



DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

CORPORATE STANCE: CONSISTENT ETHIC OF LIFE

We believe in the interconnection of all life which is at the heart of a consistent ethic of life. We commit to the protection of the whole of life on Earth. Our commitment fundamentally requires a conversion of heart and compels us to address any injustice that diminishes the community of life. We reverence the sacredness of life and address injustice in a spirit of respect, compassion, and solidarity. *June 2013*

EXPERIENCE

There are many issues around life with which society is not in agreement when it comes to policies for regulating them. For some, certain responses are clearly right or wrong. For others, there are nuances in understanding, mitigating factors, and different modes of action to uphold the value of the sacredness of life. We see this around issues relating to war, death penalty, health care, abortion, euthanasia, genetics, gender and sexuality, and ecological devastation.

ANALYSIS

As Christians we are called to make decisions and act out of the Gospel value that “all may have life and have it more abundantly”. In his term “throwaway culture,” Pope Francis accuses the 21st century culture of brutally regarding as disposable whole categories – the unborn, the elderly, the poor, and even Earth.

We are called to look at life issues through the lens of how our actions sustain and support LIFE in all its inter-connectedness. We do this so that the whole community of life might flourish.

This stance for a consistent ethic of life is broad in scope and yet gets to the heart of every life issue—life is sacred. It ties together our judgments about war, death penalty, health care, abortion, euthanasia, genetics, gender and sexuality, and ecological devastation. An ethical stance must be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible.

The issues we focus on in the consistent ethic of life provide the opportunity for a new moral vision. People can unite in a dialogue about what values should serve as the foundation for this new culture. All come to the dialogue and share from their own experiences and from their understanding of the message of Jesus. It is through such mutual sharing, listening, and respect that those in dialogue develop attitudes and behaviors that honor and celebrate the sanctity of the whole of life.

REFLECTION

“Often when we think of the consistent ethic of life, we turn toward an ethic of action rather than to an ethic of being or virtue. That is, we go to the end of the process rather than to the beginning.”

James F. Keenan, S.J

Issues included in the Consistent Ethic of Life Stance:

War: There is need to develop a theory of “just peace” rather than of “just war.”

Death Penalty: Human life is sacred. The four arguments for the state’s exercise of the death penalty (retribution, deterrence, reform, protection of the state) are no longer defensible.

Health Care: Society is obliged to ensure that all persons can realize their right to safeguard their life and dignity through health care that is universal, person-centered and community based.

Abortion: Moral deliberation and judgment demand that human life be held sacred in all its stages. It is not enough to only oppose abortion; the social policies and practices that contribute most to choosing abortion must be transformed.

Euthanasia: Dying and death are natural realities of life and the transition into eternal life. End-of-life decisions require compassion, information, and support so that persons can make the natural transition with dignity. While not supporting decisions to unnaturally end a life, persons have the right to forgo extraordinary medical treatment.

Genetics: Research into genetics by way of adult stem cells or embryos, as well as research on genes and prenatal genetic testing, raises important social justice questions that need to be incorporated into the consistent ethic of life.

Gender and Sexuality: We are now on the edge of new knowledge that gender is not simply male or female. This requires, even demands, that we remain open to all that science is uncovering as well as the ethics that will flow from that understanding.

Ecological Devastation: Ecological devastation threatens the status of the whole of creation. The practical aim and moral goal must be to establish and protect healthy ecosystems where all living creatures can flourish.

ACTION

The consistent ethic of life requires ongoing involvement and commitment to the following:

1. Pray for greater understanding and appreciation of the sanctity of all life.
2. Study the issues as addressed by different disciplines: philosophers, moral theologians, ethicists, sociologists, and scientists.
3. Engage in discussions about the sanctity of life.
4. Live with intentionality for the common good which honors all life.