



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

June 19, 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

Today our country marks “Freedom Day” or “Juneteenth Celebration Day”, recalling June 19, 1865, the day on which news reached enslaved persons in Texas of their “absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property”. While coming two years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, this day was a crucial step toward establishing equal justice before the law, recalling the dignity of every human person.

A recent Vatican document on the topic of human dignity reminds us, as Catholics, that “from the start of her mission and propelled by the Gospel, the Church has striven to affirm human freedom and promote the rights of all people.” Quoting Pope St. Paul VI it went on to recall that “no anthropology equals that of the Church regarding the human person—particularly concerning the person’s originality, dignity, the intangibility and richness of the person’s fundamental rights, sacredness, capacity for education, aspiration to a complete development, and immortality.”

Today we do well to reflect on our rich tradition of affirming the dignity of every human person, of every race. In light of this, let us consider the ways in which we can work together, in a spirit of genuine solidarity, to build up a culture within the Church and our broader society in which human dignity is appreciated, defended, and built up from conception until natural death.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore