



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

# Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics



## THE EXTRAORDINARY WORTH OF HUMAN LIFE

Fr Joseph Habila St Matthew's Roman Catholic Church Dix Hills



The story of creation in the book of Genesis tells us that when it was time to create human beings God had to change his language from singular to plural. From a language of one person to a language of a community of persons, the Blessed Trinity. "Then God said: Let US make human beings in OUR image, after OUR likeness. Let them have dominion..." (Genesis 1:26). No doubt human beings were to be superior, a little above other creatures. God even gave permission to human beings to "have dominion over" other creatures.

The change in God's language from singular to plural in creating human beings express implicitly the worth of human beings who have value in themselves as it is to be observed when God also mandated that human blood may not be shed (Genesis 9:6) for in the image of God have human beings been made. God's mandate to man to dominate, however, does not give human beings unlimited power but limited power. A power that is limited to other creatures with exception to a fellow human being, even shedding of blood of a fellow human being, which is believed to be the source of life.

The Psalmist joyfully express how special a human being is made by the Creator: " You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works!..." (Psalm 139:13-14).

In his ministry Jesus proclaimed, "I came so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). In order to prove that He stands for life He saved the life of the woman caught in adultery whom the Scribes and the Pharisees were bent on stoning her to death (John 8:3-11). "Today this proclamation is especially pressing because of the extraordinary increase and gravity of threats to the life of individuals and people, especially where life is weak and defenseless. In addition to the ancient scourges of poverty, hunger, endemic diseases, violence and war, new threats are emerging on an alarming vast scale" (St John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* 2005).

The natural law, written in the heart of man, and by the light of reason makes us understand and cherish the sacred value of human life from its very beginning- conception- to its very end- natural death. In other words, the idea of the sacredness of human life is engraved in the heart of each individual person that we are compelled to defend, protect and promote this life in all stages, from the womb to the tomb.

St John Paul II in his encyclical letter EVANGELIUM VITAE 2005, quoting the Second Vatican Council says: "Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as sub-human living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed. They poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practice them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator".

