

## **ELIZABETH ORLOWSKI ..... Age 18, Grade 12**

In 500 words or less, answer the following prompt: "What can I do now, and what would I like to do in the future, to promote a Culture of Life in our Country?"

To promote the inviolable life and dignity of the human person, each person must first show respect in his own life. "There are men who, although professing to be Catholics," said Pope Pius XI, "are almost completely unmindful of that sublime law of justice and charity." (Quadragesimo Anno, 125) How can a man have any effect on others if his own actions in any way contradict what he teaches? From his relationship to himself and God to his relationship with others, the principle of human dignity applies to every aspect of his life. To eradicate a weed, one must pull at the root, for the herbicides of argumentation and protest are but temporary hindrances. Pope Leo XIII identified the loss of religion as the foremost cause for the disrespect of today's society. "Exclude the idea of futurity," he explained, "And forthwith the very notion of what is good and right would perish." (Rerum Novarum, 21) It would be idealist to imagine that each flawed and biased man could be converted; simply to impress upon him the importance of a moral life would be a significant success. As charity starts at home, respect for the human person begins with oneself. Each person must first learn to treat himself as a temple of God by taking care of his physical and spiritual well-being. This applies to everything from personal hygiene to daily prayer. According to Pius XI, "Christian education takes in the whole aggregate of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social, not with a view of reducing it in any way, but in order to elevate, regulate and perfect it, in accordance with the example and teaching of Christ." (Divini Illius Magistri, 95) The happy and authentic example of christian life is more convincing than any logical argument. Just as Saint T  r  se performed little deeds of goodness, one can inspire others in his speech, attitude, and actions.

Leading by example is the immediate goal; the next step is for each individual to take direct action towards promoting human dignity. One can volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center or homeless shelter, advocate for domestic violence, or support friends going through hard times. One can write to representatives about laws that dishonour life in any way, petition legislators, or partake in peaceful protests. Most importantly, everyone must be treated with understanding, for rash conclusions or harsh accusations will only harden hearts to the truth. One large cause for disrespect is the promotion of sex, so much so that it has become a commodity. Sex toys, pornography, sexual jokes and swear words, popular music centered around sex, social expectations even at the highschool level: not only does it express the corrupt focus on pleasure - pleasure gained at the cost of marriages, family life, and children - but it expresses an immense degradation of humanity. If each person were to take action towards eradicating such violations of dignity, more progress would be made in realizing the inherent value of human life.