

DDF DECLARATION

Dignitas infinita, a superficial document and some serious errors

ECCLESIA

09_04_2024



**Tommaso
Scandroglio**



The Declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith *Dignitas Infinita* was published yesterday. A document born after no less than five drafts produced over the last five years.

The basic approach, of a metaphysical nature, is in principle correct but, given the value of the document, it required more in-depth study, for example on the concept of person in relation to the three persons of the Holy Trinity - it is from there that the preciousness of each person is derived in the final instance - and then emphasising that the intrinsic preciousness of mankind derives secondarily from the particular nature of his actualised form, that is from his rationality (in the document there is only a very brief mention of this conceptual junction). It is the quality of this nature that makes mankind intrinsically valuable and therefore deserving of the appellation *persona*, which is a sort of title to indicate a very high dignity. Person is thus *nomen dignitatis*. Thomas Aquinas expresses himself on the point as follows: 'Among all other substances, individuals of a reasonable nature have a special name. And this name is *persona*' (*Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 29, a. 1 c.). Although the structure is correct, not all of the individual arguments articulated are, there is then little depth of analysis, a characteristic feature of the entire pontificate.

Alongside agreeable passages in this Declaration, signed by Prefect Victor Fernández and approved by the Pope, there are others that are ambiguous, others that are questionable and others that are ultimately erroneous. In relation to the ambiguous passages - leaving aside for reasons of space the proposed definition of "human nature" - we will stop at point no. 1 where the primacy of the human person is affirmed, as previously asserted in Pope Francis' *Laudate Deum* (no. 39). This is true on the natural level, but not on the supernatural one. In fact, primacy always belongs to God. For a document that rightly finds human dignity on the fact that we have been created in the image of God, the lack of reference to transcendent primacy is a significant omission.

Regarding the questionable passages and in a telegraphic manner: "The Christian humanism of the Renaissance later emphasized this ontological dignity and its preeminent manifestation in free human action" (n. 13). Humanism, even the courageously defined Christian humanism, was anthropocentric and not theocentric. Equally critical is the following casual statement: 'human history shows clear progress in understanding human dignity and freedom' (n. 32). We are sure that the opposite appears evident to many.

Also questionable is the proposed list of conduct or phenomena contrary to the dignity of the person,

a list unbalanced on the issues of social justice: poverty, war, migrants, trafficking in persons, sexual abuse, violence against women, femicide, abortion, surrogacy, euthanasia and assisted suicide, the rejection of the differently abled, gender theory, sex change, digital violence (in that order in the document). All certainly censurable conduct or phenomena, but despite assurances that the list was not exhaustive (see Presentation), conspicuous by their absence are, for example, divorce, contraception, artificial insemination, experimentation on embryos, and environmentalism. It would have been more fruitful to start from the Decalogue to draw up such a list.

Let us come to the errors, at least those that seem most obvious to us. The first is in the title: *Dignitas infinita*. The dignity of the human person is not infinite (cf. n. 1) because his being is not infinite. Only God's dignity is infinite because His being is infinite. Our creaturalty entails an intrinsic preciousness that is limited, finite, but at the same time immeasurable, i.e. immense, and absolute, i.e. not subject to conditions, as is correctly emphasised several times in the text ([John Paul II had fallen into the same error, cited in the document](#)).

Second error: at no. 28 *Laudate Deum* is again quoted: "Human life is incomprehensible and unsustainable without other creatures" (no. 67) Yet the Declaration no less than 15 times and very appropriately repeats that human dignity is such beyond all circumstances. Now instead, human dignity seems to descend from other creatures: no longer absolute dignity, but relative dignity, in relation to plants and animals. The classic obolus due to environmentalism. On the third error - the death penalty conflicts with human dignity (cf. n. 34). Let us finally dwell on the paragraph devoted to the gender theory. Now, this theory includes, among other aspects, a positive judgement on homosexuality and transsexuality. On this second aspect, the Declaration devotes a special paragraph taking a correct critical approach. Thus, it was expected that the paragraph "Gender theory" would deal with homosexuality. This is true in the opening part of the same, but then the reflections it articulates seem more in keeping with transsexualism, and only vaguely related to homosexuality. Having said that, it is evident that an explicit and reasoned condemnation of homosexuality is lacking, taking refuge in vague references to the sexual difference between men and women. It could only be so after the [publication of *Fiducia supplicans* that blesses homosexuality](#).

We were talking about the opening part of the paragraph "Gender theory" which is dedicated to homosexuality. In it, the Catechism of the Catholic Church is correctly quoted where it affirms that the homosexual person must be welcomed (cf.

no. 2358), but the same is not quoted when it censures both homosexuality and homosexual conduct. Not only that, but immediately after this quotation, the Declaration thus continues: "For this reason it is to be denounced as 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" (no. 55). It would seem that the acceptance of homosexual persons implies the exclusion of the legal prohibition of homosexual conduct. Sanctioning homosexual conduct would then be a *malum in se*. Here, then, is the basic question: is it morally permissible to sanction homosexual conduct? An answer that we know is stinging for many: yes, but not always. Let us proceed systematically. What is the criterion to refer to when it is right to sanction a certain conduct? The common good. In the case of prohibitions, conduct that is seriously detrimental to the common good must be prohibited. Homosexual conduct is potentially detrimental to the common good for several reasons.

First and foremost, homosexuality contradicts human nature, and hence human dignity, in its very roots and depths. It is a violent disorder of the person that cannot but reverberate externally when it becomes conduct, a relationship, reverberating negatively in that social order whose protection is the first task of the ruler. Practised homosexuality leads to the corruption of thought and customs, for example in the sphere of sexual behaviour, even among heterosexuals, in education when affectivity is taught, etc. Let us then think of the negative effects we have had to record in the family sphere where civil unions or gay 'marriages' have been legitimised, including above all so-called homogenisation. Let us also bear in mind the procreative sphere, where homosexuality has encouraged practices such as heterologous fertilisation, uterus for rent and fomented an anti-life culture, because homosexuality is by its intimate structure an infertile condition.

Therefore, in the abstract, homosexual conduct can be lawfully forbidden, but in practice it must be verified that the ban is effective, that is, that it promises more benefits than harm to the common good. Otherwise, it is better to tolerate and not prohibit. It is therefore appropriate, with a thousand distinctions to be made, that in some cultures, such as Africa, homosexuality is banned because socially it is already deeply disavowed, especially since for African culture descent is everything and a relationship that is by its very nature infertile is perceived as a very serious insult to shared values. Homosexuality in those contexts is already radically rejected and not to ban it would mean to incentivise it and thus promote highly destabilising social processes (in a similar vein, Pius XI in *Casti Connubii* asked rulers to punish free unions - 'turpi connubii' in the text - which, among other things, represent a less serious moral

species than homosexual relations).

It goes without saying that the type of sanction and the quantum of punishment must be commensurate, among other aspects to be taken into consideration, with the nature of the evil committed and therefore, as the Declaration itself recalls, the death penalty and torture are to be excluded, also because the latter is an intrinsically evil action.

On the other hand, for the same reasons, it seems decidedly advisable not to ban it in the West - also because it is realistically impossible to decide in the opposite direction - precisely because society looks on this condition with absolute favour. The drug would be worse than the evil to be cured. So it is first of all necessary to intervene in the cultural sphere and in the meantime tolerate the phenomenon, not prohibit it and certainly equally not legitimise it.