

"Sanctity of Life" reflects the belief that, because people are made in God's image, human life has an inherently sacred attribute that should be protected and respected at all times.

WAR

All citizens and all governments are **obliged** to work for the **avoidance of war**.

However, "as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, **governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed.**"

"Just War"

The strict conditions for *legitimate defense by military force* require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time:

- the **damage inflicted by the aggressor** on the nation or community of nations **must be lasting, grave, and certain**;
- **all other means** of putting an **end** to it must have been shown to be impractical or **ineffective**;
- there must be **serious prospects of success**;
- the use of arms **must not produce evils** and disorders **graver than the evil to be eliminated**. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition. These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the "just war" doctrine.

DEATH PENALTY

The death penalty involves "an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person" but an attack that could be tolerated or even required in situations where there is **no other way** to effectively **protect society**.

Now we have a "**effective systems of detention**", which ensure the **protection of citizens** but, at the same time, do not deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption."

END OF LIFE – Natural death (not Euthanasia)

In short, the Church teaches that **extraordinary measures need not be taken to keep someone alive**, e.g., the use of a ventilator when a person's breathing system is shutting down.

At the same, the Church teaches that **ordinary medical care should never be forsaken**, i.e., **food and fluids**—even when taken intravenously—**unless** receiving food or fluids **yield more harm than good** because a person's body is shutting down.

In all cases, a person in the latter stages of life should be given **good palliative care**, including **oxygen** received nasally and also **pain-management** pharmaceuticals, both of which will aid the **patient's comfort** in their last days as they prepare for death.

IN VITRO FERTILIZATION

1. Life is a gift, not a right

We can fall into a trap of thinking that we're due such fulfillment because we want it so badly, or because we have so much love to give, or because we faithfully followed God's rulebook by getting married and opening ourselves to life.

But no one is ever due another human person. God gives life as a pure **gift, not as something owed**. Indeed, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith's Instruction on Respect for Human Life and on the Dignity of Procreation (*Donum Vitae*) put it, it's not parents who have rights here, but the child: specifically, the right "to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents" and the "right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception."

2. Doing justice to the Creator

God does not owe us children; but we do owe Him something: obedience to his moral law, which, as Catholics, we believe the Church communicates without error. It is God's right to require that the transmission of life be the **natural consequence of the conjugal act**.

Some people argue that God nonetheless gives the gift of life to persons created through artificial means. Doesn't that mean he approves?

God has chosen to bind himself to holding up His end of **creating new human life** whenever the **bare biological conditions are met—whether through natural intercourse or through IVF, whether through a selfless act of married love or an act of fornication or even rape. Unless you want to say that God also approves of sex outside of marriage or rape, though, it doesn't follow that He approves of every act that results in new life.**

3. Unintended consequences

IVF technology (embryonic stem-cell research, human cloning, eugenics) make human life a commodity.

- IVF procedures often **result in the aborting of superfluous embryos**.

Confirmation Teaching on the Church's Pro-life

- **Embryos** that are **not implanted** are often **frozen** for **future attempts**, or donated for **research**. In the U.S. alone there are many **hundreds of thousands such tiny human persons**, consigned to frozen storage like things or set aside for experimentation, **radically against** their **innate dignity**.

4. Know the alternatives

Contraception must include positive mention of morally licit means of spacing birth, such as **Natural Family Planning**.

ABORTION

Church's teaching on abortion "**is unchanged and unchangeable.**" **Direct abortion**, that is, abortion **willed as an end or as a means**, always constitutes a **grave moral disorder**, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. (*Evangelium Vitae*).

The Church's teaching, though hard like many of Christ's truths, is also—like *all* of Christ's truths—coherent, reasonable, beautiful, and ordered to our final happiness.