

Dignity of the Human Person



Catholic Cemeteries
Archdiocese of Vancouver

Purpose:

To explore Catholic teaching on the dignity of the human person.

Lesson Focus:

It is intended that students will...

- Develop a basic understanding of the foundation for Catholic teaching on human dignity.
- Consider and analyze end of life practices through the lens of Catholic anthropology.

Lesson Plan		Duration: 60 minutes
Introduction (10 min)	Video hook: Understanding Death Series: Video #2: <i>Do You Fear Death?</i> Small group question: <i>“Do you fear death? Why or why not?”</i>	
Guided Learning Steps (35 min)	<p>“YOUCAT Scavenger Hunt” activity. (15 min) Debrief scavenger hunt, explaining the following concepts (see Teacher’s Guide for more detail): (20 min)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Created in the Image of God (<i>Imago Dei</i>) 2. Destined for union with God 3. The physical and spiritual dimensions to all of our actions - what we do must always be in accordance with true human dignity 4. Relate to a stage of life that is not often discussed: end of life practices, such as anointing of the sick, Catholic funerals, etc.). 	
Closure (15 min)	<p>Journal Question: <i>There are many practices within our culture that undermine true human dignity, especially surrounding conception and death. What questions do you have about death, funerals and burials in Catholicism?</i> <i>Describe what you think will happen after death. What will that be like?</i></p>	

Materials (provided at rccav.org/educators)

1. Video: Understanding Death Series: Video #2: *Do You Fear Death?*
<http://rccav.org/2014/10/2-do-you-fear-death/>
2. *YOUCAT Scavenger Hunt* photocopies
3. Class set of *YOUCAT* books.

Connections to CISVA Prescribed Learning Outcomes

- Summarize Catholic anthropology (B2)
- Develop a response to contemporary dilemmas that compromise the dignity of the human person and defend why the Church’s teaching are the most humanizing. (E3)
- Contrast the position of Catholic Anthropology with contradictory anthropologies. (B4)

Teacher's Guide



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Introduction

Small Groups

- On task? If a group is struggling to keep on task, it is sometimes helpful to briefly sit down and ask individuals the focus question, and follow up questions, until the discussion takes on a life of its own.
- Asking a spokesperson from each group to verbally summarize to the class what was shared in small group is a good transition into the next activity.

Guided Learning Steps

YOUCAT Scavenger Hunt activity:

The selected YOUCAT entries are designed to give students a basic understanding of the Catholic view on human dignity, and some of the ramifications of this teaching, especially as it pertains to *end of life*. Also, they are meant as a springboard for the teacher to build upon during the debriefing of the activity.

- The mystery phrase is *Imago Dei* (Latin), which means, “Image of God.”

Debrief:

Some helpful content to help flesh out the answers to the YOUCAT activity:

1. *Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. One aspect of this is that the human person has an intellect (the ability to know and distinguish between good and evil), and a will (the ability to freely choose to love or not). If we are to be conformed to the dignity of being made in God's image, then these faculties must be directed toward what is good and true.*
2. *“The root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God...For God has called man and still calls him so that with his entire being he might be joined to Him in an endless sharing of a divine life beyond all corruption”¹*
3. *The human person, therefore, is not only a physical creature, but also a spiritual being – a union of body and soul. As a result, the human person's actions have both a physical and a spiritual dimension. Our actions, therefore, have eternal consequences; and since the goal in this life is to prepare for eternity with God, we should be mindful to always act in accordance with the dignity that comes from being created in the image and likeness of God*
4. *We must therefore approach end of life practices, mindful of upholding the true dignity of the human person. The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, as well as all the details and traditions within a Catholic funeral and burial are designed with this in mind.*

Closure:

Journaling

Encourage students to create open-ended questions in addition to any other simpler questions they want answers to (see the notes in Lesson #1 on generating good questions). If students have journals, have

¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 18, 19; cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church n.27

them bring these with their questions on the field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani, where they will have a chance to discuss with the experts on site (see the Field Trip Guide for more details).

Ideas for Extension and Extra Resources:

- **Group Project**

Have students film their own 3 - 5 minute “Understanding Death” video, featuring at least 3 different speakers (one teacher or priest, one parent or grandparent, and one peer). Questions students could pose:

- *Do you fear death?*
- *What comes to mind when you hear the word “death”?*
- *What good can come from suffering? Does it have any meaning?*
- *What do you think Heaven will be like?*

CISVA learning outcome: E4 Participate in and reflect on activities that restore and/or affirm the Dignity of the Human Person, in light of the Gospel

- **Resources on the immaterial nature of the human soul:**

- **Book:** Consciousness Beyond Life: the Science of Near-Death Experiences, Dr. Pim Van Lommel
- **Videos** interviewing Dr. Pim Van Lommel: ○
<http://www.magiscenter.com/life-after-death-and-near-death-experiences/>
- **Video:** #2 Q&A from 9/10/2010 Larry King Live show with Robert J. Spitzer,
http://www.magisreasonfaith.org/spitzer_videos.html

CISVA learning outcomes:

B2 Summarize Catholic anthropology

B4 Contrast the position of Catholic anthropology with contradictory anthropologies