

Third Sunday of Easter

“Every human person possesses an infinite dignity.” With those words the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith opened a new declaration this week that summarizes much of Catholic moral teaching with a review of contemporary circumstances. It speaks of four types of dignity: “ontological,” which comes simply because we exist and are “willed, created, and loved by God;” “moral dignity,” when we exercise our freedom in accord with God’s will; “social dignity,” which provides the necessities for those experiencing extreme poverty; and “existential dignity,” indicating that people with the material essentials for life still need “peace, joy, and hope.”

The declaration lists some grave violations of human dignity in order to call us to a better life. **The Drama of Poverty** heads the list, in which some people by birth lack opportunities that others have. We are all responsible for raising the dignity of the poor. **War** denies human dignity, especially when “innocent civilians... perish beyond the confines of a battlefield.” The **Travail of Migrants** starts with the loss of dignity in their own countries and continues when they put their lives at risk in order to care for their families. **Human Trafficking** includes “the marketing of human organs and tissues, the sexual exploitation of boys and girls, slave labor, including prostitution, the drug and weapons trade, terrorism, and international organized crime.” **Sexual Abuse** “leaves deep scars in the hearts of those who suffer it.” **Violence Against Women** reveals how they “are often not accorded the same dignity as men” and the “numerous cases where women are killed.” **Abortion** confronts our belief that “the dignity of every human being has an intrinsic character and is valid from the moment of conception until natural death.” “The Church also takes a stand against the practice of **surrogacy**, through which the immensely worthy child becomes a mere object.” **Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide** “turn the concept of dignity against life itself.” **The Marginalization of People with Disabilities** obscures the truth that each person is “willed and loved by God. Thus, every effort should be made to encourage the inclusion and active participation of those who are affected by frailty or disability in the life of society and of the Church.” Under **Gender Theory**, it is contrary to human dignity “that, in some places, not a few people are imprisoned, tortured, and even deprived of the good of life solely because of their sexual orientation.” Sexuality is a gift from God “to be accepted with gratitude and placed at the service of the good.” “Any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception.” Finally, **digital technologies** tend “toward the creation of a world in which exploitation, exclusion, and violence grow, extending even to the point of harming the dignity of the human person.”

All these concerns challenge us to honor the infinite dignity of every human person. These moral foundations spring from principles in the bible. Today we hear from the First Letter of John challenging but consoling words: “My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one.... The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments.... Whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him.”

Sunday, April 14, 2024