**The Sanctity of Human Life**

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Human beings have the privilege of being able to think both absolutely and abstractly, to feel both happiness and sorrow, to learn the difference between right and wrong, and to know or reject God. We are the only creatures who are made in the image of God and, therefore, have the intellectual potential to live in such a way that we reflect that image. (Review, for example, Gen. 1:26-7; 5:1; I Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9.)

When we fail to see the grandeur of God, we then naturally fail to see our humanity in all its grandeur and, therefore, fail to act as God intended humans to act. Though we are not gods, we bear some of the attributes of the one true God. To act in a genuinely human manner, our lives must reflect the will and character of God, i.e., we must see humanity through God's eyes and live it as God would want it lived—as Jesus Christ lived it. To avoid underestimating the worth of any human being, it is essential that we maintain an uncompromising respect for human life by maintaining an uncompromising devotion to seeking and following God's will.

To justify our faults and our weaknesses by asserting that we are “just human” is to eliminate any motivation for aspiring to be genuinely human in our behavior—it is to accept mediocrity and to invite value judgements based on subjective criteria that determine which human being’s existence is better than another's. The suffering that accompanies life in a fallen world should not cause us to place degrees of value on human life, for indeed each life is priceless. Rather, it should create in us, who have been blessed with healthy minds, bodies, and hearts, a commitment to use our health, gifts, and wisdom to creatively develop resources for and compassionately render care to those who are less fortunate, though equally human.

The determination of right and wrong is not always easy. However, starting from the viewpoint that each human being is a creature of God with inestimable value provides a guard rail that prevents each of us from straying from decision-making based on faith and losing ourselves in the wilderness of finite human reason alone. Bioethical issues typically involve life and its limits. How we live and how we die should be understood from the Creator's point of view. The way we treat our bodies and the bodies of others should reflect the way God desires to treat us. In fact, the way we treat others is a reflection of how we actually treat God.

This perspective gives us the best framework for answering questions about issues such as the use of donor eggs and sperm to have children “of one's own,” the appropriateness of initiating or withdrawing life support, the purpose and management of suffering, and the appropriate use of alternative medicines. These questions and others cannot adequately be answered apart from a perspective that recognizes the sanctity and inestimable value of human life.

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