The Catholic Church on Transhumanism

Catholic Faith Formation

July 4, 2021

The Catholic Church on Transhumanism

- What does this message say to you?
- Do you think people will believe this?
- What message would you like to share?

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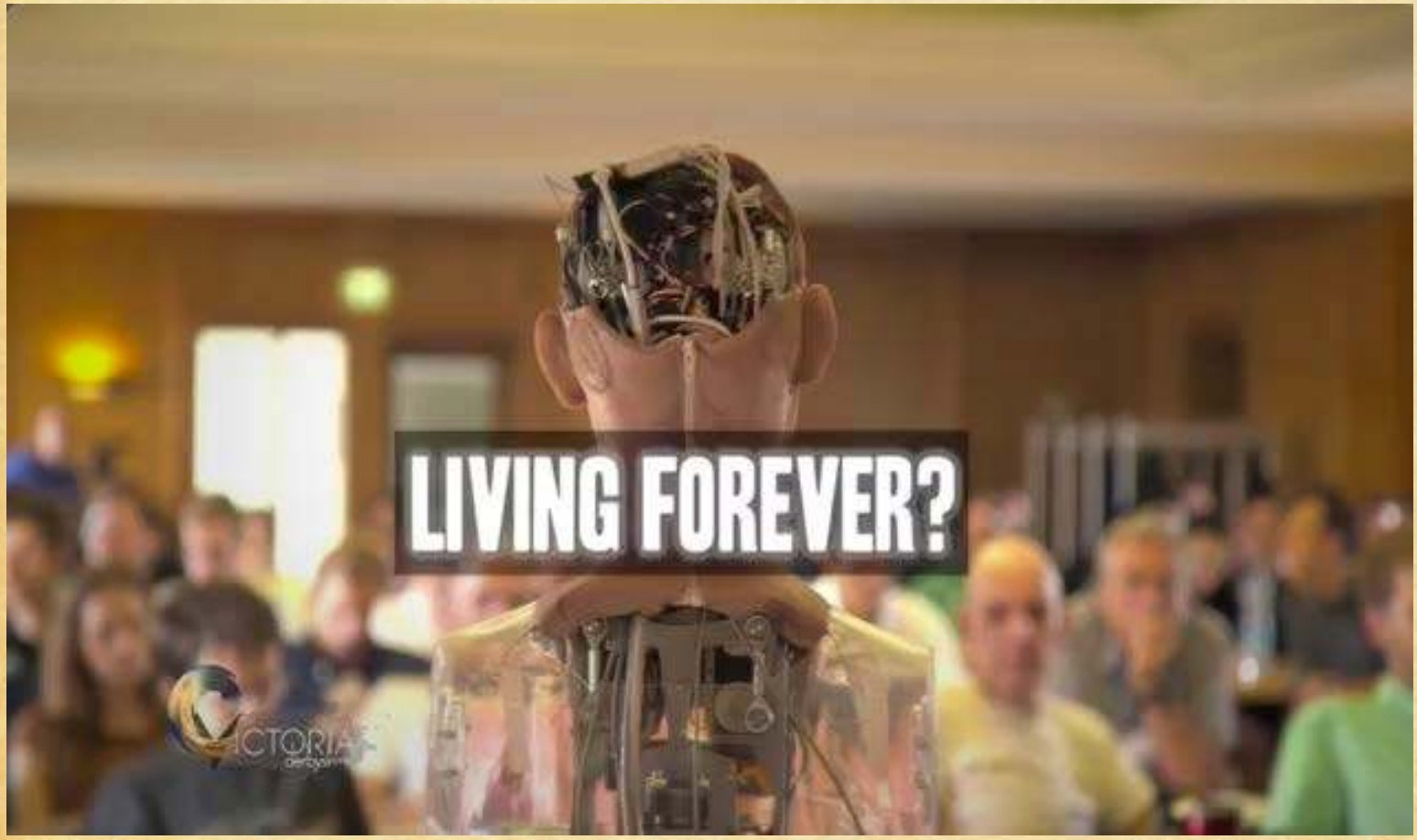

Transhumanism: Could we live forever? BBC News

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- Transhumanism and genetically altering people-today-s great ethical challenge

Transhumanism and genetically altering people, today's great ethical challenge – Rome Reports

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The Catholic Church and Artificial Intelligence - ENN 2019-04-09 - EWTN

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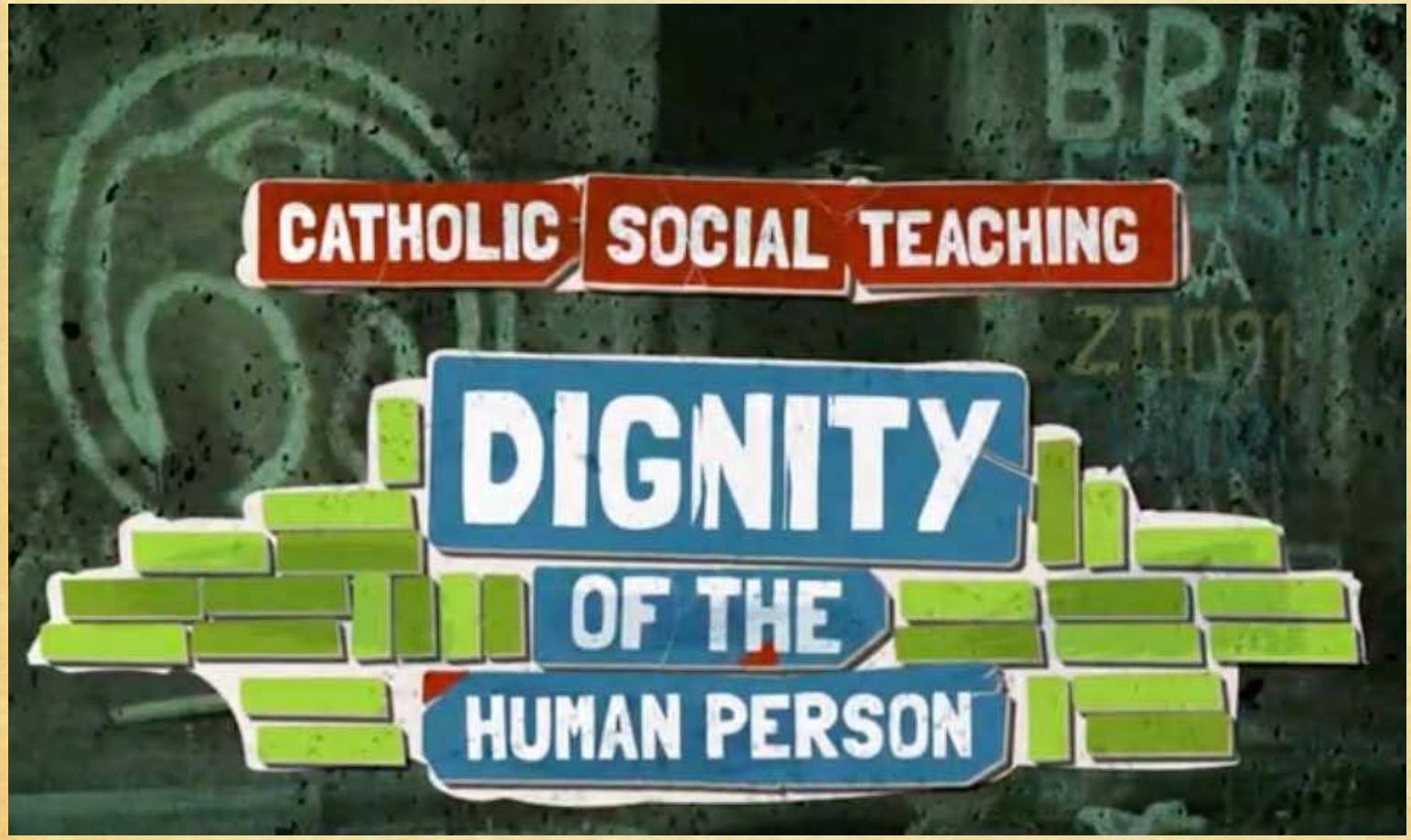

Catholic Social Teaching - Dignity of the human person – Caritas Australia

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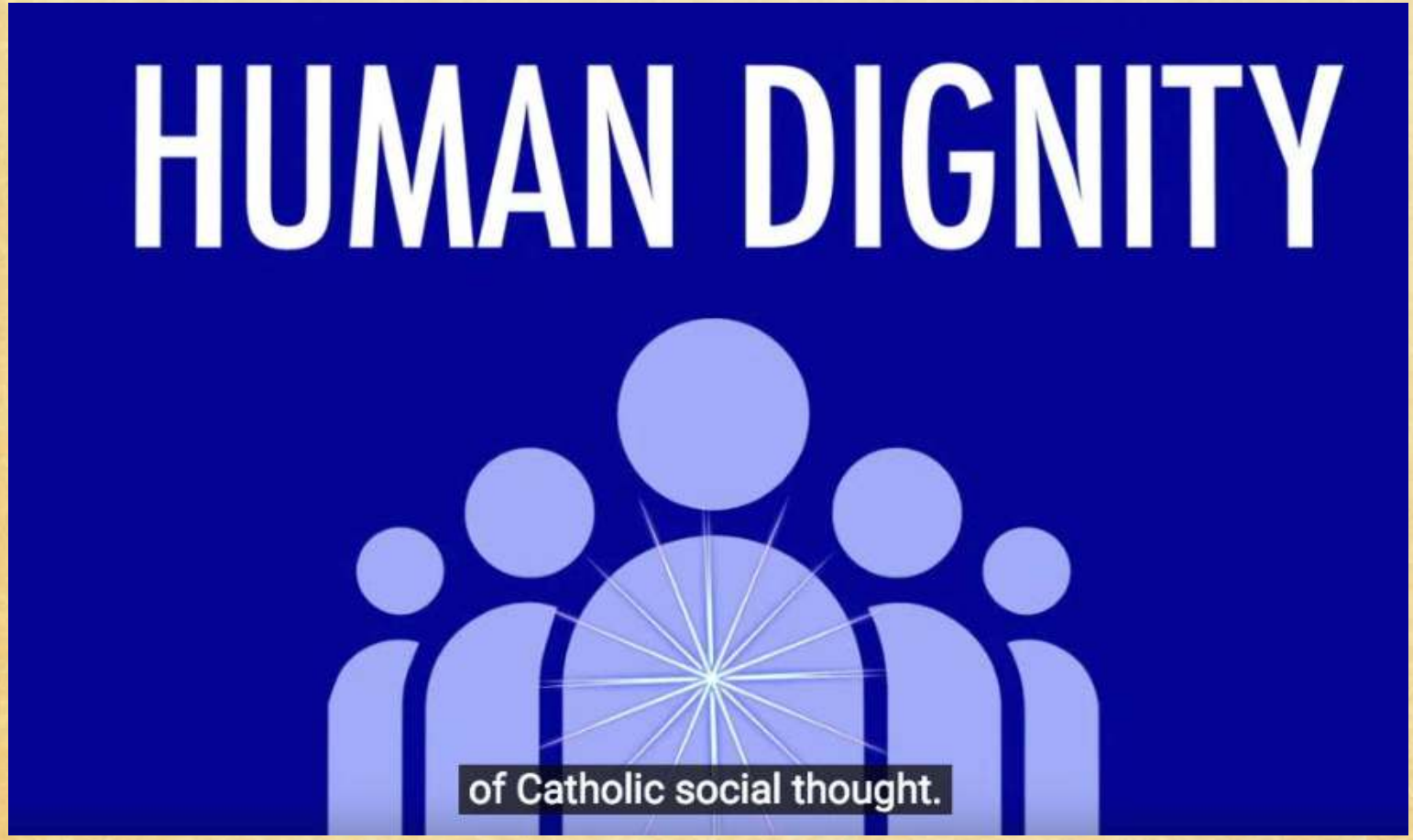

Human Dignity in Catholic Tradition - Duquesne University

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Father Gregor Mendel - The Father of Modern Genetics - Nature League

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Pope Saint John Paul II and the Meaning of Suffering – BBC News

SALVIFICI DOLORIS

The Salvific Meaning of Suffering - John Paul II

CONCLUSION

31. This is the meaning of suffering, which is truly supernatural and at the same time human. It is supernatural because it is rooted in the divine mystery of the Redemption of the world, and it is likewise deeply human, because in it the person discovers himself, his own humanity, his own dignity, his own mission.

Suffering is certainly part of the mystery of man. Perhaps suffering is not wrapped up as much asman is by this mystery, which is an especially impenetrable one. The Second Vatican Council expressed this truth that "...only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. In fact..., Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear"(100). If these words refer to everything that concerns the mystery of man, then they certainly refer in a very special way to

human suffering. Precisely at this point the "revealing of man to himself and making his supreme vocation clear" is particularly indispensable. It also happens as experience proves—that this can be particularly dramatic. But when it is completely accomplished and becomes the light of human life, it is particularly blessed. "Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful"(101).

I now end the present considerations on suffering in the year in which the Church is living the extraordinary Jubilee linked to the anniversary of the Redemption. The mystery of the Redemption of the world is in an amazing way rooted in suffering, and this suffering in turn finds in the mystery of the Redemption its supreme and surest point of reference. We wish to live this Year of the Redemption in special union with all those who suffer. And so there should come together in spirit beneath the Cross on Calvary all suffering people who believe in Christ, and particularly those who suffer because of their faith in him who is the Crucified and 29Risen One, so that the offering of their sufferings may hasten the fulfilment of the prayer of the Saviour himself that all may be one(102). Let there also gather beneath the Cross all people of good will, for on this Cross is the "Redeemer of man", the Man of Sorrows, who has taken upon himself the physical and moral sufferings of the people of all times, so that in love they may find the salvific meaning of their sorrow and valid answers to all of their questions.

Together with Mary, Mother of Christ, who stood beneath the Cross(103),we pause beside all the crosses of contemporary man.

We invoke all the Saints, who down the centuries in a special way shared in the suffering of Christ. We ask them to support us. And we ask all you who suffer to support us. We ask precisely you who are weak to become a source of strength for the Church and humanity. In the terrible battle between the forces of good and evil, revealed to our eyes by our modern world, may your suffering in union with the Cross of Christ be victorious!

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Suffering in Sacred Scripture

SD, Pope John Paul II par. 6

- The death of one's child; Lack of offspring
- Longing for homeland; National misfortune
- Persecution for Faith; Why wicked prosper and just suffer
- Mockery of sufferer; Loneliness and abandonment; Unfaithfulness of friends and followers
- Remorse of conscience

- #RC school; Recall advice suffering?

The New Eugenics Eliminating the Undesirables - Catholic Diocese of Richmond

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Benedict XVI, Enc *Spe Salvi* (In Hope We are Saved), 30 Nov 2007

- Co-suffering, companion (*cum pane* = with bread), compassion (*cum passione* = with suffering):

The true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer. This holds true both for the individual and for society. **A society unable to accept its suffering** members and incapable of helping to share their suffering and to bear it inwardly through "com-passion" is a cruel and **inhuman** society. (II, 38.)

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- **Can a Christian be a Transhumanist?**
  - What God calls us to do is *not* resurrecting the dead, but rather caring for the living.
  - *The best use of science and technology we can pursue is the elimination of disease and the potential to better meet human needs. Nevertheless, we ought to be careful; our support of given technologies and their aims must be directed toward God's aims and providential work, not taking the place of them. We have work enough on our hands without trying to take the place of the Divine.*

https://medium.com/faithtech/can-a-christian-be-a-transhumanist-93f67fc6fa6d

The Catholic Church on Transhumanism

- ***What God calls us to do is not resurrecting the dead, but rather caring for the living.***
  - But where is the line between working *with* God and taking *the place* of God? Christian theology tells us that the fundamental weakness of our first parents lay in their desire to *be like God* (Genesis 3:5). This is the root of sin, according to St. Augustine: *pride……..*
  - The key here, though, is that what God calls us to do is *not* resurrecting the dead, but rather caring for the living, as outlined in Matthew 25: feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, healing the sick and visiting the prisoner. This is what God Incarnate tells us we will be judged on. Our *hope* lies in the resurrection of the dead, but our *faith* in Christ calls us to act on behalf of the living.

https://medium.com/faithtech/can-a-christian-be-a-transhumanist-93f67fc6fa6d

The Catholic Church on Transhumanism

- **The Person, Fully Alive: Transhumanism and the Glory of God**
  - But rather than address the concerns of the transhumanists on their terms, we will take a step back and present a different vision, one that depends on a deeper (and older) meaning of the word "transhuman," one that sees the human person not as a thing to be technologically manipulated but – to quote St. John Paul II – as one "called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God."[6] The essential questions here are: what is a full human life and what does the rest of Creation have to do with it?

The Person, Fully Alive: Transhumanism and the Glory of God, Michael Dominic Taylor, Macrina Magazine

The Catholic Church on Transhumanism

- ***The Original Transhumanism***
  - From within this tradition, we find the solutions to all of man's misguided impulses. In the face of Neopaganism, we come back to the priority of the Creator over the creature. In the face of consumerism, we come back to the *poverty* of Francis and Thomas. In the face of the worship of the body, we come back to *chastity*. In the face of the power promised us by technology, we come back to *obedience*. Poverty, chastity and obedience, these are the three evangelical councils by which monks and nuns transformed Europe and built a Catholic culture, while – at the same time – creating a thriving network of sustainable local communities. To this day, the areas around Catholic shrines and monasteries are considered hotspots of biodiversity of great interest for conservation.[13]

The Person, Fully Alive: **Transhumanism and the Glory of God, Michael Dominic Taylor, Macrina Magazine**

The Catholic Church on Transhumanism

- Transhumanism, Catholic Culture -

Modern humanism, founded upon Enlightenment thought and modified by the influence of Nietzsche and Sartre, has several important features.

- It is secularist. The supernatural is excluded from consideration. Politically this expresses itself as the separation of Church and state.
- The scientist becomes the source of authority with respect to what we can know about the outside world.
- The outside world is nature, and only nature. The concern is for this life, and only this life.
- The social order is to be constructed by human beings based upon human reason and will. No consideration is given to any end or purpose of society or individual human life other than what we decide for ourselves.
- Humanism has its own mythology, particularly the myth of human progress — progress as advancement toward something allegedly better. Progress is measured by materialist standards: technological achievements, advances in medicine and improving the materialist quality of life. Evidence to the contrary is ignored or suppressed because this myth of progress is essential to the secularist program.
- Human nature has to be regarded as something plastic in the secularist world view, something that can be molded by our manipulation of the environment or genetics. If it was something objective, created by God, the myth of progress would be a meaningless proposition and the humanist program would collapse.
- A chief value is personal individual autonomy and pluralism. As an example of how this has embedded itself into law consider this statement from the decision in *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey,* a Supreme Court case in which the central holding of *Roe vs. Wade* was upheld:

Add to these features of secularism the powers given to us by technology, and the result is transhumanism. Transhumanism is the new face of eugenics, with this difference: in the older conception of eugenics human biological reproduction is limited by law or social pressure to those deemed to have the physical and intellectual qualifications defined by the ruling elite. It is like breeding horses or dogs. But the biology of reproduction remains natural. With transhumanism the biology is engineered.

Transhumanism, Adrian Calderone, Catholic Culture

The Catholic Church on Transhumanism

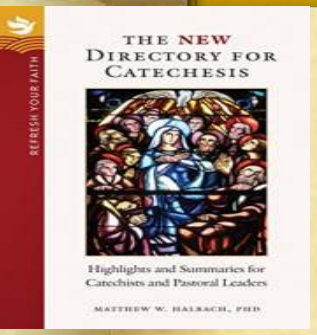
- The Church has begun to deal with transhumanism. The 2002 document of the International Theological Commission entitled *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God* addresses some of the issues I have mentioned. This document warns against mankind usurping the role of God. "Neither science nor technology are ends in themselves; what is technically possible is not necessarily also reasonable or ethical."[11] The document also deals with cloning, germ line genetic engineering, enhancement genetic engineering and therapeutic interventions.[12]

- But there is an ethical labyrinth to journey through that becomes ever more complex. In trying to help students find their way through complex philosophical ideas, one philosophy teacher used the metaphor of the golden string given by Ariadne to Theseus to find his way through the labyrinth after killing the Minotaur.'[13]

- What's our golden thread? How do we find our way through the ethical labyrinth of transhumanism? It has to be the fundamental principles derived from our religion. What does it mean to be a human person? What is our mission and destiny as human beings? If you exclude God from consideration there is no way through the labyrinth, even for well-meaning secularist philosophers such as Fukuyama who do see the dangers ahead.

- Through it all we have to remember that the world has lost sight of something precious — a vision seen only through the eyes of faith — the vision of something supernatural and eternal.[14] There will always be a little flame of faith shining in the wilderness of this world. The spirits of darkness are afraid of it and try to snuff it out, because as long as it shines there is the potential for the world to catch fire and for the grace of God to illuminate everything. As Catholics we have to keep this vision always in sight for ourselves and continually present it to the world.

Transhumanism, Adrian Calderone, Catholic Culture



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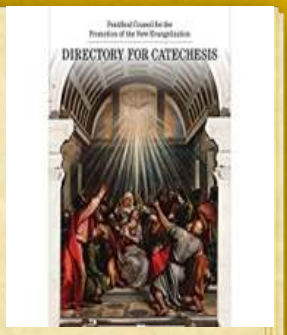

- Therefore, religion passes on the witness and message of integral humanism. This humanism, enriched by religion's identity, appreciates religion's great traditions such as: faith; respect for human life from conception until its natural end; and respect for the family, for community, for education and for work. These are opportunities and tools not of closure but of openness and dialogue with everyone and everything, leading to what is good and true. Dialogue remains the only possible solution, even when faced with the denial of religious sentiment, with atheism and agnosticism. (no. 315) Halbach, Matthew. The New Directory for Catechesis: Highlights and Summaries for Catechists and Pastoral Leaders (p. 31). Twenty Third Publications. Kindle Edition.

The New Directory for Catechesis: Highlights and Summaries for Catechists and Pastoral Leaders

The Catholic Church on Transhumanism

- Catechesis and Some Questions of Bioethics This section of the DC takes a look at anthropology through the lens of Catholic social teaching. Technology plays a key role in bioethics, which probes the rightness or wrongness of procedures and treatments and their impact on the human person. Catechesis should engage bioethics with the aim of preserving both individual human dignity and the common good:
  - *The main issues dealt with by bioethics refer to the beginning of life (status of the human embryo, medically assisted procreation...), to its end (definition of death, euthanasia, palliative care…), to health and human experimentation (genetic engineering, biotechnology…). (no. 373) Halbach, Matthew. The New Directory for Catechesis: Highlights and Summaries for Catechists and Pastoral Leaders (pp. 86-87). Twenty Third Publications. Kindle Edition.*