

When I opened the paper Thursday night I saw a picture that tore my heart. It showed the body of an 18-year old homicide victim lying on the steps of St. Monica's Catholic School at 58th and Michigan. One of the teachers discovered him there on her way to class that morning. St. Monica's is the former St. Therese School. I attended there from Kindergarten through 8th grade. It tore my heart to see a murder victim on the steps of my grade school. I pray to God that our children will never see St. Regis in such a picture.

Kansas City ranks ninth in the nation for homicides this year. We've had about 125; that's one every two or three days. Last week thieves killed a 72-year old man for his hamburger and fries. That took place at 36th and Main, two blocks from the Catholic Chancery office.

These incidents raise an ancient question: "How much is a life worth?" In Kansas City, some people are worth millions of dollars, but most of us are worth a hamburger and fries.

Christians believe that human life cannot be measured. We believe that life is holy; we believe that life will last after death. Such a life carries no price.

We believe those things, but we do not always treat life that way. We hurt people who hurt us. We cheat people out of our love. We lie; we deceive. Our little sins are not big news; they are not photographed for the evening paper. But very often our little sins do violate the value of human life. We may not be the ones who pull the trigger, but we may be the ones whose sins and crimes create a society where misdemeanors abound. If we believe in the value of life, we will fight for the value of life.

The Sadducees did not believe in life after death. They knew Jesus did believe in it. So they ask him about it. Suppose you got married seven times because your spouse kept dying. Who will be married to whom in life after death? Jesus responds that life after death differs from life before death. Who will be married to whom will not matter as much as our life with God. And life with God will be even better than marriage.

Life after death gives human life its value. If there is no life after death, our values will be different; success will be different. If there is no life after death, money, power, and pleasure are all there is to hope for. People take drugs, they worship Satan, they kill for a hamburger. Or we walk over people on our way to the top.

But if there is life after death, then every human life has value, and every human life deserves respect. I believe this with all my heart; I believe that the people of St. Regis parish could lower the murder rate of Kansas City. If we respect every human life we meet, we can fashion a city that is just.