

PROCLAIM

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Human Dignity & Mission



*Within each heart, a sacred flame burns bright,
Dignity bestowed in God's eternal light.
The Church, with love's embrace, unveils the way,
Guiding all to honor, come what may.*


Missionary Union of Priests, Religious, and Consecrated Laity

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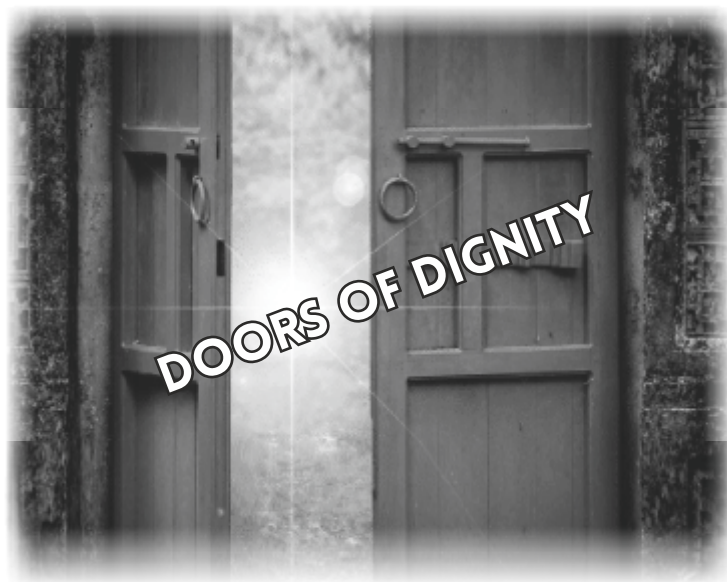


Father Paolo Manna, a PIME missionary, establishes the Missionary Union of Priests and Religious in 1916. This spiritual apostolate supports those engaged in catechesis and religious educations to help Catholics to better understand their baptismal responsibility for the Church's missionary work.



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Dignitas Infinita

A timely reaffirmation of human worth



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

The recent declaration by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas Infinita*, arrives at a critical juncture in our global narrative. Amidst a world grappling with social upheaval, technological advancements, polarization, distrust, and ethical dilemmas,

this document serves as a powerful reminder of the inherent and inviolable dignity of every human being.

Dignitas Infinita goes beyond mere platitudes. It establishes a foundational principle: that human dignity is not contingent upon circumstance, ability, or social standing. This “infinite dignity” is an ontological reality, woven into the very fabric of our existence. This core truth has profound implications for how we navigate through the complexities of our contemporary world.

The declaration tackles a range of pressing issues, from the sanctity of life to the exploitation of individuals through practices like human-trafficking and surrogacy. It unequivocally condemns acts that diminish human dignity, such as euthanasia, torture and the marginalization of the vulnerable.

While reaffirming traditional Catholic positions on certain matters, *Dignitas Infinita* also offers a nuanced perspective. It recognizes the threat posed by ideologies that erase fundamental human differences, particularly in the context of gender theory. However, this stance must be balanced with the ongoing struggle for equality and the need to recognize the spectrum of human experience.

The true strength of *Dignitas Infinita* lies in its potential to spark off dialogue and reflection. It challenges us to examine the structures and practices that perpetuate injustice and inequality. It compels us to actively defend the dignity of the marginalized, the ostracized, and those whose voices

are often silenced. This declaration is not merely a theological treatise; it is a call to action. It urges us to build a world where the inherent worth of every individual is acknowledged, protected, and celebrated. In an era marked by division and discord, *Dignitas Infinita* offers a beacon of hope, reminding us of the shared humanity that binds us all.

Here's how *Dignitas Infinita* holds significant meaning for the Church's mission:

1. *Reaffirming the core message:* This declaration serves as a powerful reminder of the Church's central message - the inherent and infinite dignity of every human being. This core principle underpins all aspects of the Church's mission, including evangelization, social justice, and service.
2. *Addressing contemporary challenges:* *Dignitas Infinita* directly tackles contemporary issues that threaten human dignity: exploitation, vulnerable populations, and bioethics.
3. *Strengthening dialogue:* By addressing sensitive topics, the declaration opens doors for crucial discussions within the Church and with the wider society: gender theory and secular world.
4. *Guiding action:* *Dignitas Infinita* calls for concrete action:
 - Advocacy: It empowers the Church to advocate for policies and practices that promote human dignity globally.
 - Education: It emphasizes the need for education within the Church to foster awareness of human dignity and its implications.
 - Witness: It inspires individuals to live out the principle of infinite dignity through their daily actions and interactions.

In essence, *Dignitas Infinita* equips the Church with a renewed focus on its core mission: to uphold the inherent and infinite dignity of every human being, inspiring action and dialogue in a world that desperately needs this message.

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu

National Director (PMO-India)

What dignity means in different contexts

By Fr Raymond J de Souza



Dignitas Infinita, the new declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), affirms that “every human person possesses an infinite dignity” and enumerates assaults on that dignity, with particular attention to new developments in “gender theory.”

While the sections dealing with abortion, surrogacy and gender ideology contain nothing new, the April 8 text has received “widespread praise” from many Catholic commentators who were apprehensive after last year's declaration, *Fiducia Supplicans* (on blessings for “irregular same-sex couples”), proved disastrous.

The language on gender theory was unambiguous: “Therefore, all attempts to obscure reference to the ineliminable sexual difference between man and woman are to be rejected” (58). Not only would that preclude pharmacological or surgical interventions to suppress/alter sexual characteristics, but it would appear to cover the use of language, including forms of address and prayers.

While direct, *Dignitas Infinita* did not quote some of the more forceful comments of Pope Francis, who has likened women who have abortions to mobsters who hire a hitman, or has said that “today the ugliest danger is gender ideology, which nullifies differences.”

While the document restates Catholic teaching on abortion, surrogacy and euthanasia, it includes other assaults on human dignity,

including poverty, war, the travails of migrants, human trafficking, sexual abuse, violence against women, marginalization of the disabled and digital violence.

Dignitas Infinita treats such matters in brief, taking its lead from the teaching of Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes*, which considers “offenses against human dignity” — a list which includes “all violations of the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture, undue psychological pressures ... subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions where individuals are treated as mere tools for profit rather than free and responsible persons” (27).

The more distinctive contribution of *Dignitas Infinita* is to examine the roots of human dignity and then to examine ways that it can be compromised, or even lost, in a certain sense.

“It is essential to point out that dignity is not something granted to the person by others based on their gifts or qualities, such that it could be withdrawn,” the declaration states (15). “Were it so bestowed, it would be given in a conditional and alienable way, and then the very meaning of dignity (however worthy of great respect) would remain exposed to the risk of



being abolished. Instead, dignity is intrinsic to the person.”

Dignitas Infinita employs the classic definition of a person given by Boethius in the sixth century: “an individual substance of a rational nature.” Citing this as the “foundation of human dignity,” the document explains that: “as an ‘individual substance,’ the person possesses ontological dignity. Having received existence from God, humans are subjects who ‘subsist’ — that is, they exercise their existence autonomously. The term ‘rational’ encompasses all the capacities of the human person, including the capacities of knowing and understanding, as well as those of wanting, loving, choosing, and desiring; it also includes all corporeal functions closely related to these abilities” (9).

Thus the human being has “ontological dignity,” meaning that it belongs to his or her very being, not conferred by others, or acquired by himself or herself. *Dignitas Infinita* refers several times to the 75th anniversary of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” last year.

“From this perspective, we can understand how the word ‘dignity’ was used in the 1948 United Nations *Universal Declaration*, which speaks about ‘the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family,’” *Dignitas Infinita* states (14). “Only this inalienable character of human dignity makes it possible to speak about human rights.”

Dignity that is ontological, inherent, inalienable, indelible — all are ways of expressing what is found in the Declaration of

Independence, namely, that it is “self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.”



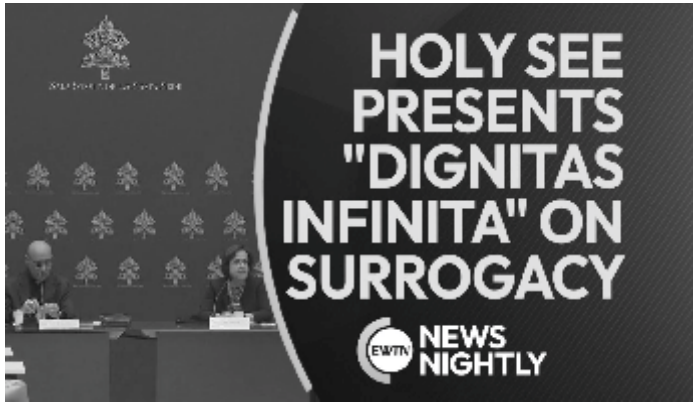
Dignitas Infinita declares that this dignity is knowable by “reason alone” (1), but divine Revelation makes that knowledge deeper still. Dignity is inherent because men and women are made in the image and likeness of God, loved and redeemed in Christ.

The document is aware that while there is widespread agreement that human dignity exists, “the phrase ‘the dignity of the human person’ risks lending itself to a variety of interpretations that can yield potential ambiguities and contradictions.” The declaration then offers: “a fourfold distinction of the concept of dignity: *ontological dignity*, *moral dignity*, *social dignity*, and *existential dignity*. The most important among these is the *ontological dignity* that belongs to the person as such simply because he or she exists and is willed, created, and loved by God. Ontological dignity is indelible and remains valid beyond any circumstances in which the person may find themselves” (7).

Moral dignity refers “to how people exercise their freedom. While people are endowed with conscience, they can always act against it.”

Thus it is possible for a man to degrade himself by his choices. Freedom can be used to sin, but sin degrades both the freedom and the dignity of the person sinning. Thus even voluntary

“Every human person possesses an infinite dignity, inalienably grounded in his or her very being, which prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation the person may ever encounter”



choices — for example, a woman who willingly agrees to be a surrogate (50) — compromise dignity. In a passage relevant to the Holy Father's teaching that the death penalty is "inadmissible," *Dignitas Infinita* notes that: "history illustrates how individuals can commit inestimably profound acts of evil against others. Those who act this way seem to have lost any trace of humanity and dignity. This is where the present distinction can help us discern between the moral dignity that *de facto* can be 'lost' and the ontological dignity that can never be annulled. And it is precisely because of this latter point that we must work with all our might so that all those who have done evil may repent and convert" (7).

The death penalty is treated explicitly, as are prison conditions:

"The death penalty ... violates the inalienable dignity of every person, regardless of the circumstances. In this regard, we must recognize that the firm rejection of the death penalty shows to what extent it is possible to recognize the inalienable dignity of every human being and to accept that he or she has a place in this universe. If I do not deny that dignity to the worst of criminals, I will not deny it to anyone. ... It is also fitting to reaffirm the dignity of those who are incarcerated, who often must live in undignified conditions. Finally, it should be stated that — even if someone has been guilty of serious crimes — the practice of torture completely contradicts

the dignity that is proper to every human being" (34).

Dignitas Infinita includes "two other possible aspects of dignity to consider: *social and existential*."

Social dignity refers "to the quality of a person's living conditions. For example, in cases of extreme poverty, where individuals do not even have what is minimally necessary to live according to their ontological dignity, it is said that those poor people are living in an 'undignified' manner" (8).

Finally, "*existential dignity* is the type of dignity implied in the ever-increasing discussion about a 'dignified' life and one that is 'not dignified':"

"For instance, while some people may appear to lack nothing essential for life, for various reasons, they may still struggle to live with peace, joy, and hope. In other situations, the presence of serious illnesses, violent family environments, pathological addictions, and other hardships may drive people to experience their life conditions as 'undignified' vis-à-vis their perception of that ontological dignity that can never be obscured. These distinctions remind us of the inalienable value of the ontological dignity that is rooted in the very being of the human person in all circumstances" (8).

Those contemplating suicide and euthanasia often speak of a "death with dignity," by which they mean avoiding some loss of



...Continued on Page 8

Biblical aspects of human dignity

By Fr Dr A John Baptist*

Introduction

Recently on 2 April 2024 the Dicastery of Faith gave the Declaration “*Dignitas Infinita*” on



Human Dignity. According to its Prefect, this document “reflects the gravity and centrality of the theme of dignity in Christian thought.” (Presentation). This contains four sections. The first three “recalls fundamental principles and theoretical premises, with the goal of offering important clarifications that can help avoid frequent confusion that surrounds with the use of the term 'dignity'. The fourth section presents some current and problematic situations.” (Presentation). The topics discussed in this Declaration are selected to illuminate different facets of human dignity that might be obscured in many people's consciousness. The aim of this document therefore is “to offer some points for reflection that can help us maintain an awareness of human dignity amid the complex historical moment in which we are living.” (Presentation).

The articles 11 and 12 of the document, under the first section titled, “A Growing Awareness of the Centrality of Human Dignity”, speaks of the Biblical Perspectives of Dignity in Old Testament (no. 11) and New Testament (no.12). Taking some clue from there this presentation explains some key biblical passages that speak of the Human Dignity. Thus it gives the biblical understanding to Human Dignity.

Human dignity in the Old Testament

In the Genesis narratives

In the first Creation account, Gen 1:26-27 goes like this, “Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Gen. 1:26-27). There are many meanings or interpretations given for the word 'image' such as rationality, capacity to relate with God and to know Him, man as God's counterpart or God's ambassador having power to dominion, man's soul, to be blessed with the responsibility of ruling the world in such a way that it is ordered, good, life-giving place that God intended it to be. The document however states that, “the 'image' does not define the soul or its intellectual abilities but the *dignity of man and woman*.” (no. 11, emphasis added). It further explains this saying, “In their relationship of equality and mutual love, both the man and the woman represent God in the world and are also called to cherish and nurture the world. Because of this, to be created in the image of God means to possess a sacred value that transcends every distinction.” (no.11). Seeing this passage from the background of monarchy in Israel, where the King is deputed by God and



is responsible or accountable God, the human couple are 'image' of God not divine in their own right. So to say that the man and the woman in Genesis were made in the 'image of God' is to say that they were meant to represent where and how God exercised power and authority, a responsibility exercised by the monarchy. (cf. Dianne Bergant, "Imago Dei: Image of Divine?" *Concilium*, 2018 no. 5, 34-43.).



Psalms 8 contains many of the same themes found in Genesis 1. The Psalmist explicitly states that human royalty is less than divine: "Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (Ps. 8:5-9). 'Image of God' therefore shows both the height and the limit of human dignity. It is both a gift and responsibility. The latter is seen in the following verse of the Genesis narrative, which was given as blessing: "God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Gen. 1:28). Seen from the background of monarchy in the Bible again, dominion is given to humanity as a blessing. This has been misunderstood and misinterpreted by humans for their selfish motives. So humanity exploited the whole world and its creatures. This blessing was to be fruitful and multiply and continue the

work of creation, started by God. So creation takes part in the act of creation by reproducing, multiplying and growing. God gave to the human beings the special task of leading, guiding and tending the created world.

Human dignity in Exodus and Deuteronomy

Exodus is the narrative of God who had come down to be and 'fight' for the oppressed and marginalized slaves, the Israelites (Cf. Ex 3:7). Later the same God gave them commandments to safeguard the dignity and the rights especially of orphans, widows and strangers (cf. Ex 22:20-26; Deut 24:17).

In the Prophetic and Wisdom Literature

The above thinking is also reflected in the Prophetic and Wisdom literature. The document affirms saying, "Amos bitterly decries the oppression of the poor and his listeners' failure to recognize any fundamental human dignity in the destitute (cf. Am. 2:6-7; 4:1; 5:11-12)" (no.11; also cf. Is 10:1-2). In the Wisdom Literatures, Sirach equates the oppression of the poor with murder. He says, "Like one who kills a son before his father's eyes is the person who offers a sacrifice from the property of the poor." (Sir. 34:24).

Human dignity in the New Testament

Incarnation is the standing witness to the human dignity. The document affirms it saying, "By uniting himself with every human being through his Incarnation, Jesus Christ confirmed that each person possesses an immeasurable dignity simply by belonging to the human community; moreover, he affirmed that this dignity can never be lost." (no. 19).

The Gospels narrate how Jesus affirmed the value and dignity of all who bear the image of God. The document asserts it saying, "Jesus broke down cultural and cultic barriers, restoring dignity to those who were 'rejected' or were considered to be on the margins of society. ... He heals, defends, liberates, and saves." (no. 12). He identified himself with least of his brethren, the 'little ones', vulnerable, the most

insignificant, the outcast, the oppressed, the discarded, the poor, the marginalised, the unlearned, the sick, and those who are downtrodden by the powerful. Furthermore Jesus identifies himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned (cf. Mt 25:34-36).

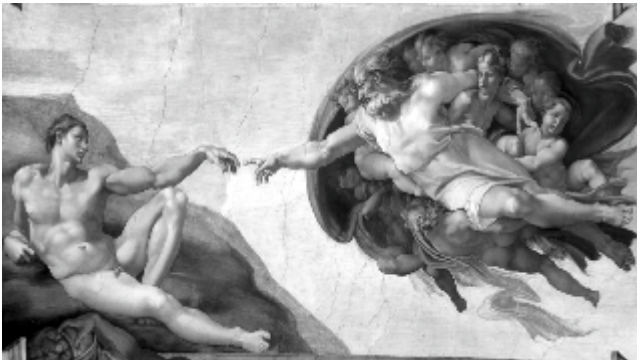
According to Maria Arul Raja getting awakened to the God-given dignity in solidarity with other victims, “The mighty deeds performed by Jesus in the Synoptic gospels are the interventions of delivering the suffering members of the *ochlos* (crowd or multitude) from the clutches of evil powers (Mk 1:21-28, 40-45; 2:1-12; 5:1-42). Jesus' interventions labelled as miracles are the stories of healing from psychosomatic disabilities, emancipation from psychospiritual possession, or liberation from religio-cultural prejudices.” (A. Maria Arul Raja, “Empowerment of the Disempowered: Some Glimpses into Jesus' Life and Mission”, *Concilium* 2020, no. 3, 42-51, here 43). Thus Jesus restored the human dignity of all men and women especially the marginalized.

Conclusion

The document on the infinite dignity goes on to argue how the church proclaims, promotes, and guarantees human dignity. It also argues dignity as the foundation of Human Rights and Duties. Before ending, it gives some grave violations of Human Dignity, such as, poverty, war, travail of migrants, human trafficking, sexual abuse, violence against women, abortion, surrogacy, euthanasia and assisted suicide, marginalization of people with disabilities, sex change and digital violence. This declaration also exhorts the following: i. to respect the dignity of the human person beyond all circumstances; ii. human community to be responsible for the concrete and actual realization of human dignity; iii. to promote the dignity of every human person, regardless of their physical, mental, cultural, social and religious characteristics. Let us therefore not forget the human dignity and try safe guard it at any cost.

*The writer is Director, NBCLC, Bangalore ♦

Continued from Page 5: What dignity means in different contexts



existential dignity. The dignity of existence has somehow become obscured for them. Suicide and euthanasia remain morally unacceptable, though, precisely because, even if existential dignity is compromised, ontological dignity always remains.

While the moral teaching of *Dignitas Infinita* will not surprise anyone familiar with Catholic teaching on the sanctity of life, the dignity of workers and the preferential option for the poor, the exploration of what dignity means in different contexts will open new avenues for discussion, apologetics and evangelization.

The Catholic Church affirms human dignity. Now a discussion can be had about what it means, where it comes from and whether it can be lost. That discussion will not be quite infinite, but certainly enduring.

Source:

www.ncregister.com/commentaries/dignitas-infinita-and-the-roots-of-human-dignity ♦

Church's mission in India today

By Rev Fr Dr A Lawrence *

Appalling contexts of today's India

The deprivations and discriminations loom large today in India! India's poverty keeps growing with undiminished vigour. The gap between the haves and have-nots keeps increasing alarmingly today as ever



before. The most recent Oxfam report says that “While India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, it is also one of the most unequal countries.” It goes on to state that “Inequality has been rising sharply for the last three decades. The richest have cornered a huge part of the wealth created through crony capitalism and inheritance. They are getting richer at a much faster pace while the poor are still struggling to earn a minimum wage and access quality education and health care services, which continue to suffer from chronic under-investment.” This is the plight of India! The report also says that “In the place of a well-funded health service, it has promoted an increasingly powerful commercial health sector.” So then, what Pope Francis claimed already two years ago in his *Fratelli Tutti*, (no. 21) in the case of poverty in the global sense, which is now being reaffirmed by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in its recent document *Dignitas Infinita*, (no. 37) is absolutely true in the case of India as well.

As professor Himanshu, of JN University, Delhi, comments, “What is particularly worrying in India's case is that economic inequality is being added to a society that is already fractured along the lines of caste, religion, region, and gender.” The prevalence of the Caste system, not only in society but also within the Church in India, even in the postmodern globalized world, is a matter of shame and disgrace to all of us. The marginality of the Dalits has got many layers. They face multiple deprivations in social,

economic, cultural, political and religious spheres. Compared with the other Dalits, Christian Dalits suffer these discriminations three times more. Feminists' challenges loom large today, given the increasing number of violence, high incidence of rape and higher rates of female mortality. The main culprit seems to be the gross neglect of female education and female health and nutrition. Many of the strongly-entrenched patriarchal norms remain at the root of the issue. Migration, mostly induced by poverty, is also on the increase, as never before. What do these challenges imply for the Church's evangelizing mission? Have they got to do anything with our Faith? First of all, these situations are violations directly against human dignity “where the dignity of the poor is doubly denied because of the lack of resources available to meet their basic needs and the indifference shown toward them by their neighbours.” (DI. 36)

The Prefect for the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Victor Manuel Card Fernandez writes very meaningfully in his most recent document *Dignitas Infinita*, published on 2 April 2024, in the first section titled “Presentation”: “The Church sees the condemnation of these grave and current violations of human dignity as a necessary measure, for she sustains the deep conviction that we cannot separate faith from the

defense of human dignity, evangelization from the promotion of dignified life, and spirituality from a commitment to the dignity of every human being.”

Jesus' mission of establishing his Father's reign – defense of the poor and the marginalized

The mission of Jesus of Nazareth remains the source and inspiration for the Mission of the Church all over. Jesus came to proclaim his Father's reign on this earth. It fundamentally





means that everyone has fuller, happier, dignified human life. Actually speaking, Jesus

identifies God with life. For Jesus, God is an experience that transforms him, and shows him a fuller, more loving, happier and dignified life for everyone. While the religious leaders of his time identify God with their religious system and doctrine, Jesus identifies God with the happiness of the people. Also, Jesus does not distinguish between God and his reign. "What human beings want is to live, and to live well. And what God wants is to turn that wish into reality. The better people live, the better reality is made of God's reign.," says Jose A Pagola in his famous book, *Jesus, An Historical Approximation*, (Page 310).

Jesus declared emphatically that the reign of God is for the poor. Reign of God means doing justice for the poorest and most humiliated in the first place. Also, his table fellowship with tax collectors means that. Jesus' meals with them were therapeutic. His conscious choice of associating himself people of dubious morality and sitting at table with them frees them from shame and humiliation, rescues them from their marginalization and accepts them as friends. Slowly they gain a sense of their own dignity. Jesus tries to break the vicious circle of discrimination and prepares them for a friendly encounter with God. They feel that their life is completely transformed. It will never be the same. In Jesus' company, they are entering into a new world which they had never imaged in their lives. Jesus calls it the reign of God. Jesus' table fellowship "is, therefore, a "sign," which translates his verbal announcement of God's Rule, the central message of his preaching (Mk 1: 14-15), into visible action", says George Soares-Prabhu.

Church's evangelizing mission in India today - promotion of dignified life

Christ's Incarnation – which is a thorough identification with the poor – is, in fact, a concrete expression of God's fidelity to the poor and the oppressed. It follows, then, that our faith in God has to be expressed in concrete actions – that means our serious involvement in the transformation of the world plagued by

different inequalities. David Bosch says it wisely: "While the problem of my own bread is material issue, the problem of my neighbour's bread is a spiritual issue." Years ago, Gandhi said wisely: "Whereas religion to be worth anything, must be capable of being reduced to terms of economics, economics to be worth anything must also be capable of being reduced to terms of religion and spirituality."

Pope Francis' caution serves us better: "A lack of solidarity towards his or her needs will directly affect our relationship with God." (*Evangelii Gaudium*. 187) We are reminded of Jesus' command to his disciples: "You yourselves give them something to eat!" (Mk 6:37). This is a call to everyone to work towards



eliminating the structural causes of poverty in order to promote the overall upliftment of the society. Instead of making louder proclamation of message of justice and peace from the pulpit, and just organizing a week-long prayer service, we could actively involve ourselves in activities such as engagement in democratic politics, promoting judicial activism for priests and religious, struggling against careerism of the priests and religious, organizing awareness programmes and workshops for Christ's faithful, etc.

"If the Church makes herself present in the defense of, or in the advancement of human dignity, she does so in line with her mission..." (DI. 4) If the above statement needs to become true of the Church in India, that requirement is closely connected with the necessity of paying much greater attention to the interests, demands and rights of the most deprived. The Indian Church's presence and its mission in the advancement of human dignity, will become truly possible and credible, if, and only if, the deprivations are more clearly recognized, more extensively brought into focus, more widely talked about and reflected in active agitations as well as critical discussions.

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Relevance of *Dignitas Infinita* for Canon Law

By Fr Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose *

Summary of *Dignitas Infinita*

On April 8th, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) released a new document about the infinite dignity of the human person, *Dignitas Infinita*. The Declaration underscores the Catholic Church's commitment to the defence of every human life from conception until natural death, calls on Catholics to compassionate care for the most vulnerable among us, and defends the biblical idea of the human person as defined in Genesis 1:27–28. It gives us the impression that *Dignitas Infinita* is a kind of a companion text to Pope Francis's 2020 encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*.



Dignitas Infinita has 116 endnote references to magisterial teaching cited in its text; over half of them are to documents and statements of Pope Francis. The document begins with an Introduction comprising nine numbered sections. *Dignitas Infinita* begins by proclaiming the prophetic truth that “Every human person possesses an infinite dignity, inalienably grounded in his or her very being, which prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation the person may ever encounter” (DI 1). Human dignity is rooted in God's infinite love for each person, which confers an infinite dignity upon them. It explores the increasing importance of human dignity (section 1, paragraphs 10-16). This section traces the idea back to the Bible, explains how it evolved in Christian thinking, and highlights how this biblical and Christian perspective has shaped wider culture throughout history, including the present day.

The second section, “The Church Proclaims, Promotes, and Guarantees Human Dignity,” offers a concise summary of Church doctrine on human dignity. It emphasizes the

“equal dignity of all people” (17), arising from the love of the Creator, who has bestowed upon each individual the indelible mark of His image (18). This section further explores the concept of the Incarnation as both a manifestation and elevation of human dignity (19). The document continues by asserting the ultimate purpose for which all humans are created: everlasting communion with the triune God (20-21). Finally, it exhorts each person to live a life that aligns with their God-given dignity, ultimately striving towards this ultimate goal. The text concludes by stating, “All people are called to manifest the ontological scope of their dignity on an existential and moral

level as they, by their freedom, orient themselves toward the true good in response to God's love” (22).

The third part of the Declaration, “Dignity, the Foundation of Human Rights and Duties”, looks at the practical implications of human dignity. It argues against denying human dignity (and rights) to those with limitations. It emphasizes that dignity is inherent and should not depend on abilities. However, the document also cautions against misusing the concept to justify endless new rights, especially those that conflict with existing rights, particularly the right to life. It argues for a balance between respecting human dignity and recognizing fundamental rights.

In the final part, entitled “Some Grave Violations of Human Dignity”, the document goes on to identify serious violations of human dignity (sections 33-62). Some of these violations stem from the previously mentioned misinterpretations of human dignity. While not an exhaustive list, the text identifies contemporary issues that undermine human dignity, such as extreme poverty, war,

mistreatment of migrants, human trafficking, sexual abuse, violence against women, abortion, practices surrounding surrogacy, euthanasia and assisted suicide, marginalization of disabled people, certain views on gender, and online harassment.

Canon Law updates insisting on the human dignity

The Catholic Church updated Book VI of its 1983 Code of Canon Law in June 2021 (taking effect on 8 December 2021) for clearer rules on numerous offences, including sexual ones. The revision was the result of a long process commenced in 2009 to better prevent and address Catholic Church sexual abuse cases, mostly committed by clerics against underage children entrusted in their care, but also against vulnerable adults, or other sexual offences the Church regards as sinful. Most of the amendments in Book VI on “Penal Sanctions in the Church” are related to human dignity.

The name of Title VI in Part II has also changed, having now introduced the noun “dignity,” in addition to references to life and liberty. The title consists of only two canons (cann. 1397 & 1398). Can. 1397 takes up in the first and second paragraph the offences previously contained in cann. 1397 and 1398 in a practically identical formulation, providing for the malicious offences of homicide, grievous bodily harm, kidnapping and imprisonment, as well as abortion, which previously occupied a separate canon.

Can. 1397

Homicide

Murder: to kill another human being. The offence consists of any act or omission by which another person dies, provided, of course, it is imputable by reason of malice or culpability (cf. can. 1321).

Usually, those who commit these delicts are penalized according to the gravity of the offence, with the penalties mentioned in can. 1336. Nevertheless, if the passive subject is any of the persons mentioned in can. 1370 (Roman Pontiff, Bishop, Cleric, religious), the legislator remits the penalties prescribed in that canon 1370 (*latae sententiae* penalties) and can also be

dismissed from the clerical state, if he is a cleric. With regard to marriage, the impediment of crime (killing of one's spouse), enshrined in can. 1090, needs to be taken into account.

Abducts (*rapit*) or imprisons/detains (*detinet*)

By force or fraud to abduct and detain another person, i.e., to take someone and hold him or her against their will, either by physical force or duping that person into going somewhere and not permitting him or her to return. This is a direct assault on human liberty. The sex of the kidnapped person is irrelevant, except being an impediment to marriage where the person kidnapped must be a woman (cf. can. 1089). Usually, those who commit these delicts are penalized according to the gravity of the offence, with the penalties mentioned in can. 1336.

By force or fraud mutilates (*mutilat*)

It is to wound a person to such an extent



that part of the body is severed. Gravely wounds the person (*graviter vulnerat*): No injury is specified in the canon. Therefore, it is difficult to establish a distinction between injuries that are grave and those are not. A canonical judge has the discretion to determine if the act falls into the category of offence. Nevertheless, anything that would compromise the life or bodily integrity would certainly be understood as serious.

Abortion

Paragraph 2 of can. 1397 prescribes, “A person who actually procures an abortion incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication.” This canon is directed towards protecting life of an unborn child. The offence is consummated/procured abortion. The offence

is committed whenever not only a non-viable foetus is ejected from the uterus of the mother but also when an action is performed with the direct intention of killing a live foetus from the moment of conception either in the mother's womb or outside it, any by whatever means, as long as the effects ensue (Pontifical Council for the Legislative Text - Reply – 19 January 1988). An attempted or failed abortion, however, morally culpable, is not technically a delict (cf. can. 1328). Can. 1329 §2 on complicity in a delict punished by a *latae sententiae* penalty is especially relevant since numerous persons may be involved in procuring the abortion, e.g., the parents of the aborted foetus, their families,



the doctor, nurses etc. In the number 12 Letter *misericordia et miseria* of 21 November 2016, (cf. AAS 108 (2016), 1311-1327), the Holy Father granted to all confessors, “up to new dispositions in this regard”, the faculty to absolve from the sin of abortion, with the consequent faculty to remove the excommunication.

Can. 1398

The other canon of this title, can. 1398, is reserved almost entirely to the offence of the abuse of minors, and this is done in different ways that also involve different penal sanctions. In the old Code of Canon Law, this delict was placed under the title that dealt with the special obligations of clerics and religious in the area of chastity. But now this delict of abuse of minor is brought under the delict against “Human Life, Dignity And Liberty”. The intention to shift the placing of this canon under this title is to differentiate it from other conduct against the virtue of chastity in order to emphasize the aspect of it being an attack against the dignity of the person, which the crime of the abuse of minors specifically involves. Therefore, this crime of abuse of minors is penalized not merely because clerics have violated the obligation of

celibacy but rather because they have offended the dignity of the minor against whom they committed the delict. It is not the obligation of celibacy that matters most, but the human dignity of the abused.

As is well known, since 2001, the abuse of minors and of persons with the habitual imperfect use of reason committed by clerics has been one of the most serious offences referred to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. However, the formulation of can. 1398 is broader, and the canon articulates new offences in this concrete area, not specifically reserved to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. On the one hand, in can. 1398 are included all such offences committed by clerics that have a sensitive character: the abuse of minors or of persons with the imperfect use of reason, their recruitment or induction to pornographic acts or exhibitions, and the acquisition, preservation, exhibition, or dissemination of pedo-pornographic material involving such persons. These are delicts not because one violates the promises or vows a cleric professes but because these hideous acts are against human dignity. Clergy breaking these vows is not the primary reason they are considered offences. The core issue is that these acts are reprehensible and undermine human dignity.

To these particularly protected subjects, however, can. 1398 has added another category of persons: those to whom the law recognizes equal protection as that given to minors and persons with the habitual imperfect use of reason. This was an indirect but equally effective way of including the so-called “vulnerable adults” category. “Vulnerable adults” mean any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally limits their ability to understand, want, or otherwise resist the offence. Precisely because of the indefiniteness of the category, which is susceptible to potentially including multiple profiles and borderline situations, it has been prudently avoided by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, which has not wanted to

...Continued on Page 22

You are precious in God's eyes

Pope Francis' message for the First World Children's Day

Dear Children!

Your first World Day, which will be held in Rome on 25-26 May this year, is fast approaching. That is why I thought of sending you a Message. I am happy that you will be able to read it and I thank all those responsible for passing it on to you.

I want to speak to *each of you*, dear children, because, as the Bible teaches us, and as Jesus showed so often, “you are precious” in God's eyes (*Is 43:4*).

At the same time, I am addressing this Message to *all of you*, because all children, everywhere, are a sign of every person's desire to grow and flourish. You remind us that we are all children, brothers and sisters. We would not be alive unless others brought us into this world, nor could we grow without having others to love and from whom to receive love (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 95).

All of you, girls and boys, are a source of joy for your parents and your families, but also for our human family and for the Church, in which each of us is like a link in a great chain stretching from the past to the future and covering the whole earth. That is why I encourage you to pay attention to the stories of grown-ups: your moms and dads, your grandparents and great grandparents. And not to forget all those other children and young people who are already battling illness and hardship, in hospital or at home, and those who even now are being cruelly robbed of their childhood. I think of children who are victims of war and violence, those experiencing hunger and thirst, those living on the streets, those forced to be soldiers or to flee as refugees, separated from their parents, those prevented from going to school, and those who fall

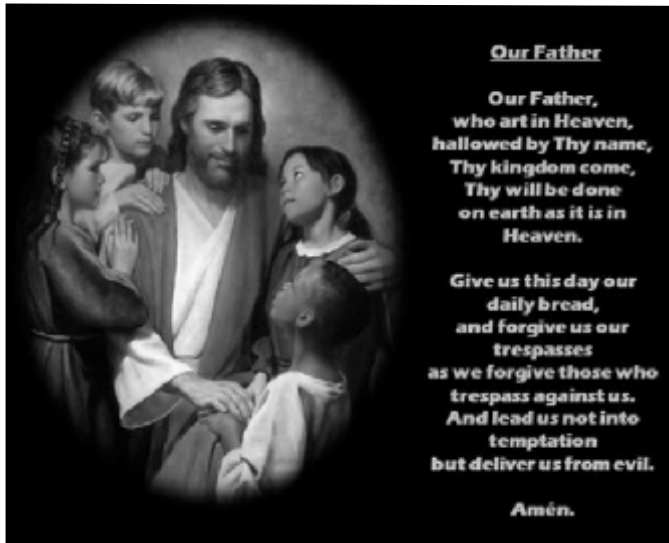
prey to criminal gangs, drugs or other forms of slavery and abuse. Let us listen to their voices. We need to hear those voices, for amid their sufferings they remind us of reality, with their tearful eyes and with that tenacious yearning for goodness that endures in the hearts of those who have truly seen the horror of evil.

Dear young friends, in order for us and our world to grow and flourish, it is not enough to be united with one another; we need, above all else, to be united with Jesus. From him we receive a great deal of courage. He is always close to us, his Spirit goes before us and accompanies us on all the world's pathways. Jesus told us:

“Behold, I make all things new” (*Rev 21:5*); this is the theme I have chosen for your first World Day. These words invite us to become as clever as children in grasping the new realities stirred up by the Spirit, both within us and around us. With Jesus, we can dream of the renewal of our human family and work for a more fraternal society that cares for our common home. This starts with little things, like saying hello to others, asking permission, begging pardon, and saying thank you. Our world will change if we all begin with these little things, without being ashamed to take small steps, one at a time. The fact that we are small reminds us that we are also frail and need one another as members of one body (cf. *Rom 12:5*; *1 Cor 12:26*).

That is not all. The fact is that we cannot be happy all by ourselves, because our joy increases to the extent that we share it. Joy is born of gratitude for the gifts we have received and which we share in turn and it grows in our relationships with others. When we keep the blessings we have received to ourselves, or throw tantrums to get this or that gift, we forget that the greatest gift that we possess is ourselves, one another: all of us, together, are “God's gift.” Other





gifts are nice, but only if they help us to be together. If we don't use them for that purpose, we will always end up being unhappy; they will never be enough.

Instead, when we are all together, everything is different! Think of your friends, and how great it is to spend time with them: at home, at school, in the parish and the playground, everywhere. Playing, singing, discovering new things, having fun, everyone being together and excluding no one. Friendship is wonderful and it grows only in this way: through sharing and forgiving, with patience, courage, creativity and imagination, without fear and without prejudice.

Now, I am going to share a special secret with you. If we really want to be happy, we need to pray, to pray a lot, to pray every day, because prayer connects us directly to God. Prayer fills our hearts with light and warmth; it helps us to do everything with confidence and peace of



mind. Jesus constantly prayed to the Father. Do you know what Jesus called him? In his language, he simply called him "Abba", which means "Daddy" (cf. *Mk* 14:36). Let's do the same thing! We will always feel that Jesus is close to us. He himself promised us that, when he said, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (*Mt* 18:20).

Dear children, you may know that in May, many of us will be together in Rome, to be together with children from all over the world. To prepare well for this, I would ask all of you to pray the same prayer that Jesus taught us – the *Our Father*. Recite it every morning and every evening, in your families too, together with your parents, brothers, sisters and grandparents. But not just by saying the words! Think about those words that Jesus taught us. He is calling us and he wants us to join actively with him, on this World Children's Day, to become builders of a new, more humane, just and peaceful world. Jesus, who offered himself on the Cross to gather all of us together in love, who conquered death and reconciled us with the Father, wants to continue his work in the Church through us. Think about this, especially those of you who are preparing to receive First Communion.

God has loved us from all eternity (cf. *Jer* 1:5). He looks upon us with the eyes of a loving father and a gentle mother. He never forgets us (cf. *Is* 49:15) and every day he accompanies us and renews us with his Spirit.

Together with the Most Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, let us pray in these words:

*Come, Holy Spirit,
show us your beauty,
reflected in the faces
of children all over the the world.
Come, Jesus,
you who make all things new,
who are the way that leads us to the Father,
come and remain with us always.
Amen.*

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 2 March 2024

FRANCIS ♦

You are the living hope of a Church on the move

Dear young people,

Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!
This certainty always makes my heart overflow



with joy, and now it inspires me to write you this Message, five years after the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, the fruit of the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that had as its theme: “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment”.

Above all, I would like my words to be a source of renewed hope for you. In today's world, marked by so many conflicts and so much suffering, I suspect that many of you feel disheartened. So together with you, I would like to set out from the proclamation that is the basis of our hope and that of all humanity: “Christ is alive!”

I repeat this to each of you individually: Christ is alive and he loves you with an infinite love. His love for you is unaffected by your failings or your mistakes. He gave his life for you, so in his love for you he does not wait for you to be perfect. Look at his arms outstretched on the cross, and “let yourself be saved over and over again”. Walk with him as

with a friend, welcome him into your life and let him share all the joys and hopes, the problems and struggles of this time in your lives. You will see that the path ahead will become clearer and that your difficulties will be much less burdensome, because he will be carrying them with you. So pray daily to the Holy Spirit who “draws you ever more deeply into the heart of Christ, so that you can grow in his love, his life and his power”.

How greatly I want this proclamation to reach every one of you, for you to accept it as living and true in your own lives, and feel the desire to share it with your friends! For you have received a great mission: to bear witness before everyone to the joy born of friendship with Christ.

At the beginning of my Pontificate, at the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, I urged you to make your voices heard! Hagan lio! Make a mess! Today, once again, I ask you: make your voices heard! Proclaim, not so much in words but by your life and your heart, the truth that Christ is alive! And in this way, help the whole Church to get up and set out ever anew to bring his message to the entire world.



On 14 April 2024, we will mark the fortieth anniversary of the first great gathering of young people that, in the midst of the Holy Year of the Redemption, was the seed of the future World Youth Days. In 1984, at the end of that Jubilee Year, Saint John Paul II consigned the WYD Cross to young people and gave them the mission of carrying it to the



entire world as a sign and reminder that in Jesus alone, crucified and risen, do we find salvation and redemption. As you know very well, that was a plain wooden cross, not a crucifix, precisely in order to remind us that it celebrates the victory of the Resurrection, the triumph of life over death. To everyone, it says: “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen” (Lk 24:5). See Jesus in this same way: as alive and overflowing with joy, the victor over death, a friend who loves you and wants to live in you.

Only in this way, in the light of his presence, will your memory of the past prove fruitful, you will find courage in the present and be prepared to face the future with hope. You will find the freedom you need to carry forward the history of your families, your grandparents, your parents, and the religious traditions of your countries, and to be in turn the leaders of tomorrow, “artisans” of the future.

The Exhortation *Christus Vivit* is the fruit of a Church that wants to move forward together by listening, dialogue and constant discernment of the Lord's will. That is why more than five



years ago, in preparation for the Synod on young people, many of you, from various parts of the world, were asked to share your own hopes and expectations. Hundreds of young people came to Rome and worked together for several days, collecting ideas to present to the Synod. Thanks to their work, the Bishops were able to come to a broader and deeper vision of our world and the Church. It was a genuine “synodal experience”; it bore great fruit and prepared the way for a new Synod, which we are celebrating now, in these years, precisely on the subject of synodality. As we read in the Final Document of the 2018 Synod, “the participation of the young helped to 'reawaken' synodality, which is a 'constitutive element of the Church’”.[4] Now, at this new stage in our ecclesial journey, we need more



than ever to draw upon your creativity in order to explore new paths, always in fidelity to our roots.

Dear young people, you are the living hope of a Church on the move! For this reason, I thank you for your presence and for your contribution to the life of the Body of Christ. And I encourage you never to leave us without your good way of “making a mess”, your drive, like that of a clean and well-tuned engine, and your own particular way of living and proclaiming the joy of the risen Jesus! This is my prayer; and I ask you, please, to pray for me.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 25 March 2024,

Monday of Holy Week.

FRANCIS

Source: www.vatican.va ♦

Spiritual dynamics of the demon-possessed boy

By Fr Dr Yesu Karunanidhi*

In Mark 9:14-29, a desperate father brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus seeking help. The boy has been suffering greatly, experiencing seizures, and being thrown into fire and water by the evil spirit possessing him. Despite the disciples' attempts, they are unable to cast out the demon. Jesus rebukes the lack of faith among the people and then commands the unclean spirit to leave the boy. After a dramatic display of the demon's departure, the boy is healed. When the disciples later inquire why they couldn't cast out the demon, Jesus explains that it required prayer. The story highlights the power of faith, the authority of Jesus over evil, the importance of prayer, and the need for spiritual discernment. It also portrays the intense suffering experienced by the demon-possessed boy and his family, emphasizing the transformative impact of Jesus' intervention and the holistic nature of his healing ministry. Let us unravel the spiritual dynamics of the story.



boy has endured fear, confusion, and torment due to the presence of the demon within him.

c. Social Isolation: The boy's possession may have also led to social isolation and alienation from the community. In ancient Jewish society, possession was often seen as a sign of spiritual impurity, and those afflicted were sometimes marginalized or avoided by others. This would have added to the boy's suffering, as well as to that of his

family, who may have faced stigma and judgment from their community.

d. Spiritual Oppression: Here comes the key thing. The disciples of Jesus in their good intention and persistent attempt wish to alleviate the sufferings of the body. But the result is contrary. The boy is made as an object of spectacle. The boy feels that he is alienated from God. And the demon's influence over the boy's life has likely hindered his ability to experience true freedom, peace, and wholeness.

Faith lessons

Suffering on all sides

a. Physical Affliction: The boy is described as having been possessed by a spirit that has caused him to suffer greatly. The text mentions that the spirit often throws him into fire and water, indicating the physical harm the boy has endured because of the possession. This suggests that the demon's influence over the boy's body has led to dangerous and potentially life-threatening situations.

b. Mental and Emotional Distress: Beyond the physical harm, the possession has likely caused significant mental and emotional distress for the boy and his family. The father's plea to Jesus reveals the desperation and anguish they have experienced in trying to find relief for the boy's condition. It's likely that the

a. Power of Faith: The father of the demon-possessed boy demonstrates the power of faith when he brings his son to Jesus. Despite the disciples' inability to cast out the demon, the father persists in his belief that Jesus can help his son. His prayer to Jesus is precise, but powerful: And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

b. Persistence in Prayer: Jesus tells the disciples that the kind of demon they were dealing with could only be driven out by prayer. This highlights the necessity



of persistence in prayer when facing spiritual battles or seemingly insurmountable challenges.

c. Authority of Jesus: The story reaffirms Jesus' authority over evil spirits and demonstrates that there is no power greater than his. This encourages believers to place their trust in Jesus, knowing that he has the power to overcome any obstacle or adversary.

d. Honesty in Prayer: The father's honesty in expressing his struggle with belief ("I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!") serves as a reminder that it's okay to acknowledge our doubts and weaknesses to God. He responds to genuine faith, even if it's mixed with uncertainty.

e. Community Support: The disciples' failure to cast out the demon emphasizes the importance of community support and dependence on one another. It underscores the need for believers to come together in faith, supporting and encouraging one another in times of spiritual warfare.

f. The Importance of Spiritual Discernment: Jesus' rebuke to the disciples about their lack of faith and their inability to discern the nature of the situation teaches the importance of spiritual discernment. It's a reminder to approach situations with wisdom and discernment, relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

g. The Intersection of Faith and Healing: This story illustrates the interconnectedness of faith and healing. The boy's healing is not only physical but also spiritual, emphasizing the holistic nature of Jesus' ministry and the importance of faith in experiencing wholeness.

Practical lessons for child safety

While the story of the demon-possessed boy in Mark 9:14-29 primarily teaches spiritual



lessons, there are still practical lessons about safety that can be derived, especially for children:



a. Seeking Help: Encourage children to seek help from trusted adults or authority figures if they encounter situations or individuals that make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable, just as the father sought help from Jesus for his son.

b. Awareness of Surroundings: Teach children to be aware of their surroundings and to recognize potential dangers. Just as the disciples were not initially aware of the severity of the situation with the demon-possessed boy, it's important for children to be observant and cautious.

c. Importance of Communication: Emphasize the importance of open communication between children and adults. Encourage children to communicate any concerns or fears they may have, so that appropriate action can be taken to ensure their safety.

d. Trusting Authority: Teach children to trust and obey trusted authority figures, such as parents, teachers, and caregivers, especially in situations where their safety may be at risk. Just as the father trusted Jesus to heal his son, children should feel confident in seeking help from adults they trust.



e. Empowerment through Faith: While the story primarily emphasizes spiritual faith, it also highlights the power of belief and trust. Encourage children to have faith in themselves and in their ability to overcome challenges, and to have faith in the support and protection of their caregivers and community.

The demon possessed boy, an anonymous boy of an anonymous father, inspires us with the message that hope is possible amidst despair, and every problem could be overcome through our belief, trust, and persistence.

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SAINT OF THE MONTH - I

St Francis di Girolamo

1642 – 1716

Feast Day - May 11

Francis was born near Taranto, in the province of Naples, Italy, in 1642, of exceptionally virtuous parents, the oldest of 11 children. At the age of 12, he was accepted for education by a group of secular priests living in community. Recognizing his intelligence, the fathers promoted him to teaching catechism, and he received the tonsure at 16. He later went to Naples in order to learn canon and civil law and was ordained a priest in 1666, receiving a special dispensation because he was less than 24 years old.

For four years, Francis taught in the Jesuit Collegio dei Nobili; at the age of 28, he joined the Society of Jesus. After successfully completing a difficult year in the novitiate, his superiors sent him to help the preacher Father Agnello Bruno in his mission work among the peasants of Otranto. After three years of diligent work, Francis was recalled to Naples to finish his theological studies and complete his profession as a Jesuit.

The next field of his apostolic labours was to preach at the Church of Gesu Nuovo in Naples, and from the onset, attracted huge crowds. Knowing that the people he was sent to might not have the longest attention spans, Francis became the master of the micro-sermon, often preaching as many as 40 sermons a day throughout the city. “He is a lamb when he speaks,” his people would say, “but a lion when he preaches.” He preached missions in parishes and on street corners and became well known throughout the kingdom of Naples. But his power as a preacher came entirely from a recollected spirit. In fact, Francis was a man of such deep prayer that he often fell into ecstasy while walking through the streets of Naples. He was so distracted by prayer that he often didn't notice people greeting him and so didn't lift his cap to them. His solution to this breach of

etiquette was simple: he stopped wearing a hat.

He conducted at least 100 missions in the provinces and was commissioned to train other missionaries. He was also much sought after as a confessor. His preaching produced such excellent results that he was appointed to train other missionaries.



St Francis didn't wait for sinners to come to him, he often went in search of them himself, sought out sinners everywhere — in hamlets, along back roads, and on streets corners; he haunted the prisons, checked the brothels, and went down into the galleys in his ever-active quest. He even converted a number of Moorish and Turkish prisoners. His most spectacular conversion was that of Marie Alvira Cassier, a woman who had killed her father and fled to the Spanish army in the guise of a man. Under Francis, she repented and became very devout. He is said to have converted 400 hardened sinners every year.

In addition to his mission work, Francis also rescued many children from dangerous surroundings, opened a charitable pawnshop, and organized an association of working men to help the Jesuit fathers in their work.

It sounds marvellous in the retelling, but it's no great surprise that people of di Girolamo's time were scandalized by the company he kept. They complained to the archbishop, who forbade him to preach in the streets for a time. That prohibition lifted, Francis returned to his seemingly endless ministry, only to be told by his superior that his work for souls was hampering his participation in community life. Again, Francis was told to stop, and again he obeyed — for a time. Eventually, he was given free rein to serve as the Lord called him.

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Proclaim. May - June 2024

Blessed Anne of St Bartholomew

1549 - 1626

Feast Day - June 7

Anne was born in Almendral, a village in Castile, Spain, in October 1549. She was the youngest of seven children born to Ferdinand García and Maria Mancanas, who were landowning farmers. They were a very devout couple who took their children to daily Mass and said family prayers each day. Anne was baptised on the day of her birth. Ferdinand García confided the spiritual care of his children to a priest who gave them a daily lesson in Christian doctrine. Anne also learnt to read in Spanish but she was not taught to write. Prayer came to her naturally.

Even as a very young child Anne had a great love for Jesus and wanted to please him in all she did; she often felt him very near to her. She liked to talk to Our Lady, St Joseph and the Saints, and every day she asked them to keep her free from sin. She enjoyed playing with other little girls and was especially close to her cousin Francesca García, a girl of her own age, who also became a Carmelite.

When Anne was ten, both her parents died from a plague which swept across Castile; she tended her brothers' sheep. Devoted to the Passion of Christ, she wanted to consecrate her virginity to God, but feared she would be unable to overcome her brothers' opposition to her vocation. As she later related, "I decided one day that if I were to find a man very rich, very handsome, very agreeable, very holy, and who would have helped me in the service of God, that I would have been glad with such companionship." As she was musing thus, Christ appeared to her and said, "I am the man whom you are seeking." From that day onward, Anne resolved never to marry. One night, having fallen asleep with her rosary in her hands (which she recited daily), Anne experienced a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary showing her the

Discalced Carmelites' convent in Avila, and pressing her to become a nun there. Then Christ appeared, seconding his Mother's words and pulling Anne by her rosary beads. After waking, Anne resolved to become a Carmelite, and took her vows at Ávila on 15 August 1572 at the age of 21 taking the religious name Sr Anne of St Bartholomew. She served as secretary to the Discalced Carmelites' foundress, Saint Teresa of Ávila.



In 1574 Anne went with St Teresa to Valladolid and Medina del Campo. After that she became ill herself and was unable to travel for two years, but Teresa thought very highly of Anne and in 1577 she became her secretary and nurse. In the last five years of her life Teresa needed help with her large correspondence as she was often too tired or too ill to write herself, but she was able to dictate her letters. Teresa wanted Anne to receive the black veil and become a choir nun, but Anne begged to remain a lay sister, as she did not know how to read Latin which was required for the Divine Office and she said she would prefer to serve the community in practical ways than have the burden of administration. Teresa allowed her to remain a lay sister but predicted correctly that she would eventually become a choir nun. Anne visited many monasteries with Teresa and helped her with the foundations of Villanueva de la Jara, Palencia, Soria and Burgos. She was a dedicated nurse helping Teresa through her many health problems and attending to her lovingly in her last journeys.

After Teresa's death Anne returned to Avila and in 1595 she went on the foundation of Ocaña. Later she was one of the seven Spanish sisters who founded the Discalced Carmelite nuns in France. In 1611 she left France for the Flanders and in 1612 she founded a Carmel in



Antwerp where she held the office of prioress for the rest of her life. She died on June 7, 1626.

Anne was greatly loved by the people of Antwerp and after her death many miracles were attributed to her intercession; by 1632 more than 150 had been noted. Anne wrote extensively after Teresa's death, leaving her memories of Teresa containing both

biographical details and insights into the spirit which permeated her foundations. She had the joy of seeing Teresa beatified in 1614 and canonised in 1622. Anne wrote about the foundation and origin of Teresa's reform in Spain and France, including the Defence of the Teresian Inheritance. She also wrote her own autobiography, Spiritual Treatises, Conferences and meditations as well as numerous letters of which 665 are still extant.

Anne of St Bartholomew was declared Venerable in 1735 by Pope Clement XII and beatified in 1917 by Pope Benedict XV. Her Feast Day is kept on June 7th, the anniversary of her death.

Source: www.carmelitesisters.ie;
www.catholic.org/saints;
<https://carmelitenuns.uk/> ♦

Continued from Page 20: St Francis di Girolamo



And serve he did, for 40 years, reaching thousands of souls. It's likely that his work had far greater impact and saved far more souls than it would have, had he been permitted to go to Asia; indeed, it's hard to imagine that he could have been more

productive. Through accepting his lot in life, Francis became the great missionary he always longed to be.

The holy Jesuit's preaching was enhanced by his reputation as a wonder-worker, though he continuously disclaimed any extraordinary powers, and rather attributed the numerous cures which accompanied his ministry to the intercession of St Cyrus to whom he had a special devotion.

After a painful illness, he died in 1716 at the age of 74. He was canonized in 1839 by Pope Gregory XVI.

Source: <https://americaneedsfatima.org>;
<https://catholicexchange.com>;
www.divine-redeemer-sisters.org;
<https://aleteia.org> ♦

Continued from Page 13: Relevance of Dignitas Infinita for Canon Law

include it within its competence. The same reasons suggested that it not be incorporated into the Code, but the possibility has been left open for further norms to define these types of subjects concretely or for the judge to evaluate in individual cases.

These two canons, modified or newly incorporated in the Code of Canon Law, are the best examples of how the amended Book VI of the Code of Canon Law on Penal Sanctions

insists on protecting human dignity. The inclusion and modification of these two canons within the revised Book VI of the Code of Canon Law on Penal Sanctions exemplifies the document's resolute emphasis on safeguarding human dignity.

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He lived to work for the family



Father was a hardworking man who delivered bread as a living to support his wife and three children. He spent all his evenings after work attending classes, hoping to improve himself so that he could one day find a better paying job. Except for Sundays, Father hardly ate a meal together with his family. He worked and studied very hard because he wanted to provide his family with the best money could buy.

Whenever the family complained that he was not spending enough time with them, he reasoned that he was doing all this for them. But he often yearned to spend more time with his family.

The day came when the examination results were announced. To his joy, Father passed, and with distinctions too! Soon after, he was offered a good job as a senior supervisor which paid handsomely.



Like a dream come true, Father could now afford to provide his family with life's little luxuries like nice clothing, fine food and vacation abroad.

However, the family still did not get to see father for most of the week. He continued to work very hard, hoping to be promoted

to the position of manager. In fact, to make himself a worthy candidate for the promotion, he enrolled for another course in the open university.

Again, whenever the family complained that he was not spending enough time with them, he reasoned that he was doing all this for them. But he often yearned to spend more time with his family.

Father's hard work paid off and he was promoted. Jubilantly, he decided to hire a maid to relieve his wife from her domestic tasks. He also felt that their three-room flat was no longer big enough, and that it would be nice for his family to be able to enjoy the facilities and comfort of a condominium. Having experienced the rewards of his hard work many times before,

Father resolved to further his studies and work at being promoted again. The family still did not get to see much of him. In fact, sometimes



Father had to work on Sundays entertaining clients. Again, whenever the family complained that he was not spending enough time with them, he reasoned that he was doing all this for them. But he often yearned to spend more time with his family.

As expected, Father's hard work paid off again and he bought a beautiful condominium overlooking the coast of Singapore. On the first Sunday evening at their new home, Father declared to his family that he decided not to take anymore courses or pursue any more promotions. From then on he was going to devote more time to his family.

Father did not wake up the next day.

Author Unknown

Source: <https://academictips.org> ♦

Don't ignore the parts in *Dignitas Infinita* about the poor: Card Poola

Hyderabad (AsiaNews) – Focusing on bioethical issues is to offer a partial (and too easy) reading of *Dignitas Infinita*, the doctrinal declaration on human rights released on Monday by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, said Card Anthony Poola, archbishop of Hyderabad, in comments he shared with AsiaNews, starting with the reactions generated in India and beyond by the Vatican document.

“[W]e need to confront those socio-cultural and religious thought-patterns that are behind why many in India still live in subhuman conditions,” something that *Dignitas Infinita* challenges.

It is significant to note that Card Poola is the first Indian from a Dalit family (once referred to as "outcasts") to be raised to the cardinalship in the consistory convened in 2022 by Pope Francis. Because of his direct knowledge of a form of negation of human dignity, his testimony takes on particular significance.

The Vatican's document on human dignity comprehensively reflects the Catholic Church's enriched understanding of dignity, in light of Biblical teachings and tradition, and the implications it has on diverse spheres of life.

Global media as well as Indian newspapers largely focused on gender theory, sex change, surrogacy etc., but the doctrinal teaching covers more ground than this, [and] that needs to be explored. Topics such as poverty, migration, violence, human trafficking, abuse are burning issues that need urgent attention in the Indian context.

Undoubtedly, human dignity is denied to millions across the country as they struggle with poverty, exploitation, discrimination, lack of access to primary healthcare and education, denial of rights, etc.

Dignitas Infinita challenges us, especially the Church, to engage in a discussion on the increasing gap between the wealthy and those deprived of the basics, on those who migrate to escape and survive, on the normalization of violence, on those living on the peripheries whose lives do not matter.

In light of the Gospel values, we need to confront those socio-cultural and religious thought-patterns that are behind why many in India still live in subhuman conditions and find ways to ensure that their sanctity and dignity are recognized and upheld.

Speaking of issues that are remotely important may be easy but it is not easy to discuss the problems which we are all part of. To reflect on the dignity, or the denial of it, of a migrant living next door or the poor in the neighbourhood is not easy but the Vatican Instruction reminds us to place them in the centre of our conversations.

The Declaration also invites the Indian Church to discuss the structural causes of poverty and injustice and violence and try to find ways to uphold the dignity of the millions in our contexts.

(Nirmala Carvalho contributed to this article.)

--- accessed from

<https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Cardinal-Poola:-Don't-ignore-the-parts-in-Dignitatis-Infinita-about-the-poor-60527.html>, 30 April 2024 ♦

Pope's Prayer Intentions – 2024

May : *For the formation of religious and seminarians*

We pray that religious women and men, and seminarians, grow in their own vocations through their human, pastoral, spiritual and community formation, leading them to be credible witnesses to the Gospel.

June: *For migrants fleeing their homes*

We pray that migrants fleeing from war or hunger, forced to undertake journeys full of danger and violence, find welcome and new opportunities in the countries that receive them.

PMO INDIA FOR JUBILEE 2025

PUBLICATION OF JUBILEE 2025 HANDBOOK

A comprehensive handbook will be developed, outlining the history, significance, and themes of the Jubilee 2025 in the light of the Synod for a Synodal Church 2021-2024.

TRAINING OF DIOCESAN DIRECTORS

A training program will equip the Diocesan Directors with the knowledge and resources necessary to effectively lead Jubilee preparations in their respective dioceses.

ANIMATION OF CATECHISM TEACHERS, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND CHILDREN

Engaging activities and materials will be created to involve catechism teachers, young people, and children in the spirit of Jubilee 2025.

CONTACT US FOR SALE & ANIMATION

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JOINING HANDS WITH THE CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF INDIA JUBILEE 2025 DESK



DOORS OF DIGNITY

HUMAN DIGNITY IS THE SAME FOR ALL HUMAN
BEINGS: WHEN I TRAMPLE ON THE DIGNITY OF
ANOTHER, I AM TRAMPLING ON MY OWN"
POPE FRANCIS

"Dignity is never lost.
It is the supreme value of every human being."
Dignitas Infinita

