

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Archbishop



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Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord Jesus,

During October, the Catholic Church in the United States draws special attention to the issues affecting human dignity in what is commonly known as “Respect Life Month.” Offenses against human beings...whether from abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, the death penalty, or in scientific experimentation...are discussed and prayed for with the intensity called for by their seriousness.

Just last month, the American people paused to remember those who died because of a callous and horrific disregard for human life: the attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001. What I found most touching about the 9/11 coverage were the stories of the impact that every person who died had on their family, friends, co-workers and community. The loss of each person reverberated far beyond their own lives to others. In remembering the attacks on our nation, Pope Benedict XVI noted that, “Every human life is precious in God’s sight and no effort should be spared in the attempt to promote throughout the world a genuine respect for the inalienable rights and dignity of individuals and peoples everywhere.”

One of the ways in which we show our “genuine respect” for the dignity of all people is by welcoming those with different abilities into our midst when we gather in our parishes for worship. Participation in *Inclusion Awareness Sunday*, sponsored by the Pathways Awareness Foundation, helps parish communities to learn about the different ways in which our facilities and our programs can be more mindful of those among us with physical or developmental disabilities so that they can fully participate in parish life.

However, to have a real and lasting impact, we must extend our efforts beyond Respect Life Month. I would ask each of you to consider taking one action every week throughout the year to welcome and include parishioners of all abilities into your parish family. Each one of us can participate in this effort; together we can open our communities so that everyone feels welcome to participate in worship, ministries and fellowship every day of the year.

You and those you love are in my prayers every day; please keep me and the needs of the Archdiocese of Chicago in yours.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis Cardinal George".

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago