**Dignity and Respect**

**Teacher Background**

The underlying basis for Catholic teaching on social justice is in the Judaeo-Christian understanding of the goodness and worth of all of God's creation. The human being, the summit of God's creation, is formed in the image and likeness of God. Every person has an intrinsic dignity as a child of God. Human beings and the whole of God's creation are to be treated with love, care and respect.

The following extracts from Catholic Social Teaching emphasise the dignity of respect for all creation.

There is a growing awareness of the sublime dignity of human persons, who stand above all things and whose rights and duties are universal and inviolable. They ought, therefore, to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing... the right to education, and work...

*The Church and the Modern World, #26*

The basis for all that the Church believes about the moral dimensions of economic life is its vision of the transcendent worth - the sacredness - of human beings. The dignity of the human person, realised in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured.

All human beings, therefore, are ends to be served by the institutions that make up the economy, not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals. Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God (Gn 1:27).

*Economic Justice for All, #28*