

Week Two - Sacred Dignity of Every Person

We affirm the sacred dignity of every human being, no matter their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, economic status, religion, background or ability. We reject any policies or programs that would undermine the dignity or inhibit the well-being of any resident of Ottawa County.

One of the very first things we learn in Scripture is that humanity was created in the image of a God. This means that all people, every gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation can find their source in the one Creator. It also means that when people have a different immigration status, economic status, when they come from a different religious tradition or background, and no matter their physical or mental abilities, they are sacred children of God, worthy of our care and respect.

We find this principle at work in the Hebrew Scriptures, where one of the fundamental principles of the Torah (law) is God's concern particularly for how God's people will care for the marginalized and vulnerable in their time: the orphan, the widow, and the stranger (best translated as immigrant). We also see it present in the ministry of Jesus, when he held up the Samaritan (a group despised by Jews for being both ethnically and religiously inferior) as an example of God's love in action toward the neighbor. The early church was an unsettling (for the first century) blend of social classes, genders, and identities. They were also exhorted over and over again to care for one another, those who are struggling, and to be the manifestation of God's love in their own time.

Honoring each person also means honoring their ability to choose to live, work, or worship differently than you. This can be particularly challenging because most of us (or maybe all of us!) think we are right in what we believe and value. But if we can hold our convictions with an attitude of humility, and an emphasis on serving God, we can find room for the diversity that is the body of Christ and our own society. We can find ways to engage, ask questions, get curious, and learn from those who disagree with us. This is what makes a society truly vibrant and faithful.

Scripture Readings & Discussion Questions

- *Genesis 1:26–31* • What does the creation narrative communicate about our relationship to God as created beings? What does it communicate about our relationship to each other?

- *Deuteronomy 10:17–19* • The orphan, widow, and immigrant were marginalized and vulnerable in the time of the Hebrew Bible, but what groups would you say are at risk, vulnerable, or marginalized today? What is the responsibility of followers of God to those people?
- *Luke 10:25-37* • Jesus' original audience would have been shocked to be told that the Samaritan is the hero of the story, the one who embodied God's love most faithfully. Who are the groups or people you would be surprised to hear as the hero of a story like that? (Hint: it's not just the marginalized but could be a group you disagree with or find challenging).
- *Galatians 3:27-28* • Many first-century onlookers found the diversity of the early church to be evidence that it was clearly wrong (how could slave and free worship together and treat each other as equals?). Are there groups that you wish were more present in the body of Christ that is your own local faith community? What might it look like to work toward that end?