



THE PARISH OF ST. VINCENT FERRER AND ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

CHURCH OF ST. VINCENT FERRER: 869 Lexington Ave, New York, NY 10065

CHURCH OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA: 411 East 68th Street, New York, NY 10065

www.svsc.info | (212) 744-2080 | parish@svsc.info

September 4, 2016 — 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

LABOR DAY - SEPTEMBER 5TH

In observance of the federal and state holiday of Labor Day, there will be one Mass at St. Vincent Ferrer at 8:00 AM, and one Mass at St. Catherine of Siena at 9:00 AM. The churches will close immediately after Mass. The church offices will also be closed on Monday, September 5th.

EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

On Wednesday, September 14, we will commemorate the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross with a Sung Mass at 6:30 PM at St. Catherine of Siena. After Mass, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place through the night, concluding before the 7 AM Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

PARISH VESPERS

Parish Vespers will begin on Sunday, September 18 at St. Vincent Ferrer. A chant class will be taught by our Music Director, James Wetzels, at 4:30 PM, followed by Vespers at 5:15 PM.

PARISH INVOLVEMENT

After all Masses the weekend of September 18, representatives of our various committees and groups will be available to speak with those who would like to deepen their involvement in the parish.

PARISH STUDY

On Tuesday, September 13 at 6:45 PM we will begin our new series of Parish Study lectures in the Parish Hall at St. Vincent Ferrer. This Fall we will focus on the Book of Psalms. Fr. Innocent will introduce the series with a talk on "Why the Psalms?"

CHRISTMAS FAIR PLANNING MEETING

On Tuesday, September 13, at 7:00 pm, parishioners are invited to the first planning meeting for our Annual Christmas Fair in St. Dominic Hall at the Church of St. Catherine of Siena. At this meeting, we will discuss the planning and organization of our three-day fair which will be held from December 2-4. If you cannot attend this meeting, but would still like to be involved in the planning of this event, please contact Kim Quatela at 203-520-5089 or kburde3@gmail.com.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION FOR ADULTS

RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) is a program for adults who wish to become Catholic. Our parish RCIA program will begin in mid-September 2016. Those who are considering enrolling should contact the parish office to set up an appointment with Fr. Innocent Smith, O.P.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

On September 15, the Social Concerns Committee will start our bingo games for the women living at the Park Avenue Armory. Last bingo season, our parish provided enough items for almost 1100 prizes. These gifts were greatly appreciated by the women. As usual we need handbags, baseball caps, tops, sweat pants, socks, medium to large size bottles of shampoo, conditioner, face wash, body wash, body lotion, hair brushes and combs... tooth brushes and toothpaste...cologne, and slightly used jewelry. Anything you think the women would use. Kindly leave your donations at the Parish Office.

MASS AND CONFESSIONS ST. VINCENT FERRER

SATURDAY VIGIL: 6:00 PM

SUNDAY: 8:00 AM, 12:00 PM,
6:00 PM

WEEKDAYS: 8:00 AM, 12:10 PM,
6:00 PM

SATURDAY: 8:00 AM

Confessions

SATURDAY: 5:00–5:50 PM

WEEKDAYS: 5:20–5:50 PM

Adoration

WEDNESDAYS: 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

SATURDAY VIGIL: 4:00 PM

SUNDAY: 10:00 AM, 5:00 PM

WEEKDAYS: 7:00 AM, 5:15 PM

SATURDAY: 9:00 AM

Confessions

SATURDAY: 3:00–3:50 PM

WEEKDAYS: 4:40–5:05 PM

LITURGY OF THE HOURS & OTHER PRAYER ST. VINCENT FERRER

MONDAY–FRIDAY:

7:40 AM (MORNING PRAYER)

5:30 PM (OFFICE OF READINGS
AND EVENING PRAYER)

WEDNESDAY:

6:30 PM (ROSARY)

7:30 PM (HOLY HOUR)

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

THURSDAY:

4:00 PM (HOLY HOUR)

MONDAY–FRIDAY:

5:00 PM (ROSARY)

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP
PRAYER GROUP:

WEDNESDAY 6:30 PM

QUEEN OF PEACE PRAYER GROUP:

SATURDAY 9:30 AM

PARISH OFFICE

St. Vincent Ferrer
869 Lexington Ave, NY, NY 10065
(212) 744-2080 | parish@svsc.info
Office Hours: Monday–Friday:
9 am–1 pm, 2–5 pm

St. Catherine of Siena
411 East 68th Street, NY, NY 10065
Office Hours:
Monday – Friday: 10 am–3 pm

PARISH STAFF

Very Rev. Walter Wagner, OP
Pastor

Rev. Joseph Allen, OP
Vicar

Rev. Albert Paretsky, OP
Vicar

Rev. Innocent Smith, OP
Vicar for Formation

Bro. Damian McCarthy, OP
Sacristan

Deacon John F. Powers
Lee Ann Rubino
Business Manager

James D. Wetzel
Director of Music and Organist

Lisa Harrelson
Director of Catechesis and
Youth Ministry

Rachel Miller
Administrative Assistant

Sr. Padraic Mary McGuinness, OP
Receptionist

Tony Hicks
Church Custodian

Tracey Hicks
Church Custodian

ST. VINCENT FERRER HIGH SCHOOL

(212) 535-4680
Sr. Gail Morgan, OP
Principal

PARISH INFORMATION

REGISTRATION

Please register as a member of our parish if this is where you regularly attend Mass. Registration forms are available in the Parish Office, or online at www.svsc.info/register.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

To arrange for the baptism of a child, call the Parish Office. Baptisms are usually celebrated on Saturdays, but other arrangements may be made depending upon the circumstances. A baptism preparation class is held at St. Vincent Ferrer on the second Saturday of the month at 12 PM. Please call the Parish Office to register.

SACRAMENTS OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION AND FIRST RECONCILIATION

Youth participate in the sacramental preparation program coordinated by Lisa Harrelson (lharrelson@svsc.info).

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Youth participate in the sacramental preparation program coordinated by Lisa Harrelson (lharrelson@svsc.info). Adults who have not been confirmed should inquire with the Parish Office about preparing for confirmation.

SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

To begin making arrangements for a wedding at St. Vincent Ferrer or St. Catherine of Siena, contact the Parish Office to arrange a meeting with a priest. More information is available at www.svsc.info/weddings.

SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Please contact the Parish Office if you or a loved one would like to receive the Anointing of the Sick at the parish, at a nearby hospital, or at home (for those who are homebound).

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)

RCIA is a class for adults interested in becoming Catholic. To learn more, contact Fr. Innocent Smith, OP, at the Parish Office.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

For information and/or registration for classes held at St. Vincent Ferrer or St. Catherine of Siena, contact Lisa Harrelson (lharrelson@svsc.info).

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

Parish Study is a program for adults interested in learning more about the Catholic faith. It meets on Tuesday evenings in the Fall and Spring. To learn more, contact the Parish Office or check our website at www.svsc.info.

YOUNG ADULTS

St. Vincent Ferrer often hosts events of the New York Frassati Fellowship. For more information, visit www.frassatiny.com.

MASS INTENTIONS
ST. VINCENT FERRER

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4
6:00 pm (Vigil) Maria Corso (D)
8:00 am Christopher Dominiak (D)
12 pm Peter Priolo (D)
6:00 pm Alice Kelley (D)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5
8:00 am For the Deceased Friends &
Benefactors of the Order
12:10 pm No Mass (Labor Day)
6:00 pm No Mass (Labor Day)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6
8:00 am For the Christians in the
Middle East
12:10 pm For the People of
the Parish
6:00 pm George Bugeja (D)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7
8:00 am William & Rose Marotti
(D)
12:10 pm Theresa Maniyangat (D)
6:00 pm Arthur David Hill (D)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8
8:00 am Mary Silveira (D)
12:10 pm Jeanne Gorski (D)
6:00 pm Special Intention

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
8:00 am Fr. William C.
Cunningham, S.J. (D)
12:10 pm Jack, Natalie, Marie, &
Francis Egan O'Brien (D)
6:00 pm Catherine & Patrick
McGlade (D)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10
8:00 am Raymond (D) & Marcella
(L) Cruz Hicks

MASS INTENTIONS
ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4
4:00 pm (Vigil) Peggy Loughran (D)
10:00 am For the patrons of the
Shrine of Saint Jude
5:00 pm Maria Cecilia Punzalan

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5
9:00 am Thomas Lynch (D)
5:15 pm No Mass (Labor Day)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6
7:00 am For the Province of
St. Joseph
5:15 pm Lalla Galletti

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7
7:00 am For the Victims of the
Earthquake
5:15 pm Mary Ellen Jordan (D)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8
7:00 am Rev. Damian O'Connell,
S.J., & Three Generations of
Family in honor of Kristin Julia
O'Connell (L)
5:15 pm Josie Fortune

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
7:00 am St. Catherine of Siena
Purgatorial Society (D)
5:15 pm Cesar DeCamps

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10
9:00 am Louis J. Schneider (D)

PARISH PRAYER
INTENTIONS

*Contact the Parish Office to add a
name to this list*

Len Bencivenga, Monica Farren,
Adrienne Fashay, Sr. Timothy
Goettisheim, O.P., Christopher
Heath, Rev. Chris Johnson, O.P.,
Helen Johnson, Carolyn Kelly, John
Kelly, Sarah McDermott, Ann
Morris, Stephen Osso, & Aquila
Zacharilla.

Please pray for the repose of the souls
of Pat Keegan, Wayne Rudolph, &
Gerald Westminster, and the souls of
all our recently deceased.

We continue to pray for the sick, the
dying, and their families in Memorial
Sloan Kettering Cancer Center,
NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, the
Hospital for Special Surgery, and
Rockefeller University Hospital.

CANDLE INTENTIONS

The seven-day candles are available for
an offering of \$15 each.

St. Vincent - Sanctuary Lamps
Rene Concepcion (d); Ramon &
Fernando Gonzalez (l); William J.
Schwede, Jr. (d); Mary Wilson (d);
Intention of Donor; Intention of
Donor; Special Intention

St. Vincent - Sanctuary Madonna
Jack Ryan Keegan (l)

St. Vincent - Pieta Lamp
Well-being of Christians in the
Middle East

St. Catherine - Mary Candle
Priscilla Ventigan

St. Catherine - Sanctuary Lamp
Kristin Julia O'Connell
Rev. Damian O'Connell, S.J. &
Family

Mass Intentions may be reserved in the Parish Office Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, and in the Church Office of St. Catherine of Siena Monday through Friday, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

SHARED WORK

These days invite us to consider work, and perhaps we do so from a variety of angles. Some of us are grateful for the work we have, and some of us are longing to have any kind of work at all. Work fulfills many of us profoundly, and others it oppresses in equal measure. For many, work is something to resume at this time; others have come to summer's end without letting up and their frustration simmers.

Perhaps we take note more slowly of work we share. Some things rate as group tasks. For example, presidential elections are a common work of the whole national electorate. In general people feel obliged to ponder the options and come to some kind of decision, even if they do not actually vote. For most of us this discernment includes talking to our friends and trading thoughts back and forth. Everyone engages this endeavor in some way, unless they avoid every means of public communication.

Moments like this elicit a desire to be part of them. Fourth of July fireworks offer a great visual and sonic spectacle, but they also put us in touch with the gift of being a resident of the United States, and so people drive, walk, and sail to be part of them, or they make sure to bring a national moment into their living room via TV.

The time for a very solemn shared work approaches. It will be our task to remember those who died in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In remembering them, we also recall the horror that overtook them and deplore the attacks on innocent life that have followed in its wake. This is to stand for the sanctity of lives, and for the holiness of life; shared life at work, at play, and at worship. We assert the godliness of ordinary life; in building things, in raising children, and in making love. The fifteenth anniversary of 9/11 falls on a Sunday, and so we are positioned to participate as a community in this city's, and this nation's, shared task of commemoration.

We will commemorate these fallen at the 10 AM High Mass at St. Catherine's. After Mass, there will be procession to the Altar of the Holy Souls for prayers. Since this altar is a "purgatorial" altar, it invites us to remember that for God all souls live and that Christ's redemptive purpose is never frustrated except by explicit rejection. Terrorism never has success against God.

May we, in this liturgy, disabuse ourselves about the capacity of violence either to change our minds or to make us afraid. May we harken again to the clarity and absolute power of the Cross of Christ.

As God's providence would have it the feast of the Cross follows 9/11 by three days. On Wednesday, September 14 we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and its companion, the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows follows the next day. The Passion of the Lord and the Compassion of the Sorrowful Mother together speak volumes about God's regard for those who suffer and those who walk with them.

How privileged is our parish to have so close at hand the mysteries of passion and compassion. The patients at Sloan Kettering, New York Presbyterian, and the Hospital for Special Surgery, as well as the residents of Mary Manning Walsh Home have the help of doctors, nurses, and scientists who undertake the shared work of restoring health. They have the support of family and friends who want them back to normal. But, at some point, the sick and the elderly and those who care for them must face together the limits of human health and life with dignity and clarity. Even with all our advances we have not escaped suffering, and suffering with.

Perhaps this experience can strengthen our faith as we pray about the world's great sufferings of late. Human violence and natural disaster have handed out a great deal of pain to innocent people. So September 14 and 15 offer us a chance for solidarity with those suffering close at hand and far away.

Here is an invitation to our parish to take on another shared work, one of prayer. We would like offer a night of prayer with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament as an intercession for those we know who suffer, and those we do not know, especially victims of terror. These latter would include:

- those trapped in Syrian towns and cities.
- those caught in the domain of Isis.
- those made to flee their homelands by violence.
- those lives disrupted physically or emotionally by terrorists.

This night of prayer will take place at St. Catherine of Siena Church, in the heart of the hospital neighborhood. It will begin with a Sung Mass for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross at 6:30 PM followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament through the night until the 7 AM Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. Common prayer will punctuate the silence in various ways. But nothing is so lovely as the shared silence of common intercession. You can pray for your loved ones and for the world and know fellow travelers around you are doing the same.

Some may be moved to spend the whole night in prayer, others may come for an hour before or after work, but the deepest beauty of the prayer lies in the shared enterprise of it. In the end our witness to faith, and against violence, is that for Christians, suffering incites not the scattering of fear but the communion of charity.

Blessings to you at summer's end.



Religious Education

in the Parish of St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Catherine of Siena
Registration Form • 2016-2017

Child's First Name _____ Last Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Child's School for 2016-2017 _____ Grade in School 2016-2017 _____ Parish _____

I am interested in registering my child for: (*Sessions begin the Week of September 18, 2016*)

- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level 1 for **3-year-olds – Kindergarten**: Sundays 10:00 – 11:15 a.m.
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level 1 for **3-year-olds – Kindergarten**: Thursdays 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level 2 for **1st grade – 3rd grade**: Sundays 11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level 2 for **1st grade – 3rd grade**: Sundays 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level 2 for **1st grade – 3rd grade**: Wednesdays 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level 2 for **1st grade – 3rd grade**: Thursdays 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level 3 for **4th grade – 6th grade**: Mondays 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

- Graded Program **4th grade /5th grade /6th grade** at **St. Vincent Ferrer**: Tuesdays 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
Please indicate which grade level: _____

- Ignite Youth Ministry for **7th grade – 8th grade**: Mondays 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Sacramental information about my child:

- Yes No My child has received the Sacrament of First Reconciliation.
- Yes No My child has received the Sacrament of First Holy Communion.
- Yes No My child has received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Annual Fee for 2016-2017 – \$250 per child	Amount paid:	
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Please make checks payable to "Parish of St. Vincent Ferrer & St. Catherine of Siena". Tuition is due in full on the first day of the session. We accept registrations on a "first come, first served" basis. Please contact us within the first 3 weeks to receive a 75% refund of the annual fee. After the first 3 weeks, fees are non-refundable. *CGS Level 1 only*: In the first 3 weeks of the CGS Level I sessions, we assess if the child is ready. If the child is too young (i.e., not potty-trained, not able to follow instructions), we will ask them to wait 6 months. Please contact **Lisa Harrelson, Coordinator of Religious Education**, with any questions you may have at: **(212) 988-8300, ext. 186** or **lharrelson@svsc.info**. ***Other than the Graded Program on Tuesdays, all sessions will be held at the St. Catherine of Siena Priory.***

By signing below, I understand and agree to the policies above.

Parent Name (print) _____ **Parent Signature:** _____

Date: _____ **Phone Number:** _____ **Email:** _____

Please return your completed form and payment to:

FAITH AND ETHICS FORUM - 2016-2017

An Open Invitation to All Students of the Health Professions

How can I guide patients, families and colleagues in decisions about complex moral issues?

Why are moral distress and moral relativism so evident in today's health care environment?

Why are conscience clauses important in the delivery of health care services?

What is happening to the dignity and freedom of the sick in the new health reform agenda?

How does the Catholic moral tradition inform and guide my practice?

These and many more questions are the focus of a new series of small group discussions facilitated by the Dominican Friars Health Care Ministry of New York. Monthly discussions provide a vehicle and a place where medical and nursing students and all students of the health professions (including interns, residents and fellows) of all faiths can come together for discussions about faith and contemporary ethical issues in health care which affect their lives as persons and as clinicians in a continuously changing health care delivery system.

Forums are held on the third Sunday of each month from 6:30 to 8:00 PM (except for June, July and August) in St. Dominic Hall following the 5:00 PM Mass at St. Catherine of Siena Church, 411 E. 68th Street, New York, NY. There is no charge for this series but an RSVP email is required. Light refreshments are served. Forums for the 2016-17 academic year are scheduled for: **September 18, October 16, November 20, January 15, February 19, March 19, April 23 and May 21.**

For more information or if you would like to participate please contact Bro. Ignatius Perkins, OP, Executive Director (brotherignatius@dfhcmny.org) or one of the Student Coordinators: Grace McNerney (gemac612@gmail.com), Jessica Edgecomb (Jessica_Edgecomb@nyc.edu).

PURGATORIAL SOCIETY

Each Friday, the 7 AM Mass at St. Catherine of Siena is offered for the deceased enrolled in the St. Catherine's Purgatorial Society. Enrollment of a deceased family member or friend is available in the church office for \$35.

COLLECTIONS

AUGUST 28, 2016

St. Vincent Ferrer

Regular Offertory: \$9,552

Attendance: 590

St. Catherine of Siena

Regular Offertory: \$3,725

Attendance: 334

PARISH CHOIR

The Parish Choir seeks additional members! The Parish Choir will begin its season by singing for a Mass at 10:00 AM for the 15th Anniversary of the terrorist attacks on Sunday, September 11th at Saint Catherine of Siena. Rehearsals for Mass will be on Sunday mornings from 9:00-10:00 AM in Saint Dominic's Hall in the Priory of Saint Catherine's; there will be no weeknight rehearsals, which we hope will allow more people to participate! Anyone interested in finding out more or joining the Choir should contact James Wetzel, the Director of Music, at jwetzel@svsc.info or (412) 951-7441.

LAY FRATERNITIES OF ST. DOMINIC

Our Lady of the Assumption Chapter of the LFSD meets on the third Thursday, for approximately two hours each month, directly after attending the 6:00 pm parish Mass in St. Vincent Ferrer Church (meeting in the Parish Center, street level, left of Priory stairs). Dominican Laity share deeply the spiritual charisms of the Dominican Order, while remaining in the lay state. More information is available at <http://www.laydominicans.com>.

CENTER FOR LEARNING AND LIVING

The Center for Learning and Living, Inc., a non-profit school for people 55+, offers St. Catherine's and St. Vincent's parishioners a special discount on its courses, in thanks for the church allowing us to rent classroom space. Our 8-week fall semester starts September 20, with classes on a wide variety of interesting topics in the daytime on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. For the discounted fee of \$235, parishioners can sign up for as many courses as they like. Topics include literature, poetry, the Middle East, U.S. politics, constitutional law, film, and historical figures. The full course schedule and more information about CL&L is online at clandl.org or people interested in learning more can call (212) 644-3320. CL&L will also have a table at the 3rd Ave. Street Fair between 69th and 70th Streets Sept. 11 from 10-6. First-time students can attend classes free the first week.

PARISH OFFERTORY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Beginning September 1st, all checks for the Parish should be made payable to the Parish of St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Catherine of Siena.

As of September 11th the new offertory envelopes will be distributed. There will be a gap for those who have been receiving envelopes for St. Catherine's, for September 4th. Please submit your offertory in a Welcome envelope or a personal envelope, making sure to include your name and address, for recording purposes.



DFHCM of NY

DOMINICAN FRIARS HEALTH CARE
MINISTRY OF NEW YORK

Reflections on Ethics, Faith & Health Care

EDITOR: FR. JONAH POLLOCK, O.P., S.T.L.

The BEGINNING of HUMAN LIFE

By Fr. Jonah Pollock, O.P., S.T.L., Associate Director, Dominican Friars Health Care Ministry of New York

I HAVE WRITTEN PREVIOUSLY ABOUT THE DIGNITY AND VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE, BUT AS WE NOW REFLECT UPON ETHICAL MATTERS CONCERNING HUMAN LIFE AT ITS BEGINNINGS, THOSE CONSIDERATIONS BEAR REPEATING:

HUMAN LIFE IS A PRECIOUS GIFT FROM GOD. In its very first chapter, the Bible tells us, “God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them” (Gen 1:27). Human beings are made in God’s image, which accounts for the surpassing dignity and value of human life. We see that dignity most especially in the spiritual souls with which human beings are endowed, giving them the capacity to know and to love. The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it this way: “Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons” (CCC 357). Because human beings are endowed with such dignity, human life is to be respected and protected. This is the basis for the fifth commandment: “You shall not kill” (Ex 20:13). Human life is inviolable. As the Catechism says, “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (CCC 2258).

THE CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING of the dignity and value of human beings is based on what God has revealed to us in Sacred Scripture and in the living Tradition of the Church. It is also deeply indebted to classical Greek philosophy. The Greek Philosopher Aristotle, in particular, articulates an understanding of human beings as composed of body and soul that is implicit in much of the Church’s theology and in many of her teachings. According to this Christian appropriation of Aristotelian anthropology, human beings, like all living things in this material creation, are composed of soul and body. The soul is the principle that gives unity, shape, and life to the body. The soul makes a thing the individual sort of living thing that it is. Fido the dog, for example, is an individual living dog so long as his dog soul is united with his dog body. Human beings are unique, however, in that they are endowed with spiritual souls by which they can reason intelligently and choose freely, by which

they are made able to imitate the knowledge and love of God. The spiritual souls of human beings are also unique in their capacity to remain alive once they are separated from their bodies in the event we call death. Nevertheless, a human being, similar to every other living thing, can be identified when a human soul is united to a human body.

THIS LAST CONSIDERATION is important because, in order to accord to human beings the honor and respect they deserve, we must be able to determine what is and what is not a human being. That is, we need to know when a human soul is united to a human body, in other words, when human life begins and ends.

DETERMINING THE PRECISE MOMENT of a human being’s death is difficult. Even deciding on the proper criteria to be used in making this determination is complicated and controversial. Fortunately, determining when human lives begin is easy. Contemporary science makes it clearer than ever that human life begins at conception.

THE FACT THAT HUMAN LIFE BEGINS at conception, at the moment when the sperm fertilizes the egg and a human zygote is formed with a genetic identity distinct from both parents, is commonly acknowledged. Even the most outspoken proponents of so-called “abortion rights” have long admitted that this is a biological certainty. At the present time, with advancements in embryology and the development of imaging technologies like sonograms, the question of when life begins is not at all difficult to answer and consensus has been reached.

HOWEVER, THE MORAL QUESTIONS – the questions about how we treat human beings at the beginning stages of life – are not commonly agreed upon. Consensus on these questions has not been reached. Many people who recognize that human life begins at conception do not conclude that, in their early stages, human lives are inviolable, deserving honor and respect. Despite this lack of agreement in contemporary society, the Catholic Church offers clear answers to many of the moral questions concerning the treatment of human beings at the beginning stages of life. These will be the subjects of future reflections.