

A Prayer for an Increase in Respect for the Dignity of the Human Person: From the Perspective of a Young, Catholic (Almost) Nurse, About to Make Honoring Human Dignity Her Life's Goal.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

With your help, Jesus, I honor... *(repeat at the start of each line)*

The person lying sick in a hospital bed.

The person experiencing homelessness after a lifetime of injustice and pain.

The immigrant who moved here with the hope of a better life.

The child in the womb that is innocent of any wrongdoing.

The refugee who fled their country in fear and is now living in poverty.

The pregnant woman who is feeling scared and alone.

The elderly person who struggles to live independently as they once did.

The prisoner who lives day after day isolated from family and friends.

The person with disabilities who experiences the world so differently than those around them.

My friends

My family.

Every person whom I pass on the street.

When I fail to love my neighbor, Jesus, lend me your eyes that I may recognize the dignity of every single person I see.

When I am busy, Jesus, lend me your hands, that I may slow down and reach out to hold the hand of the person in my life who needs it.

When I am lazy, Jesus, lend me your feet that I may stand up and take active steps to serve the vulnerable around me.

When I am hungry, Jesus, unite me in solidarity with the hungry people in our world and lead me to the resources to help alleviate their hunger.

When I am selfish, Jesus, give me your selflessness on the cross, that I may empty myself out for Love of my brothers and sisters.

When I think only of myself, Jesus, lend me Your heart that I may embody Love and Mercy to every single person.

Heavenly Father, I am small, I am flawed, I am selfish. But through Your grace, allow me to see Christ in every single person, help me to lift them up, to love them with only a fraction of the love You have for them. Help me to remember: in honoring a fellow human person, I honor and glorify You. Amen.

The inspiration for this prayer was born through a desire to unite two of the most important aspects of who I am—my faith and nursing. I spent some time in reflection on what nursing means to me and how it connects to my faith. The fruit of that reflection is this: at its most basic, foundational level, the task of a nurse is to honor and respect the human dignity of her patients. It is from this foundation that everything must flow. How will the medications I am giving help my patient if they do not feel respected and dignified as a person? How will the surgery they underwent help them if they did not feel valued? From there I spent some time reflecting and praying on what does it truly mean though to honor someone's human dignity. That is such a huge task, how does one even do that? But after much time pondering on this question, I realized that to honor human dignity in someone is to recognize Christ alive in them. And the easiest way to do that is by asking Christ to give us His Spirit in every small moment.

It was this idea that grew into the prayer I created. We have dignity because God created us in His image, imbuing us with a spirit that differentiates us from all other created beings. But we as people are small and weak, and the idea of trying to see Christ in people felt too daunting and theologically intense for me. It was at this point in my prayer where I'm sure Jesus was sitting there chuckling, patiently waiting for me to recognize that is exactly the point. We aren't supposed to be able to do this on our own! He challenges us with these difficult tasks for a reason—that we will turn to Him so He can hold our hand and lead the way. This inspired the second half of the prayer; I wanted to ask Christ to show me how to transform common human struggles (laziness, hunger, selfishness) into something that dignifies the people around me, through Him lending His own spiritual attributes to me.

I just spent four years of college uniting my studies of nursing with various theological and intellectual studies in the Catholic Studies Minor. The Catholic intellectual heritage and the role of a nurse are deeply interconnected for me now. To me, nursing is more than a medical profession rooted in science and evidence, it is also the place that Christ is calling me to serve the people around me, no matter who they are or their circumstance in life. To truly honor and serve my patients means that I recognize Christ alive in every single one of them, and the only way I know how to do that is to ask Jesus to take me by the hand and show me how to be more like Him. This is the goal and mission of my career: to heal through science that is rooted honoring human dignity.