

From the Office of Marriage & Family Life:

“Dignitas Infinita” on Human Dignity – A Response to May 17 - *International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia*

May 17th has been designated as the *International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia*. It was created in 2004 to draw attention to the violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex people, and all of those with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, and sex characteristics. Today it is a worldwide *Celebration of Sexual and Gender Diversities* which according to the May17.org website is intended ‘to draw the attention of decision makers, the media, the public, corporations, opinion leaders, local authorities, etc. to the alarming situation faced by people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, and sex characteristics.’ Although as Church we cannot support the *Celebration of Sexual and Gender Diversities*, we can use May 17 as a point of reflection.

The May 17 theme for 2024 is *No One Left Behind: Equality, Freedom and Justice for All*. The May17.org website exhorts: ‘The world has just celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — a document that is much more than a cornerstone of international law: it is a guide to navigate a deeply divided world, a set of values that everyone can live by, and ultimately a force for good. And yet, we know that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” represents a promise not yet fulfilled — for LGBTIQ people across the world, and for everyone experiencing the suffocating impact on their lives of diverse layers of inequalities.’

The recently released Declaration “Dignitas Infinita” on Human Dignity [“Dignitas Infinita” on Human Dignity](#) from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) echoes this appreciation for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: ‘As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of that document, the Church sees an opportunity to proclaim anew its conviction that all human beings—created by God and redeemed by Christ—must be recognized and treated with respect and love due to their inalienable dignity. The anniversary also provides an occasion for the Church to clarify some frequent misconceptions concerning human dignity and to address some serious and urgent related issues. (Dignitas Infinita - Introduction paragraph 2).’

The clarifications of misconceptions are made based on the recognizing the ‘possibility of a fourfold distinction of the concept of dignity: ontological dignity, moral dignity, social dignity, and existential dignity (Dignitas Infinita - Introduction paragraph 7).’

- Ontological dignity comes by our very existence as human beings and being willed, created, and loved by God.
- Moral dignity reflects how one uses freedom.
- Social dignity refers to the quality of a person’s living conditions.
- Existential dignity is what is colloquially referred to as “quality of life”: ‘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. (Dignitas Infinita - Introduction paragraph 8).’

Dignitas Infinita discusses the following as grave violations:

- The Drama of Poverty
- War
- The Travail of Migrants
- Human Trafficking
- Sexual Abuse
- Violence Against Women
- Abortion
- Surrogacy
- Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide
- The Marginalization of People with Disabilities
- Gender Theory
- Sex Change
- Digital Violence

While affirming the infinite dignity of each and every human life we need to acknowledge and draw attention to the violations of human dignity listed above which include those celebrated by May 17. Dignitas Infinita's response to those who would challenge Catholics for lack of support for such celebrations is that these celebrations are grave violations of human dignity. They seek to deny the gift of our sexual differences which is at the heart of our dignity rooted in our creation in the image and likeness of God. *"We cannot separate the masculine and the feminine from God's work of creation, which is prior to all our decisions and experiences, and where biological elements exist which are impossible to ignore. Only by acknowledging and accepting this difference in reciprocity can each person fully discover, their dignity, and their identity (Dignitas Infinita - paragraph 59)."*

May we as Church place respect for the dignity of the human person at the center of the commitment to the common good. Let us do this with hope and confidences in the power that flows from the Risen Christ, who revealed the inherent dignity of every man and woman.

Let us heed the appeal in Pope Francis: "I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us. (Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* (24 May 2015), no. 205: AAS 107 (2015), 928)"

Mary, Mother of All, pray for us to resist temptation to wish evil upon those we see as different and to love those we find difficult to love. Show us how and when to speak the truth in love.