

When dad gets home at night, kids don't usually run up to him and say, "Thanks dad, for working all day we have food." Nor do they say "Thanks, mom, for preparing this meal." After Sunday Mass, people don't usually run to the priest and say "Thank you, Father, for offering Mass with us."

We receive, I hope, expressions of esteem or gratitude on birthdays and anniversaries ... but don't ordinarily expect them otherwise because, as Jesus in the Gospel says, we are doing what is our obligation, what is expected of us, what we're supposed to do. If you support your church, or do your duties as a mother or father or friend or child, don't expect a thanks each time. It's our obligation.

But we do sometimes need to be reminded of our obligations. Today is Respect Life Sunday, a time when the Church reminds us it's the obligation of each Catholic to respect human life and all human persons. We need today's reminder ... because we live in the United States ... and in the United States there is so much disrespect.

Would you please take the cards in your hands and let's read some of the convictions we have about respecting human life.

(Women) Every person, at each stage of life, is an image of God and deserves respect.

(Men) Every person has rights: life, security, food, shelter, worship, education, decent work and wage, rest.

(Women) Creating a just society --- where all receive respect and rights --- is the obligation of every person.

(Men) Victims of gross injustice deserve our first attention.

(All) Catholics respect each person, at every stage of life.

So ... we teach our children to respect everyone, even people they don't like. We insist on respect in the family, in church, in school and in public.

And we confess our sins of disrespect for life, especially sins like abortion, racism, evil gossip or bad manners.

And we turn to God to stir into flame our faith and hope. We don't insist that God thanks us every 5 seconds for living a respectful life. It is our obligation. But we do know that, in the way God knows is best, and especially on the last day, God will reward us for every good deed more than we can possibly imagine.

Because God respects and honors human life.