

St Joseph's Catholic Parish

Third Sunday of Easter
Year B, 14 April, 2024

Embracing the communities of
Cherbourg, Goomeri, Murgon,
Proston and Wondai



Unity in Diversity ... being one in Christ through Baptism!



'Dignitas Infinita' and the Roots of Human Dignity

The Vatican, April 9, 2024

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

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". 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 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, marginalisation 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".

"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that dignity is not something granted to the person by others based on their gifts or qualities, such that it could be withdrawn," the declaration states. "Were it so bestowed, it would be given in a conditional and alienable way, and then the very meaning of dignity 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: "an individual substance of a rational nature." The document explains that:

"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".

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.

Dignity that is ontological, inherent, inalienable, indelible – all are ways of expressing "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." 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 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

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Sunday Mass Times

Murgon		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Sunday	8.00am
Wondai		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Saturday	5.00pm
Proston		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Saturday	9.00am
Goomeri		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Sunday (except 5th Sunday)	6.00pm
Gayndah		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	1st, 3rd, 5th	10.30am
every	2nd, 4th	9.00am
Cherbourg		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
5	Sunday	4.30pm
Weekday Mass Times		
12 noon, Wednesday, Gayndah		
5.00pm, Wednesday, Wondai		
9.00am, Thursday, Murgon		
9.00am, Friday, Castra		
Holy Hour for Peace		
Wondai, 4.00pm to 5.00pm, Wednesday, before Mass		

Today's readings

Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19; John 2: 1-5;
Luke 24: 35-48

Response:

Lord, let your face shine on us.

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia! Lord Jesus, make your word plain to us: make our hearts burn with love when you speak. Alleluia!

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God. Ontological dignity is indelible and remains valid beyond any circumstances in which the person may find themselves".

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 choices – for example, a woman who willingly agrees to be a surrogate – 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".

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 recognise that the firm rejection of the death penalty shows to what extent it is possible to recognise 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".

'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".

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".

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

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.

Father Raymond J de Souza is the founding editor of Convivium magazine



Pope Francis: 'A Christian Without Courage' is 'a Useless Christian'

A Christian without courage, who does not turn his own strength to good, who does not bother anyone, is a useless Christian.

The Pope noted that fortitude develops in a twofold manner, being composed of both an inner, or passive, dimension as well as an active, or outer, orientation that allows humans to respond to adversity.

Fortitude is first and foremost a victory against ourselves. Most of the fears that



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We pray for those who are sick:
Renee Elliott; Allan McKeering;
David McIntosh; Bob Ricketts.

We are invited to have a Parish representative to Synod in September and October 2024. More details will be available on request.



17 May 2024 – 150th Anniversary of The Cathedral of Saint Stephen. Return of the Message Stick Ecumenical Celebration.

Further details will be available from the Cathedral's website in the near future. <https://www.cathedralofststephen.org.au/150-year-anniversary.html>

arise within us are unrealistic and do not come true at all.

It is better, then, to invoke the Holy Spirit and face everything with patient fortitude: one problem at a time, as we are able, but not alone! The Lord is with us, if we trust in him and sincerely seek the good. Then in every situation we can count on God's providence to shield and armor us.

Fortitude is a fundamental virtue because it takes the challenge of evil in the world seriously. Some pretend it does not exist, that everything is going fine, that human will is not sometimes blind, that dark forces that bring death do not lurk in history.

Let us ask the Lord for peace, and may we not forget our brothers and sisters who suffer greatly in war-torn places.