



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

06 October 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Consistent Life Ethic

\kən-'si-stənt 'lif 'e-thik\

An ideology that moral principals valuing life should be applied with continuity. Genetics, abortion, end-of-life healthcare, racism, warfare, capital punishment, access to resources, and more—are inextricably related; a holistic reverence for life.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-consistent-life-ethic>

CONTEXT

The protection of life is a seamless garment. You can't protect some life and not others.

—Catholic journalist and pacifist Eileen Egan

Pope Francis uses "throwaway culture" to name the opposite of what the **consistent life ethic** seeks to affirm.

—Charles Camosy, Resisting Throwaway Culture

WHY IT MATTERS

We live in a culture that often disregards the planet and its interrelated species—all of which make life possible. Throwaway mentality extends to groups of people considered unproductive and unvalued: the poor, disabled, dying, refugee, or otherwise undesirable. The **consistent life ethic**, a term coined by Bryan Hehir of the USCCB, challenges us to embrace a culture of hospitality and encounter, which affirms life as God's own gift.

From *The Value of Life: A Consistent Ethic* by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin: Whenever life is considered "cheap" and easily "wasted," no life is safe. Such disrespect for human life and dignity runs directly counter to the biblical teaching about its sacredness.

RELATED WORDS

Moral theology | Pro-life | Human Rights

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Why do we "respect life"?

Scripture describes life as a divine gift. We are animated with God's breath, imparting an indelible dignity. This makes life holy. The Bible also declares life is a choice, freely and fatefully determined: "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse" (Deuteronomy 30:19). God sustains, heals, and restores our life in turns. Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), offering himself as the "bread of life" (John 6:35). Resurrection is the ultimate divine measure that preserves life for eternity.

The motto to respect life originated in the pro-life movement of the 1950s initiated after the passage of various abortion laws. The call to honor the dignity and rights of every person echoes the teachings of Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*. Later theologians would speak of a "**consistent life ethic (CLE)**," or "seamless garment," concerning decisions around conception and child-bearing and death and dying. CLE also applies to justice issues like poverty, immigration, capital punishment, warfare, living wage, racism, and any stance that threatens the dignity or rights of a person or group. Respect for life is not a boutique option for Christians. It is central to our purpose.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-Respect-Life>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

RESPECT LIFE SUNDAY (OCTOBER 6)

To life!

The call to respect life confronts the multiple ways life is often devalued in our world—war, capital punishment, racism, and abortion, among others. It is not only a call "out there in the world" but also a call within each of us. We can take this message to heart in every situation we encounter, and each day offers many opportunities—large and small—to respect life by the way we treat one another.

READINGS: Genesis 2:18-24; Hebrews 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16 or 10:2-12 (140) <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/100624.cfm>. "From the beginning of creation, God made them."

FAITH IN ACTION

What is one choice for life that you can make today?