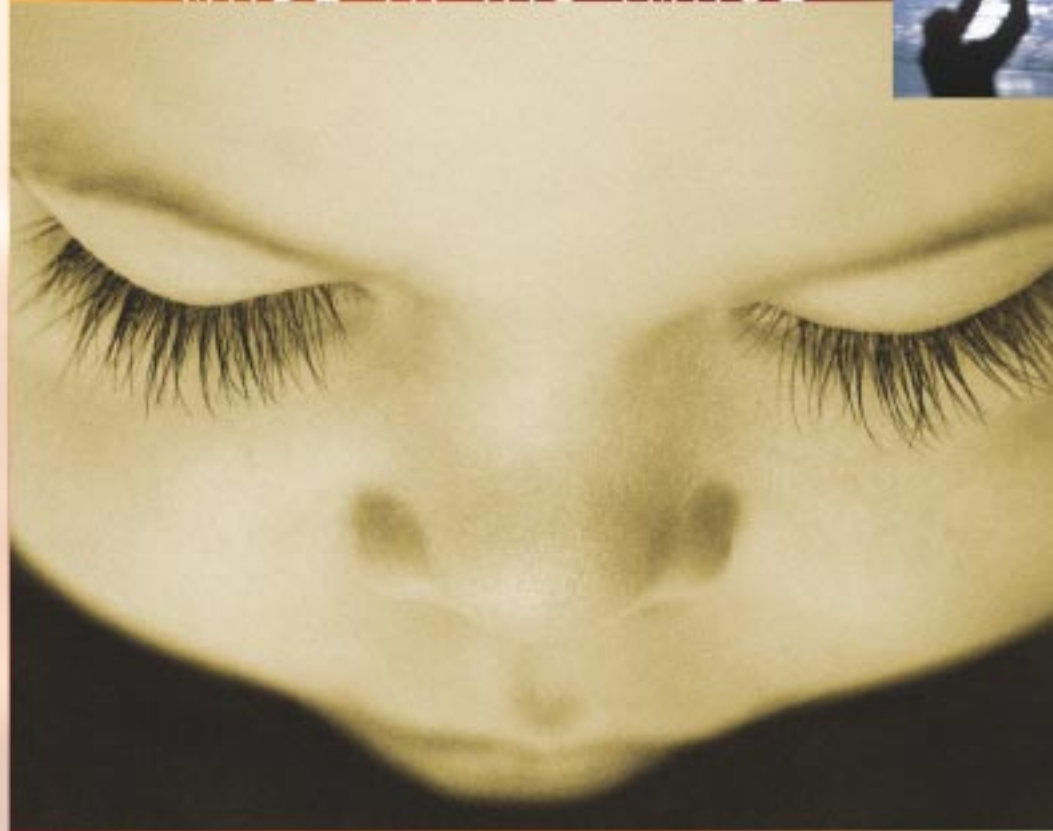


MADE IN HIS IMAGE

Respect Life 2004-2005



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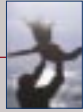
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RESPECT LIFE



When we hear a phrase all our lives, it can become stale. No matter how true or profound, it loses the power to capture our attention and invite reflection. *Made in the image of God* is such a phrase.

Because God created human beings in His own image, each of us has a unique dignity. "Of all visible creatures only man is 'able to know and love his creator'... and he alone is called to share by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 356).

What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Jesus himself is the answer. It means to be holy and loving, to give oneself for the sake of others even to the point of death, so we might share eternally in God's life, our souls united again with our risen bodies (*Catechism*, 459, 460).

Even in this life our soul – which is our innermost self – is a single unity with our body (*Catechism*, 365). This oneness of body and soul calls us to treat our bodily life, and that of others, with the greatest respect. And the relationship God has established with and among us calls us to reach out to every human being with unconditional love.

Jesus taught that we must love one another as He loves us (*Jn 15:12*). And the fact that every human is made in God's image has specific implications depending on one's situation in life.

Consider briefly what it means for three groups – families, the medical profession, and public officeholders and those who elect them.

For parents, *made in God's image* means accepting, nurturing and educating children in truth and love, never treating them as property one is free to abort or abandon if inconvenient or burdensome.

For families and caregivers of those who are frail, mentally or physically impaired, addicted or dying, it means respecting the God-given dignity and right to life of those who are dependent and vulnerable, treating them as we would wish to be treated, until the moment God calls them home.

For fertility specialists, *made in God's image* means helping couples achieve pregnancy in ways that enhance their ability to conceive a child through their union as husband and wife. It means refusing to "manufacture" children through artificial means or to treat them as products.

For obstetricians, gynecologists and family practitioners, it means acknowledging that human life begins at conception, and rejecting drugs and devices that may cause the death of young embryos (such as by inhibiting their implantation in the womb).

For medical personal involved in abortion it means coming to grips with the fact that those whose lives they destroy are innocent human beings who are also made in the image of God. For the rest of us it means praying for their conversion and their return to the life-affirming mission of medicine.

For researchers seeking cures for diseases, *made in the image of God* means striving to alleviate human suffering in ways that respect life — the lives of human research subjects, from conception onward, no less than the lives of the patients for whom a cure is sought.

For those who hold public office, it means addressing issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing and health care. "But being 'right' in such matters can never excuse a wrong choice regarding direct attacks on innocent human life" (*Living the Gospel of Life*, 23). Those involved in lawmaking have a "grave and clear obligation" to oppose laws that attack human life (*Doctrinal Note on Catholics in Political Life*, 4).

For voters, it means exercising their significant power of citizenship in ways that defend human life, especially those who are waiting to be born, disabled or otherwise defenseless. The bishops urge Catholic voters to choose political leaders based on principle, rather than on party affiliation or self-interest (*Living the Gospel of Life*, 34).

The call to honor the image of God places special duties on each of us, in every walk of life. But at its root this call is the same for all. It is by seeing Christ in others, and acting accordingly, that we will become like Him and share in His eternal destiny.