

# ON HUMAN DIGNITY

Below is a brief summary of the recent Declaration on Human Dignity. In it, the Catholic Church confirms “the primacy of the human person and the defense of his or her dignity beyond every circumstance.”

 [mncatholic.org/humandignity2024](https://mncatholic.org/humandignity2024)



## WHAT IS HUMAN DIGNITY?

*“God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ [...] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” // Genesis 1:26-27*

While “each individual and also every human community is responsible for the concrete and actual realization of human dignity, [...] it is incumbent on States not only to protect human dignity but also to guarantee the conditions necessary for it to flourish in the integral promotion of the human person.”

The Declaration insists that this dignity **“be placed at the center of the commitment to the common good** and at the center of every legal system. Indeed, respect for the dignity of each person is the indispensable basis for the existence of any society that claims to be founded on just law and not on the force of power. **Acknowledging human dignity forms the basis for upholding fundamental human rights, which precede and ground all civic coexistence.”**



## CLARIFYING HUMAN DIGNITY

A four-fold distinction on the concept of dignity includes

- ontological dignity
- moral dignity
- social dignity
- existential dignity

Ontological dignity “belongs to the person as such simply because he or she exists and is willed, created, and loved by God.”

Moral dignity refers “to how people exercise their freedom.” People “can always act against” dignity. So, while someone’s action may be undignified, his or her inherent dignity remains, and the Church works to encourage that person to “repent and convert.”

Social dignity indicates “the quality of a person’s living conditions.” Those who live in extreme poverty may have “undignified” housing. However, this is not a judgement on the person’s intrinsic dignity.

Lastly, existential dignity is the perception we place on various situations. For example, those who lack nothing may still live without joy. Or in other situations, such as serious illness, the hardship may seem undignified, but the person’s dignity always remains intact.

*“This dignity comes to each person from the love of the Creator, without exception, because people are created in the image and likeness of God. As Genesis 1:26-27 describes and St. Thomas Aquinas attests to, the ‘person’ signifies what is most perfect in all nature.”*

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continued ...

In light of the primacy we must place on human dignity, violations of human dignity remain. “In a world in which a lot is said about rights, how often is human dignity actually trampled on!” Therefore, we must “awaken to our responsibility to” engage in concrete ways we can uphold the intrinsic worth of every human person.



## ABORTION

The acceptance of abortion in the popular mind, in behavior, and even in law itself is a telling sign of an extremely dangerous crisis of the moral sense, which is becoming more and more incapable of distinguishing between good and evil ...”

“Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems.”

## ASSISTED SUICIDE

“... laws permitting euthanasia or assisted suicide are sometimes called ‘death with dignity acts’ ... However, in response to this, it must be strongly reiterated that suffering does not cause the sick to lose their dignity, which is intrinsic and inalienably their own.”

“Life is a right, not death, which must be welcomed, not administered.”

## SURROGACY

“A child is always a gift and never the basis of a commercial contract.”

“... the legitimate desire to have a child cannot be transformed into a ‘right to a child’ ...”

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

“The ‘trade in people’ is a vile activity, a disgrace to our societies that claim to be civilized!”

We “must not cease fighting against such phenomena as ‘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.’”

## POVERTY

“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 neighbors.”

“It must be recognized that ‘there is no poverty worse than that which takes away work and the dignity of work.’”

## GENDER THEORY

“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.”

“... any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception.”

## WAR

“War is always a ‘defeat of humanity.’”

“All wars, by the mere fact that they contradict human dignity, are ‘conflicts that will not solve problems but only increase them.’”

To read the full document, visit [mncatholic.org/humandignity2024](https://mncatholic.org/humandignity2024)



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