



Ascension
Leader Institute

Roots of Ministry Leadership

Our View of the Human Person: Respect for Life
Retreat 1

Imago Dei

Made in the Image and Likeness of God



Human dignity

The **inherent value of each individual** simply by virtue of their existence as a human being, not contingent upon race, gender, social status, ethnicity, the ability to function or any other accidental attribute of the human person.

Common good

Human life finds its fulfillment in and through relationships. Ascension is committed to creating an environment and promoting policies that **foster conditions necessary for persons to flourish**.

Justice

At its most basic level, justice means **giving all persons what is due or owed to them** in accord with their inherent dignity as people created in the image and likeness of God. It accounts for the basic human needs all people need to flourish and participate in the Common Good.

Applying the *Imago Dei*

The following story was recounted by an Ascension associate in 2019. As you read it, hold the definitions offered on the opposite side in mind and consider:

- *What went wrong?*
- *How might this situation have been handled differently?*

"The story I'd like to share is one of the care of a cardiac patient at one of our hospitals some 20 years ago. This patient was overtly racist. He insisted that there not be any Black members of the surgical team about to repair his heart. An ethics consultation was obtained and there was substantial discussion over how to handle this situation. Did the patient's autonomy extend to inflicting suffering and hate on another human being? Unfortunately, the surgeon chose to agree to the patient's wishes, did not hold his ground and the team was all white. I was not directly connected to this clinical event but it was widely discussed throughout the hospital. I thought about what would that have felt like to me if I were a Black member of the operative team? Several adjectives and adverbs came to mind but one of the important ones that sticks with me is the word lonely. What a terrible injury to inflict on another. First by a patient, who knew nothing about them, and then by a colleague, who did."

In your small group

- Try to imagine yourself as a particular person (i.e. surgeon, member of the surgical team, ethicist). What are you thinking and feeling?
- Share your thoughts on this story and the questions posed at the start
- Share a story from your experience when these principles of Catholic Social Teaching (Human Dignity, Common Good, Justice) were applied properly. What was the result?