

Not long ago I was driving down the highway, when a car with pro-life bumper stickers went speeding by, way past the limit. Maybe the driver had a reason for speeding; who am I to judge? But if there was no justification other than "I want to," and if the driver will not slow down, then at the very least the bumper stickers should be removed. Why?

Because the behavior – exceeding the speed limit – contradicts the message of the bumper stickers, even holds it up to ridicule. A speed limit is set for the common good of society, intended to reduce the probability and severity of car accidents, which is motivated by respect for human life and dignity.

We can't be advocates of life issues and at the same time be indifferent to issues related to the common good or human dignity. And the other way around is equally irrational, being advocates of justice issues while indifferent to the right to life; this is not a case of either/or, but rather both/and.

In a just society, it is expected that everyone will have respect for the common good and for the life *and* dignity of all people, from the moment of conception, and all through life, to the point of natural death (which is hopefully not caused by a speeding car).

We might disagree about how to provide people with what's needed to live in dignity – the fundamental right to life, productive work and fair wages, food and shelter, education and health care, protection from harm and freedom to emigrate – but we must agree that all people have a right to them, and that we have a duty to help protect life and to provide for the common good.

This is a *lifestyle* for all people in a just society, but especially for Catholics, who are called to be like our heavenly Father: perfect, that is, without reservation or condition in our practice of justice and mercy; less focused on my rights, more on my duty to others, even going beyond what strict justice provides for; not living just for me, because "I want to," but for thee, for we.