this gift. Suicide is never an option because it goes against God's love and our hope, and it's forbidden by the Fifth Commandment. The *Catechism* tells us that suicide "unjustly breaks the ties of solidarity" with humanity (see CCC, 2281). But praying and asking for help is an option.

➤ **Why do you think some people have so little respect for human life?**

Catholic Faith Words

human dignity the worth each person has because he or she is made in the image of God

murder the deliberate killing of another person when the killing is not in self-defense. It is always gravely sinful.

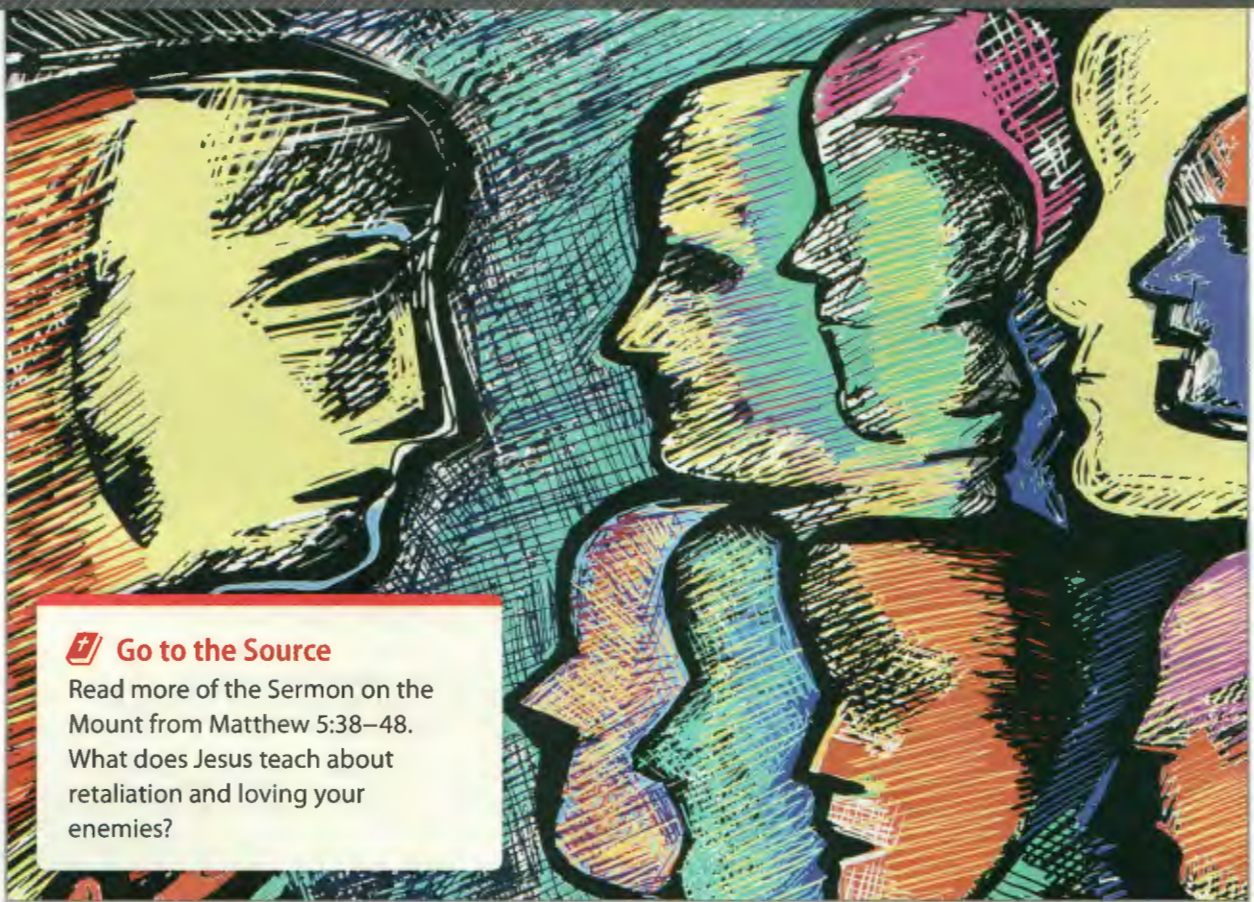
LIST

Imagine God has asked you to take notes on the creation of human beings. Make a list of how we are different from the rest of creation.

Humans:

The Rest of Creation:





Go to the Source

Read more of the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5:38–48. What does Jesus teach about retaliation and loving your enemies?

Honoring Life

What does the Church teach about protecting life at all stages?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus refers to the Fifth Commandment, which bans murder. He then widens the understanding to include anger and vengeance: “But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment . . .” (**Matthew 5:22**).

Jesus understands human nature and speaks against destructive emotions that can lead to worse things. Anger, hatred, and vengeance tear peoples’ lives apart. Jesus didn’t preach one message and live another. His actions and behavior show that he lived in a way that valued life. He told the disciples, “But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on (your) right cheek, turn the other one to him as well” (**Matthew 5:39**).

When Jesus is arrested, he allows his enemies to lead him to an unjust trial and execution. He upholds and honors every human life to the point of not raising a hand against his oppressors or allowing his disciples to take up the sword against them.

The Church Follows Her Master

The Church has taken a stand on life issues, advocating for the rights of others. Over the centuries the Church has established hospitals; outreach organizations; and programs for the poor, immigrants, children, victims of domestic abuse, and others in need.

The Church also confronts today’s culture. She gets the message out—through preaching, outreach, papal encyclicals, bishops’ letters, media campaigns, and more—that each human life, from conception to natural death, is innately valuable and deserves respect.

Safeguarding Life

A human life still in the womb or a life that is no longer as strong as it once was is to be protected from direct harm.

Because of this teaching, **abortion**, the deliberate termination of a pregnancy by killing an unborn child, is a grave sin. The Church does not believe that human life begins at some arbitrary point later in a pregnancy. An embryo requires the same efforts of care as any human. Life is bestowed by God at conception. We are called to protect the life of the most vulnerable.

In the same way, our lives cannot be considered less valuable because we are older or sick. For this reason, **euthanasia**—the deliberate action or inaction that causes the death of someone who is sick, or dying, or has disabilities—is also a grave sin. We owe tender care to those who, at the end of their lives, are most fragile.

It follows from this principle that sometimes we must defend ourselves, or others, from a person or group of people causing harm. It is legitimate and necessary to defend the lives of others, and this is a serious duty for those who have responsibility for the lives of others.

The late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago, described our Catholic beliefs and teachings as a “consistent

ethic of life.” Catholics should honor, respect, and defend all life. Bernardin taught that Catholics must be consistent in opposing abortion, the death penalty, war, the nuclear arms race, and anything that threatens life. Being consistent in our approach to the sacredness of human life makes the human family, and the Church, stronger.

> **Who helps you to respect the dignity and sacredness of life?**

IDENTIFY

Think about the different organizations or people that protect the right to life of people at different stages of life. On the lines below, name one way you can value and honor life at each stage. Then discuss with classmates two ways you can value and honor life, no matter the age.

Seniors _____

Infants _____

Adults _____

Adolescents _____

All ages _____



Catholic Faith Words

abortion the deliberate termination of a pregnancy by killing an unborn child. It is a grave sin.

euthanasia the deliberate action or inaction which causes the death of someone who is sick, dying, or suffering because of disabilities or a debilitating condition. It is a grave sin.

Respecting the Human Person

Why is it important to take care of ourselves and others?

Unkind words are hurtful. They can affect how people think and feel about themselves, and they don't have a positive purpose.

If words can be demeaning and cause damage, think about how much worse it is to allow harmful conditions to continue. Harmful conditions that deny people their rights exist all around us: people living in poverty with no means to change the situation, trapped in unsafe housing, or people who don't have access to an education, health care, or a job.

People need to be able to meet these basic rights in order to grow and mature. Without them, they are constantly using all of their energy merely to survive. They cannot flourish as God would want.



Catholic Faith Words

scandal the destructive behavior by which a person deliberately leads, through his or her own action or inaction, another person to sin

Raising Ourselves Up

A great piece of artwork is meant to be put on display so that everyone can appreciate it and be made better by it. We are God's work of art. The human person is the pinnacle of creation.

We honor the human person, so that all might appreciate and be made better by the creative work of God among us. We avoid all the things that damage the artistry of God at work in the human person, such as overindulgence, extremism, or physical and mental intimidation.

Things that Damage God's Artistry in You

abusing food, alcohol, tobacco, and drugs

sacrificing everything else for the sake of physical perfection

promoting success in school, popularity, and sports without considering those involved

bullying

sexual exploitation or manipulation of another person

pornography

kidnapping, hostage-taking, terrorism, and torture

Add two more examples to the list.



Care for Others

Harsh words are not the only way people harm others. Another way is to encourage others to do sinful things. Jesus warns his disciples against leading others into sin. He says, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (**Matthew 18:6**).

Scandal is the name given to the destructive behavior by which we deliberately lead others to sin through our own action or inaction. For example, the sin of scandal is committed when a radio talk show host rallies his listeners to engage in racism.

Those in authority have a greater responsibility to guard against scandal. Teachers and government and business leaders must exercise care for others by not misleading and manipulating them. The *Catechism* teaches that anyone who uses his or her power to lead others to scandal is “responsible for the evil that he has directly or indirectly encouraged” (CCC, 2287). This special responsibility also includes those who influence public opinion because these are areas of life that can promote or hinder how we perceive and care for one another.



THINK

Think of some phrases you have heard or maybe even said that are either respectful or disrespectful. Which would you use more or less based on the things you have learned in this chapter?

IN SUMMARY Catholics Believe

All human life is sacred and a gift from God.

- All people possess the human dignity that comes from being made in God’s image, and we do not have the right to take that life away from others or ourselves.
- We have a responsibility to honor and protect life at all stages, from conception to old age to death.
- We respect the dignity of the human person by respecting the rights of others, taking care of ourselves physically and emotionally, not abusing ourselves or others, and by not leading others into sin.

Our Catholic Life

The Fifth Commandment tells us “you shall not kill.” The Catholic Church has always been clear about protecting human life from the moment of conception to natural death. The Church also calls us to provide special protection to the unborn, who are among the most vulnerable and innocent. Through prayer and action, the Church calls governments to protect the **right to life** of all human beings, the unborn as well as the terminally ill and aged. She provides prayer, guidance, and many types of support to people facing challenges in these areas. The Church also protects those who are sick or have serious disabilities. Because God made each of us, the value and human dignity of every human life is an important teaching of the Catholic Church.



➤ How do you show respect for human dignity in your life right now?

People of Faith

Saint Martin de Tours, 316–397

Saint Martin joined the Roman army at age fifteen. One day while stationed in Gaul (now France), he gave half his cloak to a beggar. That night, Martin dreamed that he saw Jesus wearing half of his cloak. He heard Jesus say, “Here is Martin, the Roman soldier who is not baptized; he has clad me.” Martin was baptized when he was 18. He traveled and preached throughout the country and was eventually named bishop of Tours. Saint Martin helped people understand true Christianity and not believe errors, called heresies. The Church celebrates his feast day on **November 11**.

For more, go to aliveinchrist.osv.com



LIST

Make a list of movies, television shows, books, or songs that encourage respecting life.

As a class, discuss the items you have listed in common, and think about watching or reading some of your classmates’ suggestions.



Prayer for Life


Leader: Father and Creator, you are the source of all life. You gave your son Jesus to redeem our fallen world and offer us new life on Earth and in Heaven. When your Angel Gabriel asked Mary of Nazareth to become the Mother of your Son, she graciously accepted. Not knowing what would come with this “Yes” to life, she trusted in you.

Thank you, Mary, the Blessed Mother of the world’s Redeemer. Jesus told the world, “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (**John 10:10b**). Please guide us in honoring the gift of life. Give us courage, the courage of Pope Saint John Paul II, to defend the right to life for all.

All: [recite together slowly]: O Mary, bright dawn of the new world, Mother of the living, to you do we entrust the cause of life. Look down, O Mother, upon the vast numbers of babies not allowed to be born, of the poor whose lives are made difficult, of men and women who are victims of brutal violence, of the elderly and the sick killed by indifference or out of misguided mercy.

Grant that all who believe in Your Son may proclaim the Gospel of life with honesty and love to the people of our time. Obtain for them the grace to accept that Gospel as a gift ever new, the joy of celebrating it with gratitude throughout their lives and the courage to bear witness to it resolutely, in order to build, together with all people of good will, the civilization of truth and love, to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life.

Prayer of the Gospel of Life, by Pope Saint John Paul II

 *Sing or play “Lover of Life”*

Go to aliveinchrist.osv.com for an interactive review.

A Work with Words Circle the letter of the choice that best completes the sentence.

- Murder is always gravely sinful because it shows contempt for the ___ of human life as well as for the holiness and goodness of God, the Creator.
 - dignity
 - happiness
 - love
 - wonder
- ___ is deliberately ending a pregnancy on purpose by killing an unborn child.
 - Euthanasia
 - Genocide
 - Suicide
 - Abortion
- Deliberate action or inaction that causes the death of someone who is sick, or dying, or suffering because of disabilities is called ___.
 - euthanasia
 - genocide
 - suicide
 - abortion
- Behavior or attitudes that leads others to sin are known as ___.
 - disobedience
 - scandal
 - free will
 - suicide
- Because humans are made in the ___ and likeness of God, each human life is sacred.
 - shadow
 - mirror
 - image
 - awareness
- The human person is the ___ of creation.
 - zenith
 - pinnacle
 - image
 - purpose

B Check Understanding Complete each sentence with the correct term from the Word Bank.

abortion	kill
overindulgence	sin
life	self-awareness
love	action
breath	covet

- The Fifth Commandment instructs us not to _____ another person.
- We avoid _____ and extremism because these actions can damage the artistry of God at work in the human person.
- Jesus warns his disciples that it would be better to drown in the sea than to lead others into _____.
- Not only are we made by God, but we humans alone, of all creatures, also have the capacity for _____.

C Make Connections On a separate sheet of paper, write a one-paragraph response to the following questions. Choose a current issue (local, national, or worldwide) in which human life is being valued, respected, or protected. Who are the people involved, and what impact are their actions having on others? How can this be an example of living out the Fifth Commandment?