

Human Dignity and the Common Good in Papal Social Teaching (1878—2005)

Summary

The analysis of papal social teachings with regard to human dignity and common good leads to several final conclusions. It is our belief that Polish scientific literature lacks a monograph to jointly interpret the ideals of human dignity and common good against the background of the social teachings of the Popes. In our opinion, the aforementioned categories comprise the core of the social teaching of Saint Peter's successors, commencing with the enunciations of Leo XIII and concluding with those of John Paul II. The documents analyzed revealed an exceptionally broad spectrum of statements on *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* that – with particular emphasis on human dignity – lay the foundation for the entire social teachings of the papacy. In addition, we subscribe to the notion asserting that the basic theses of the papal social teaching on human dignity and the common good were advanced by their creator – **Leo XIII**.

There is no doubt that the author of *Rerum Novarum* referred to these matters throughout the whole span of his long pontificate. Relating to the idea of human dignity, like many of his followers, Leo XIII accentuated the fundamental role of Christianity in its protection and development. His approval of human dignity, therefore, was grounded in theology as a direct invocation of Jesus Christ's teaching about the equal ontological dignity of all men as *imago Dei*. In the teachings of the Popes human dignity is one's inalienable attribute. Man cannot rid himself of it, given that, in accordance with Leo XIII, retaining dignity is an obligation to God that man must fulfill and cannot evade.

The notion of human dignity supported by the organicistic concept of society was used by Leo XIII to reject the slogans of natural equality of all men. The Pope considered men to be equal in the ontological sense rather than in capacity or physical traits. Furthermore, the organic structure of society sustained the advancement of *bonum commune* because all parts of the social organism worked for the benefit of the whole.

Leo XIII's concept of joining human dignity with the idea of human liberty was of particular significance. His successors on the papal throne fully reaffirmed this position. According to the author of *Libertas praestantissimum*, man's dignity is inseparably linked to his liberty, which is vested solely in creatures endowed with intellect. The way a man uses his reason and liberty shall be indicative of the level of his dignity. The Pope believed that Christians should choose true freedom in order to better protect their dignity. He preached that it was owing to Jesus Christ, who restored and broadened the original dignity

of human nature, that men's freedom was reinforced and directed towards a path of pursuing transcendental goals. Christians should accept God's sovereignty over men, for true and worthy liberty ought to be subject to the natural and eternal law of God. Thus we discern in the papal ideas a linkage between human dignity, and divine and natural laws.

The concept of *dignitas humana* set out in *Rerum Novarum* was employed by the Pope to defend both the dignity of workers and private property from excessive interference by the state, as well as to reject the notion of class struggle and sustain the Christian institution of alms. Leo XIII indicated that true dignity relies on virtue, equally within the reach of the wealthy and the poor. The support for the concept of private property as an instrument to protect the dignity of man is present in the remarks of all the "activist" Popes.

The idea of human dignity enabled the Pope to formulate several workers' rights, such as the right to decent working conditions, the right to a just wage, and the right to rest. Hence, already in the teachings of Leo XIII a number of human rights are grounded not only in natural law but also in human dignity.

While conforming to the traditional Catholic teaching about marriage that forbids divorce, the Pope was the first of St. Peter's successors to preach the dignity of women. In his rejection of the possibility of granting divorce Leo XIII lectured that not only did it have a negative influence on woman's dignity, but it also adversely affected the public good by destabilizing society. Therefore, once again, it is possible to notice how the categories analyzed permeate and complement each other.

An assumption can be derived from Leonine teaching that abiding by the idea of *dignitas humana* was conducive to improving living standards both in the public and private arena, whereas the Christian interpretation of the concept served as a means for abolishing slavery. In addition, human dignity was used to protect the family and marriage, contributing to the furtherance of the common weal as a result. This is a constant tendency in the papal social teaching, reinforced as well by Leo XIII's successors on the papal throne. *Bonum commune* and *dignitas humana* constitute categories that at once coexist, complement, and reinforce each other.

Leo XIII used the category of *dignitas humana* to support the Catholic understanding of the right to resistance (*ius resistendi*) towards government that breaches divine or natural laws, since human dignity commands obedience to God rather than to people. The Pope linked the idea of human dignity with Catholic religion, noting that the state best protects human dignity when it follows the teaching of the Church. It then guarantees peace and security to the governed and the governing by allowing the citizens to obey the government without losing their human dignity.

Even more abundant were papal enunciations on *bonum commune*, where a variety of terms were used interchangeably to signify the common good, namely: common benefit, public good, common weal, social good, the good of mankind, the good of the whole of humanity, and general good. The Pope stressed the merits of religion and the Church in the advancement of the common weal; he also argued for the indispensability of a sovereign Church State for the common good and benefit. Meanwhile religion, as the supreme common good, facilitated the protection and promotion of *bonum commune*.

Leo XIII preached that common good is the main and original purpose of the existence of any authority, and that every new government should be accepted upon its formation

precisely in view of the common good that has shaped and supported it. Any rebellion against such rule is forbidden so long as it duly protects *bonum commune*, because good is for the society the first and the final law after God. Accordingly, the category of common good as universal law gained legal status.

The Pope's introduction of a definition of the law, derived from Aquinas' concept, founded on the category of common good was of vital importance to the Catholic social teaching. *The law – Leo XIII taught – is nothing but a decree by a rightful authority issued according to the dictates of common sense for the sake of the common good.* Thereby, the common weal is the objective of statutory law, which plays an essential role in its protection and advancement. Simultaneously, the Pope noted that the rules established by men originate from and depend on natural and eternal laws. For this reason, the citizens should cooperate to achieve the goal set for the entire community, hence they should strive to reach *bonum commune*. The idea of the common weal was used by Leo XIII as a call for active participation in the political life of the state by all Catholics, because the Church recognizes every government that protects and promotes *bonum commune*.

Invoking the authority of St. Thomas, the Pope taught that the objective of the state involves all citizens, as it is the common good, i.e. the kind of good in which every citizen alone and all citizens together are entitled to participate in due proportion. For this reason the state is called a "commonwealth" – it brings people together in the name of the common good. As a result, the governing as well as the governed, each to the best of their ability, should concern themselves with the protection and promotion of the common good.

Leo XIII pioneered an exceptionally interesting way of linking the idea of the common weal with the principle of subsidiarity, to which he was a forerunner. The Pope preached that for as long as the actions of an individual do not menace the common good and do not harm others, neither the individual nor their family should be subject to interference by the state and both should be allowed freedom of action. However, since the care of the common weal is the government's main end, it may step in *whenever the general interest or the interest of a particular social class are harmed or threatened* and they cannot be protected in any other way. For Leo XIII the principle of subsidiarity determined the scope of state involvement.

The concept of the common weal and the organic nature of society enabled the Pope, as the first successor of St. Peter, to formulate the principle of social solidarity, which states that all social strata are indispensable to one another and work together in the interest of *bonum commune*. Social solidarity understood in a Catholic vein permitted the elimination of class struggle. The notion of the common good allowed Leo XIII to accept the kind of political struggle that was waged according to the rules of justice and favored *bonum commune*, as well as to summon the government to impose moderate taxes on the citizens. The author of *Rerum Novarum* lectured that a government that deprives the private owner of more than is fair is unjust and degrading because it diminishes the common good. The Pope and his followers continuously emphasized that the ideas of the common good and human dignity stand guard over private property, which helps protect and promote them.

Analogous to the other "activist" Popes, Leo XIII was convinced of the great importance of the proper, i.e. Christian education of the youth in the process of advancing the common weal – as a Christian upbringing facilitates the furtherance of *bonum commune*.

The successor of Leonine teaching – **Pius XI** also linked the idea of the common good with the principle of solidarity and the principle of subsidiarity. He lectured that the goal of the state as well as every citizen should be to overcome class struggle and achieve a peaceful cooperation of different social strata. In the teaching of this Pope the principle of subsidiarity rose to the rank of a jurisdiction principle that determined jurisdiction while fulfilling *bonum commune*. In his call for the formation of Christian associations of workers Pius XI, like Leo XIII, advocated that they should be focused on encouraging employers and employees to take active measures to promote the common good. Labor corporations would lead to avoiding both the class conflict and free competition. In Pius XI's conception the corporation was a bridging structure between the individualist capitalism and the collectivist socialism. From this perspective, the state follows the pursuit of *bonum commune* best when it functions according to the correct systemic model. The systemic proposals of the "Christian civilization" put forward by Pius XI aspired to establish internal and international order, which, based on social justice would be capable of coordinating economic activity with the idea of *bonum commune*. With this purpose in mind, the predecessor of Pius XII proposed the recreation of transitional organisms between the state and the individual.

When discussing capitalism, Pius XI wished for it to function in conformity with the rule of justice, i.e. to safeguard and promote the common good and the Christian idea of human dignity. It is possible to argue the thesis that the notion of *bonum commune* is for Pius XI in many ways identical with the principle of social justice. In reference to the organicistic concept of society the Pope joined the ideas of social justice and the common good, because he considered adhering to these rules a necessary condition for the development and existence of the man as a creature endowed with personal dignity. Pius XI lectured that social justice requires taking active measures with the common good in mind of the individuals. What stems from this is an obligation imposed on all Christians commanding them to contribute to the development of the entire social organism. One can therefore distinguish in the teaching of Pius XI an attempt at a twofold, mutual justification of the ideas of dignity and the common good. Christians, as members of the Church striving for a union with Jesus Christ and conscious of their dignity, should pursue the promotion of the idea of *bonum commune*. Furthermore, as a part of a larger whole they should actively contribute to its good. Hence, the aforementioned justification is not only of religious but also of rationalist character, for the metaphysical relations are supported by common sense. Human dignity is of fundamental importance to the Pope and bolsters the entire system of values, rights, and obligations.

The teaching of Pius XI reveals unyielding criticism of the communist system, which in addition to depriving humans of freedom takes away their human dignity, and fails to protect the common good. The Pope likewise rejected the remaining totalitarian systems: Fascism and Nazism. Furthermore, reading into the Pope's condemnation of racism, nationalism, and the cult of the state is not unwarranted when based on the assumption of equal ontological dignity of all men regardless of race and country of origin. Moreover, bearing in mind that in the interior life of the country man as a person is vested with rights conferred upon him by God, the author of the encyclical instructed that these rights must be protected from any attempts to question or eradicate them either by society or

the state. Pius XI maintained that those who reject this principle fail to understand that the common good is ultimately described and imparted based both on human nature, which harmoniously fuses the rights of the individual with general obligations, and on the purpose of society, also described through nature. The human community likewise exists for men to develop as individuals and for all men to cooperate for the benefit of the common good. Therefore, by exposing the idea of personalism, the author of *Mit brennender sorge* defends the inviolability of personal rights of men, because impugning them would undermine the existence of the entire human community.

In order for the state to function according to the principles formulated by the Pope, i.e. to function correctly, it must provide its citizens with adequate standards of living, especially with regard to employment. For this reason the authorities should influence the employers to partake in the development of the society for the sake of *bonum commune*. Pius XI frequently indicated the part Christianity played in the creation and development of the notion of human dignity of all men, including the workers.

While addressing the need for improvement in the situation of the poor, the Pope opposed resorting to violence in the defense of human dignity; moreover, he ruled out the possibility of transforming the social system by way of revolution. Instead, he called for humanitarian aid for the poor, explaining that men should be afforded the subsistence minimum, which is an indispensable means of protecting their dignity. The measures adopted for the protection of *dignitas humana* should correspond with the principle of *bonum commune*. These are the type of tasks that Christians who engage in Catholic Action should be prepared to undertake. As a result, a Catholic acting for the benefit of the common good would exercise his or her political rights while serving both the Church and the state.

Similarly to Leo XIII, Pius XI believed that private ownership contributed to the spread of *bonum commune* and for that reason should be protected and reinforced by the state. However, the idea of *bonum commune* implied, in the Pope's view, state ownership of some of the branches of economy. It is, therefore, possible to discern a fundamental shift in Pius XI's approach from the teaching of Leo XIII, who did not take a stand on public ownership.

Pius XII proclaimed that the primary tasks of any public authority embrace the protection of the inviolable scope of persons' rights and their human dignity, as well as the facilitation of the fulfillment of their obligations. After all, these are the key matters in the promotion of the common good to which the state is appointed. On the aforementioned basis Pius XII asserted that public authority cannot excessively interfere with the activity of an individual; most importantly it cannot make direct decisions concerning the inception or termination of human life (excluding punishment according to the rule of law), nor its physical, spiritual, religious, or moral development – as such interference would certainly collide with the personal rights and obligations of man. Whoever tries to introduce a wider range of government activity than stems from natural or divine laws shall injure *bonum commune*, as understood by Christianity.

Pius XII introduced a catalog of basic rights of the human person founded on human dignity, in which he included the right to life and its physical, mental and moral development, in particular the right to freedom, to profess religion, the right to contract marriage,

and the right to start a family. Furthermore, he enumerated the right to work, to choose a life path, and to use material goods while abiding by the restrictions implicated by the common good. His successors on the papal throne fully embraced this position.

In his urge to form of a new civilization Pius XII placed special significance on the idea of *dignitas humana*, which was supposed to become one of its fundamentals. It was precisely the Christian civilization that, by protecting human dignity and respecting healthy elements of *the most diverse local cultures*, identified and established moral principles common to everybody, which provided the permanent foundation for all men. The Pope argued that the common good of humanity is inseparably linked with *bonum commune* of given countries, and both categories are mutually conditioned.

In the teaching of Pius XII the common good encompasses human rights, which are anchored in human dignity. The Pope believed that the best protection of human rights would be guaranteed by a system based on the Christian principles of justice, truth, love, and freedom. He deemed that they would be safeguarded best by a democracy that is centered around freedom, equality, and citizens' awareness of their powers and obligations. In the Pope's conviction men should take it upon themselves to care for the protection and furtherance of their individual dignity as well.

Analogous to his predecessors, appealing to the concept of man as a social creature, the Pope recalled the basic human right of association. Associations in their functioning should not infringe on the right to property and legitimate interests of the other social strata, but instead should build consensus and look after the common good of the society as a whole, as stated by the Pope. The Pope's concept is marked by a constant reference to the principle of social solidarism, which is conducive to the protection and promotion of *bonum commune*.

Pius XII emphasized that owing to the documents published by his predecessors some disputes between the employers and employees in the United States are settled with consideration for the common good and the dignity of the human person. He was the first of all the Popes to make such an unequivocal linkage between the categories of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune*. In his view, with the support of these two principles, finding the correct solution to the social question would become feasible. For Pius XII the dignity of the human person is the source of knowledge – it enables men to discern their rights. No authority could dispute these rights because the Creator has inscribed them in the personal dignity of man.

In the papal teaching private property should function as an incentive for men to work in the interest of their temporal and supernatural objectives, in order to become the foundation of their freedom and dignity as *imago Dei*. It is clear that Pius XII, like his predecessors, perceived private property as an instrument to protect human dignity and freedom. However, private ownership is restricted by the principle of the common good and for that reason has to be regulated; nonetheless, the state can interfere only in cases when it is impossible to establish the right to the use of property, or when the regard for the common good requires expropriation, which takes place by way of compensation.

The Pope was convinced that human dignity was the basis for the religious, political, social, and economic rights of men. We fully subscribe to the perception that Pius XII's teaching is deeply permeated by the idea of personalism drawn from the works of Jacques

Maritain. The Pope called constant attention to the natural and supernatural dignity of men, stressed their subjectivity in the social and political life, and supported the creation of the type of political system that would best protect the rights and development of human persons, in addition to enabling them to achieve transcendental goals.

Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, **John XXIII** taught that the idea of human dignity – *imago Dei* – has its direct source in God, who is the highest truth and the greatest good, as well as the deepest source of existence of the human community, which should duly organize itself into the kind of system that would best protect human dignity. The successor of Pius XII maintained that *dignitas humana* originates directly from Christianity, from assigning a special place and role to men by God, as a result of which men enjoy universal and natural rights that are grounded in human dignity and cannot be relinquished.

The Pope gave the idea of *dignitas humana* the rank of sanctity and pronounced it an underpinning of social life, whose objectives are truth, justice, and love. In the teaching of the Author of *Mater et Magistra* the dignity of the person and the goodness of his or her excellence, which aims to reach the highest end, holds a value superior to the objectives of the society that must be subordinated to it. For these reasons the Author of the encyclical frequently accentuated the concern for the good of the person and one's dignity as the final and irrefutable considerations.

Much like in the teaching of Pius XII, human dignity is the source from which many rights are derived. The most important among them are: the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to a decent standard of living. What is more, man is entitled to the right to enjoy moral and cultural values, which to the Author of the encyclical included the natural right to due respect, the right to education, the freedom to pursue the truth, the right to voice one's own beliefs, and free artistic expression on stipulation that the principles of moral order and the common good are observed. Thus the common good conditions the right to the affirmation of their political and artistic convictions.

It should be stressed that the right to engage in economic activity suited to one's degree of responsibility originates precisely from the dignity of a human person. In addition, from dignity also springs the worker's entitlement to a wage that is determined in compliance with the precepts of justice in the amount limited by the economic circumstances, but sufficient to guarantee a standard of living consistent with human dignity for the worker and his or her family. Pervading the teaching of John XXIII is a noticeable interdependence between the categories of work, remuneration, and justice, which concomitantly affect human dignity. The Author of *Pacem in Terris* affirmed human dignity regarding it – let us stress it once again – as the source of human rights. This stance is distinctive of the social teachings of the papacy.

Among other important issues linked to the dignity of a human person in the papal teaching were: the right to active participation in public life, and the right to make a personal contribution to the common good of the citizens. The Pope emphasized that in contemporary times the basic measures by which the common good is realized are the rights and obligations of a person. Therefore, there is a discernable connection between the idea of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune*. Human persons are also vested with the right to an adequate and effective defense of their rights, which is equal for all and accords

with the true principles of justice. Public authorities should collaborate with the citizens in an effort to protect and promote the common good, and the collaboration should be grounded in the principle of subsidiarity. In the Pope's belief *dignitas humana* linked with *bonum commune* inclines people to actively participate in the public life of the state and to fight for the protection of their due rights.

John XXIII laid a constant and firm emphasis on the fact that the dignity of a human person requires one's conduct to be guided by common sense while retaining personal freedom. Hence, the Pope made a connection between human dignity and the rational behavior of a free person. When deprived of liberty people are incapacitated from pursuing development and excellence which strips them of their dignity.

The Author of *Pacem in Terris* also recognized, albeit in a slightly different manner than his predecessors, the dignity of women. In his enunciation he indicated that women not only claim their rights in private life but also demand public rights and obligations worthy of their human personality. Once more in the papal teaching, the category of *dignitas humana* proved helpful in the defense of the rights of women, who became a rightful subject of social relations.

One might notice that human dignity is constantly highlighted in the teachings of the Pope as the underpinning of human rights, while the papal proposals contain ethical standards acceptable to all humans and all cultures. The Pope believed that civil societies possess natural dignity just as all men are endowed with equal dignity arising from nature. It seems that John XXIII was the first Pope to teach the dignity of whole societies or nations.

The Pope, similarly to his predecessors, asserted the role and significance of private property in the protection of human dignity and freedom, and accordingly appealed for its expansion. Nevertheless, he recognized the prevailing characteristic of the contemporary times in the increase of state and public property, which he justified by the exigencies of the common good, which necessitate that public authority is entrusted with ever higher numbers of tasks. Therefore, a significant change took place in the papal teaching as John XXIII advocated the expansion of the state and public ownership for the realization of the idea of *bonum commune*, and thus, even if indirectly, supported the limitation of private ownership. Concurrently, the Pope stipulated that meeting such demands has to occur in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity. Although he did recognize the principle, he also stated that *bonum commune* requires much more involvement by the state than ever before. The author of *Mater et Magistra* advocated these additional forms of engagement both on the intrastate and the global level. A new category of "the economic welfare of all nations" has been introduced in his teaching.

When offering his definition of *bonum commune*, John XXIII concluded that *the common good incorporates the entirety of such conditions of social life in which people can reach their own personal excellence more fully and quickly*. Hence, for this Pope the criterion of economic prosperity is not measured by the gross national income or the income per capita, but instead by the creation of the possibility of an equitable distribution, by the state, of produced goods. Fair distribution should guarantee personal development and self-improvement. Therefore, there is an element of personalism visible in John's definition. The common good stands for the circumstances warranting integral development to a human person, and thus taking *dignitas humana* into consideration.

Moreover, the Pope formulated the demands of the common good on the national scale, comprising: employment of the greatest possible number of workers, adequate pricing policy with regard to goods and services, concern for the equal rights of all members of society, widest possible access to cultural benefits, reduction of disproportions between various branches of the economy, adjustment of the production methods to the progress of science and technology, and an endeavor to spread the achieved prosperity over *bonum commune* of the future generations.

John XXIII believed that contemporary times require global authority, because the common good of the whole world concerns all nations. For this reason, worldwide issues can only be solved by an authority of a worldwide reach. Such an authority, equipped with adequate resources, would facilitate the advancement of the universal common good, its activity resulting from mutual cooperation of all nations.

The Pope addressed Christians about making a personal contribution to the universal common good. He also encouraged Catholics to enter into collaboration with non-believers and followers of other religions, as he believed that every man is endowed with human dignity, which should be recognized at all times. It becomes evident that for John XXIII human dignity is an innate attribute of every single man, regardless of the religion he or she professes.

Taking a stand on *dignitas humana*, **Paul VI** preached that human dignity is the core of self-knowledge. This category is, therefore, the main goal to which a man who seeks true development of his personality should aspire. Thus, the Author of *Populorum Progressio* supports a concept of integral humanism derived from personalism. Although the Pope emphasized that by the power of the Sacrament of Baptism Christians have been elevated to a higher level of living so that they could experience dignity specific to the people of this religious orientation, nonetheless, like his predecessor, he preached that the category of *dignitas humana* commands the Christians to respect the professors of other religions and enter into dialogue with them so as to jointly pursue *bonum commune*. Hence, a thesis can be advanced that both categories have a universal and meta-religious value.

The universal character of the abovementioned ideas is also revealed in the Pope's appeal for cooperation directed towards protecting human dignity and the basic human rights, in particular the right to religious freedom. The call for cooperation in the interest of human dignity was addressed not only to persons of other religious orientation but also to nonbelievers. Therefore, the idea of *dignitas humana* and the human rights that stem from it could be provided with shared care of all Christians, professors of other religions, and even of atheists.

In the concept of the Author of *Populorum Progressio*, the right to private ownership receives a much weaker protection than in the earlier papal pronouncements. We subscribe to the statement that with the furtherance of the common good in mind the Pope was not afraid of the changes brought about by capitalism and was willing to sacrifice private ownership, which in his perception legitimized drastic discrepancies between the rich and the poor.

Paul VI's statement pertaining to *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* on the approval of revolution presented in *Populorum Progressio* took an enormous significance as the only such statement in the history of the social teachings of the papacy. The author of

the encyclical argued that in situations of particular injustice when whole communities are lacking the bare necessities of life and cannot participate in social and public life, they might become subject to a temptation to redress the harm inflicted on human dignity with violent means. However, revolution was approved by the Pope only on the forceful stipulation that it solely concerns manifest and longstanding tyranny that violates the basic rights of a human person and inflicts great damage on the common good of a country. Therefore, the only instance when armed uprising is tolerated occurs when human dignity and the common good of the whole community are endangered. Otherwise radical behavior merely generates new injuries because the evil that exists cannot be eradicated in a way different from that which brings even worse results. Let us stress once again that for Paul VI human dignity and the common good are values that can be defended even by use of force.

In Paul VI's belief free trade cannot lay down the sole principle to regulate international relations; nevertheless, it is useful when the parties involved represent equal civilizational progress. According to the teaching of the Author of *Populorum Progressio*, the point was not to eradicate free trade but to keep it in such boundaries that it truly becomes fair and thus more worthy of man.

The Pope called for the rejection of racism and for human solidarity and Christian love. He deemed that true economic and civilizational progress takes place when the respect for human dignity grows. The Pope taught that although it is sometimes possible to tolerate lesser moral evil in order to avoid greater evil or to achieve a greater good, doing evil in order to achieve good is always forbidden. In other words, upsetting the moral order is unworthy even if one has the improvement of the welfare of others in mind.

Paul VI, in the vein of John XXIII, supported the efforts channeled towards defining the legal status of women with the purpose of ending the existing sex discrimination and establishing equality of rights with observance for the personal dignity due to women. He taught that the law should protect the special role ascribed to women by nature and concurrently bestow them with personal freedom and equal rights to participate in economic, social, and public life.

The Pope wanted Christians to pay careful attention to the issue of environmental protection, which he considered very important because it concerned all people. The successor of John XXIII maintained that the natural environment was a common good of all mankind.

Paul VI taught that in times when the scientific and technological progress transforms interpersonal relations and surroundings, concern for dignity and freedom shows a dual tendency: striving for social equality and participation in decision making. Dignity, therefore, demands equal rights and an input in community life, both of which are difficult to achieve due to existing discrimination. In practice human rights are obeyed only formally and this does not suffice to develop interpersonal relations based on equality and justice. The Pope warned against rejecting the teachings of the Church in favor of the exclusive application of the principle of equality before the law, as it could lead to exploitation. He was of the conviction that the idea of equality before the law alone – without invoking the Christian principle of solidarity – was not enough for the proper furtherance of *bonum commune*.

Paul VI claimed that Christians as social creatures should make an active contribution to democratic society, serving to increase its common good. In this respect, the preparation for social life is of crucial importance. Proper education not only informs persons of their due rights, but also reminds them of the obligations imposed upon them, thus allowing them to contribute to the benefit of the common good more fully.

Paul VI made a very interesting observation about the threat to the common good posed by the process known today as globalization. With great intuition the Pope wrote about the emergence of new economic powers – supranational enterprises – which owing to the concentration and flexibility of the means used could apply strategy largely independent of national public authorities, and therefore uncontrolled from the perspective of the common good. These supranational institutions, by constantly expanding the scope of their activity, could lead to new forms of abuse or economic advantage in the social, cultural as well as political spheres. In the Pope's estimation the menace to the common good posed by globalization was, therefore, very serious.

John Paul II taught, similarly to his predecessors, that it was the Redeemer of men – Jesus Christ, who bestowed the unique dignity onto them and that *the whole Christian anthropology, based on the Gospel, allows men to better understand their human dignity*. The Pope repeatedly emphasized that after WWII the Church made *dignitas humana* the focus of its social commentaries. In addition, by protecting the transcendental character of the human person it contributed to increasing human dignity and concomitantly called for an active contribution to the common good.

John Paul II asserted that Christianity respects the man, his reason, will, conscience, and liberty, making man's personal dignity its essence. Following the line of Leo XIII, the Pope taught that not every freedom is true freedom and for that reason the duty of the Church is to guard the type of freedom that conditions the true dignity of a human person. The union of the categories of human dignity and true freedom allowed the Pope to indicate the role of the Church in the protection of the fundamental values. Joint interpretation of the ideas of human dignity and freedom comprises a permanent element of the papal social teaching.

From John Paul II's perspective every violation and restriction of religious freedom opposed the dignity of persons and their objective powers. In the Pope's estimation religious freedom was more than just one of the human rights; it was *the most basic of the laws because the dignity of each person has its primary source in the relation to God, in whose image and likeness man was created*.

By calling to attention the condition of contemporary men and the threats posed by global development, and invoking the category of human dignity, John Paul II challenged the modern idea of progress. The Polish Pope declared that the advancement of contemporary civilization demands proportional development of morality and ethics, whereas men should become more conscious of the dignity of their humanity and more open towards others. To be is more important than to have, according to the Pope, as enslaving oneself to things brings a loss of humanity, and thus a loss of human dignity. John Paul II saw the source and determinant of *bonum commune* in the goodness of a human person; therefore human dignity became the criterion of the common good.

With reference to the category of *bonum commune* John Paul II, like Leo XIII, held that the Church has always called for the contribution to the common good in the hopes

of nurturing good citizens in every country, and has taught that the fundamental obligation of the authorities is the care for the common good of society, which forms the basis of its powers. Thus the objective ethical order imposes on the governing a duty to respect the natural and inviolable human rights. The common good, towards which the authorities should make endeavors, is fully realized only when all the citizens have confidence in their rights. The idea of the common good grounded in the principle of human rights conditions the broadly understood social justice and becomes its measure in the life of a state that is obliged to safeguard and advance *bonum commune*. The Church should also contribute to the common good by way of nurturing the people in the spirit of the Gospel.

John Paul II frequently highlighted the dignity of the Mother of the Redeemer in order to acknowledge the special role women and their dignity played in the history of the humankind. The author of *Redemptor Hominis* accentuates the equality between the dignity of a woman and the dignity of a man. In the Pope's belief the biblical texts give full support to the assumption that men and women are equal in terms of humanity; moreover, they assert that a portrayal of the full dignity of one's humanity cannot be painted otherwise than by a reference to God.

It should be noted that while teaching about human dignity the Pope does not consider men in isolation but rather as social beings; in the papal enunciations the communitarian character of the person serves the development of human dignity. According to John Paul II human dignity originates from love and is fulfilled through it. A man is capable of fully perceiving and understanding his own human dignity only if he can perceive it in others through love. Evoking the twentieth-century personalism the Pope supported the ecumenical dialogue, arguing in the spirit of personalism that dialogue as such accords with human nature and its dignity, while dialogue between communities engages the subjectivity of each of them in a particular way, contributing as a result to the furtherance of the common good.

Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, John Paul II unequivocally points to labor as a source of human dignity and teaches that the Catholic Church should therefore constantly remind its followers about the dignity and rights of workers and condemn any violations of either. From the anthropological point of view, work is an activity of a person that not only comes from them but also transcends them and thus in some measure partakes in the dignity of its subject and creator, revealing their intellect, free will, and the obligation to perform it. Therefore, the dignity of the subject of work – man – is more important to the Pope than the type of work performed.

The idea of human dignity gave the Pope an opportunity to make a claim for the rights of the disabled, who must be considered full-scale subjects of work, useful and respected for their human dignity, and appointed to contribute to the progress and common good according to their capacities. In John Paul's belief man and human dignity have precedence over economic matters. When acting in the defense of the disabled, the Pope availed himself of the idea of human dignity to decisively reject the slogans adopted by the supporters of the quality of life.

Touching on the subject of private ownership, the Pope writes that it is necessary for securing personal dignity and freedom, but it is not absolute – it has to take into account proper relations between the person and the common good. John Paul II reorients private

ownership towards the common good. In the papal teaching the right of economic initiative has strong theological grounds, as it originates from the creative subjectivity of the man-citizen who is *imago Dei*. The Pope considered the right of economic initiative to serve both the individuals – by protecting their dignity – and the increase of the common good. Once again in the teaching of the Popes the categories of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* noticeably complete each other.

The Author of *Laborem Exercens*, in a way typical of Catholic social teaching, offers his definition of politics while digressing from the analysis of the trade union's tasks. The Pope explicated that trade unions enter the field of "*politics*," understood as *prudent concern for the common good*, and the activity worker associations embark on should serve *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune*. The abovementioned categories are mutually implicated in the teaching of the Author of *Laborem Exercens*.

With reference to the teaching of his grand predecessor, the Author of *Centesimus Annus* not only strongly supported the catalogue of the rights of workers put forward by Leo XIII, but also significantly broadened it, invoking the categories of human dignity and the common good. It can be assumed that the Polish Pope used the Christian concept of personalism for a creative reinterpretation of the ideas of solidarity, private property, common good, subsidiarity, and human dignity. As seen by John Paul II, private ownership not only enables better understanding of one's own dignity, but also allows active contribution to the community one comprises. Therefore, private ownership adds to the advancement of both *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune*.

The category of *bonum commune* was linked by the Pope to the principle of solidarity, understood as perpetual activities dedicated to the common good, that is to say to the good of all and every individual, because we are *all* really responsible for *everybody*. The predecessor of Benedict XVI expressed the hope that those who are not inspired by any religious faith would also share in the conviction of the need to pursue such higher values as the common good, so as to achieve the full development of the individual and of all people. Hence, for the Pope the idea of the common good is one that can unite people regardless of their world view and religion.

John Paul II believed the principle of solidarity to be deeply rooted in the Christian eschatology and anthropology, while its implementation facilitated the protection and development of human dignity and the common good. Human dignity and human solidarity are in his teaching contrasted with liberal individualism and Marxist collectivism.

The Author of *Centesimus Annus* was convinced that the application of the papal teaching about human dignity and the common good by the workers in Poland contributed to the changes undergone by Europe and the world after WWII, which reached their climax in the events of 1989. The Pope emphasized that *the Church's commitment to defend and promote human rights* was the decisive factor in these occurrences. The Church perpetually reiterated that every human being deserves respect as *imago Dei* and for this reason urged for the universal awareness of human dignity. According to the Author of the encyclical this position enjoyed the support of the vast majority of the society, which led to the employment of the forms of protest and political solutions respectful of the dignity of the person. Similar to Leo XIII, John Paul II taught that class struggle is contradictory not only to the idea of human dignity but also to the idea of the common good. It is

worth remembering that the struggle that prompted the fall of Marxism was carried out without recourse to violence; instead it appealed to the conscience of the opponent by attempting to awaken the sense of common human dignity.

From the beginning of his pontificate, John Paul II considered the issues of culture within the framework of human dignity, rights, and labor. While favoring the free market as the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and satisfying the needs, the Pope stressed the fact that not all needs could be met by the operations of the market. Prior the logic of the market stands that which is due to man *because he is man*, by reason of his or her dignity; therefore the market has to take into account the integral development of the person. That which *belongs to man* must guarantee survival and a chance to make an active contribution to the common good of humanity. Thus, *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* appear in the teaching of John Paul II as the determinants of a properly functioning capitalist system.

As regards the systemic model of the state, the Pope supported the idea of *state ruled by law*, organized according to the Montesquieuan principle of separation and balance of powers. In the Pope's concept both the principle of the rule of law and the democratic principle of majority rule have to comply with natural law. Only the state that abides by these principles would be capable of ensuring maximum protection of human dignity and the common good perceived as the fullest possible exercise of human rights. John Paul II believed the primary tasks of the state were to guarantee security, protect human rights in the economic sector, and govern. Upon undertaking these activities the state has to take into account the principle of subsidiarity.

Time and time again the Pope taught that the transcendental dignity of the human person – *imago Dei* – laid the foundation for inalienable rights. Man is therefore by his very nature the subject of rights that no one may violate – neither an individual, nor a group, nation or state. John Paul II was convinced that the contemporary legislation and politics of many countries lead to the point where the original and inalienable right to life is called into question or even denied on the basis of a parliamentary vote or the will of the majority of society. These destructive actions are the consequence of the unopposed reign of relativism, and lead to a situation in which the “right” ceases to be such, because it is no longer firmly founded on the inviolable dignity of the person, and instead is subordinated to the will of the stronger party. This way democracy betrays its own principles and effectively turns into a totalitarian system. It occurs as a result of the loss of the ability to make decisions in accordance with the common good by the democratic systems, as they began to solve social problems by way of a ballot, rejecting the criterion of justice and morality. The Pope concluded that democracy does not always act for the benefit of *bonum commune* and *dignitas humana*.

For John Paul II the law must defend human dignity, because the inviolable dignity of man is simultaneously the foundation of just law. Otherwise the state no longer is the “common home” where everyone can live according to the fundamental principles of equality, but it is transformed into a tyrant state, which arrogates to itself the right to dispose of the lives of the weaker and the defenseless, such as the unborn children, in the name of a public interest which is actually nothing more than the interest of one party. We believe that public interest as understood by the Pope is set in opposition to the Christian idea of *bonum commune* as an erroneous understanding of the common good.

John Paul II linked the ideas of solidarity and the common good with the idea of justice. In his view, the concept of solidarity is directly connected with the concept of the common good, the increase of which serves the protection and improvement of the social and natural environment, while the contribution to ecology is a part of the endeavor for the increase of *bonum commune*.

The Pope directed his attention to the fact that by positing a separation between the freedom of individuals and the nature that is common to all people some philosophical theories obscure reason's perception of the universality of the moral law. But inasmuch as natural law gives expression to the dignity of the human person and establishes a framework of their rights and obligations, its commands have a universal meaning – they connect all people, and the mentioned universal character does not put the individuality and uniqueness of each person to question.

With reference to the category of *bonum commune* John Paul II argued that some of the positive precepts are equitable and good, and should therefore be universally binding and remain unchanging. They unite all people of every historical period in the same common good. In the Pope's view the *negative precepts* of the natural law are always universally valid, because there are types of behavior that can never, in any situation, be considered consistent with human dignity. The Pope taught that the intentions behind the actions taken by man are good only if their purpose is the true good of a person, and if they serve the protection and development of his or her dignity.

Some very important matters concerning the idea of *dignitas humana* were raised in the *Veritatis Splendor*, by reference to the relationship between human freedom and God's law. John Paul II deemed that the relationship is in the depths of the conscience, where one discovers a law that is not self-imposed, but which should be obeyed. It is precisely in the conscience that a human has a law written by God, which must be obeyed in order to retain dignity and according to which one will be judged. Therefore, obedience to natural law is for the Pope the measure of human dignity. For this reason conscience should be the image of God's law, the carrier of the objective truth, and the source of positive law ultimately regulating human liberty and protecting the dignity of the man at the same time. However, the highest state of human dignity consists in the situation where man turns towards good *voluntarily rather than being compelled by others*. For John Paul II, like for Aquinas, people possessing the highest state of dignity are of pure conscience and do not need the compulsion of the law to do good. Conscience is one of the central categories to help understand the Pope's teaching about dignity.

John Paul II taught that the Church's staunch defense of the universal and unchanging moral precepts serves the true freedom of man, because there is no freedom apart from the truth or in opposition to it. Only a staunch and uncompromising defense of the inalienable norms arising from the personal dignity of man leads to freedom and is an indispensable condition for its very existence. The precepts mentioned provide an unshakable foundation and solid guarantee of a just and peaceful human coexistence, and hence of genuine democracy, i.e. one that can recognize the equality of rights and obligations of all citizens. A truly democratic state ruled by law should consider the ethical consequences of its actions. The Pope emphatically noted that public authorities are never authorized to violate the fundamental and inalienable rights of a human person.

In the Pope's view it was precisely the dignity of man that compelled the representatives of public authorities to act ethically. The view should be shared that the message conveyed by the *Veritatis Splendor* encyclical does not fall under the specific category of Catholic teaching, but it rather is a statement on the dignity and freedom of man as such, revealing a universal and meta-religious character.

John Paul II proclaimed the truth of the sacredness of life, which gave rise to its inviolability, because the Creator alone is its master and hence no one can arbitrarily choose whether to live or die. This belief has been present in the social teachings of the papacy from the beginning. John Paul II indicated that the law fully protects human life only when it is open to the fullness of the truth about God, man, and history, because only when humans obey the norms of the law of God can they live with dignity and justice. Therefore – let us stress it once again – abidance by the divine law conditions human dignity in the Pope's view. The main origin and the justification of the duty of absolute respect for human life are in the dignity of the person, rather than simply in the natural inclination to preserve one's own physical life. Even though human life is a fundamental good of man, it acquires a moral significance only in reference to the good of the person, who must always be affirmed for one's own sake.

John Paul II indicated that the idea of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* is the context in which to place the issue of the death penalty, in an endeavor to limit or even altogether abolish it. The Pope deemed that penal law system should function in line with human dignity, in order to better reflect God's plan for man and society. Sentencing people to the maximum penalty – the death penalty – is acceptable only in cases when it would be impossible to otherwise defend society.

John Paul II taught that democracy is not an end in itself as it is a system (the Pope used the name “order”) and as such is just a means to an end. The value represented by democracy, he believed, stands or falls with the values it embodies and supports. Among its fundamental and indispensable values undoubtedly are: the dignity of every human person, respect for inviolable and inalienable human rights, and finally the adoption of the “common good” as the purpose and criterion regulating political life. Availing himself of the analyzed categories of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* John Paul II once again stated for that their adoption conditions the existence of a fully-fledged democratic system. In *Evangelium Vitae* the Pope taught that true democracy must acknowledge the natural moral law and the human dignity it entails. The Pope was convinced that the norms of justice and morality cannot be established by way of voting.

The Pope was confident that the laws that authorize termination of pregnancy and euthanasia radically oppose not only the good of the individual but also the common good, and therefore lack any legal force. Disregard for the right to life, precisely because it leads to the killing of the person whose interest society exists to serve, directly and irrevocably opposes any chances of achieving the common good. Accordingly, had civil law permitted the termination of pregnancy and euthanasia, it would, by this mere fact, cease to be true and morally binding. Legitimizing abortion and euthanasia is, in the Pope's view, contrary to natural and divine laws, and consequently contradicts the principles of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune*. John Paul taught that with regards to life, civil law (the statutory law) must adhere to the moral teaching of the Church, because statutory law should be

the “teacher of virtue.” In a democratic system, in which the law is based upon the consensus of the citizen majority, the sense of personal responsibility in the conscience of those vested with authority might be weakened. Yet nobody can relinquish their responsibility for a decision that may be contrary to the true common good. Despite the fact that laws are not the only means of protecting human life, they still occupy a very important position. Consequently, those responsible for making the law should never allow the enactment of new legislation that, by disregarding the dignity of a person, undermines the very roots of social coexistence. In the conviction of the Author of *Evangelium Vitae*, the duty to protect human dignity and the common good rests mainly on the legislator; nonetheless one must bear in mind that democracy does not absolve those in charge of implementing majority rule of their personal responsibility.

When considering matters pertaining to human solidarity, the Pope invoked the idea of *bonum commune*, asserting that solidarity, understood as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good,” has to be also practiced by various forms of participation in social and public life. The Christians should shape the legislature and state institutions so that they do not violate the right to life from conception to natural death, but instead protect and promote it, i.e. support the development of human dignity.

John Paul II pointed out the importance of the role women play in the shaping of culture. He wished for them to become promoters of a “new feminism” in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life in society. Through motherhood women gain better insight into human relations, which are authentic only when they are open to accepting the other person, loved and respected for the dignity that comes from being a person and not from any other determinant.

The Pope was of a conviction that uncompromising defense of human life serves the entire human community and is conducive to the renewal of society through the promotion of the common good. Moreover, it is impossible to further the common good unless the right to life is acknowledged and protected. The right to life is, according to the Pope, the basis and the source from which all the other inalienable rights of men derive. Only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential values of society, such as democracy and peace.

It seems that today the awareness of the existence of the idea of human dignity has become an axiom accepted by the majority in the Western world. Therefore, the Pope did not address merely the believers but all the men of good will, because the respect for life is the only basis for the essential values of society, namely democracy and peace. In the teaching of the Pope the right to life is not only the determinant of human dignity, but it also allows the advancement of the common good.

In our conviction – let us reiterate it – the categories of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* lay the foundation for the papal social teaching. Commencing with Leo XIII and concluding with John Paul II, the Popes continuously referred to these ideas. The opinions

they held on the issues analyzed form, in our view, a coherent and fully thought through structure with grounds rooted in the Christian religion. We have approached human dignity and the common good in the teaching of the Popes together, because we believe that both categories frequently coexist, and are mutually conditioned and complementary. Oftentimes it is in fact quite difficult to analyze them in separation. The common good understood in line with the papal teaching protects and reinforces human dignity and *vice versa* – the contribution to the dignity of man protects the common good and reinforces its advancement.

Based on the ideas of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* a whole range of notions pertaining to religion, morality, philosophy, culture, law, politics, and even economics has been deliberated on and decided in the social teachings of the papacy. While setting them in the context of human dignity and the common good, the Popes made an attempt at introducing into the public discourse such classical ideas and values as truth, good, conscience, love, and virtue.

Ever since the teachings of John XXIII, the category of *dignitas humana* has supplied arguments in the defense of women's rights and in the demand of granting them personal freedom along with equal rights to participate in the economic, social, and public life. While placing emphasis on the unique role of the woman assigned to her by nature, the Popes stressed the equality between the dignity of men and women that springs from Christianity.

Many authors share the opinion that human dignity in the papal teaching lays the foundations for political, social, and economic human rights and, above all, protects the most important of them – the right to life. The Popes assigned a vital role in the protection and promotion of human dignity to the right to private ownership, although their opinions on the subject evolved over time. Private property was of crucial significance to Leo XIII, but the position of his successors was far less explicit. While guarding human dignity, private ownership was tied to the demands of the common good. In the papal assessment, private property contributes to the protection and advancement of human dignity and the common good. Those among the political systems that fail to acknowledge it stand in opposition to the aforementioned ideas.

The Popes availed themselves of the categories of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* in order to indicate an acceptable economic and political model. Their positions differed considerably, nevertheless common to all the successors of St. Peter's was the view expressed especially by Leo XIII that the Catholic Church would welcome any political system so long as it looked after the dignity of men and the common good. In the teaching of the followers of the Author of *Rerum Novarum* there is an ever-growing support for the democratic system. John Paul II, whose concepts, in our opinion, recapitulate the whole body of social teachings of the papacy, took a stand in support of the democratic system, based on the Montesquieuan idea of the separation of powers. A democratic state ruled by law must observe the norms arising from natural law that are carriers of specific values, because, according to the Pope, it is the only way for the optimum advancement of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune*.

As regards the economic system of the state evaluated on the basis of the categories analyzed a quite distinct evolution stands out, which we describe as the evolution from capitalism to capitalism. As a staunch supporter of private property, Leo XIII favored the capitalist

model. In the end, the Pope was not familiar with any other system and firmly rejected the socialist postulates. His successors were more skeptical towards capitalism, while John XXIII and Paul VI sympathized with the idea of welfare state as they supported extensive economic interventionism, by arguing that it would best protect human dignity and the common good. Not until the pontificate of John Paul II did the Catholic social teaching return to its origins. In his nuanced support for capitalism, the Pope referred to the business economy or free market economy with full approval, asserting that it was the most efficient means of utilizing resources and providing for needs. The Author of *Centesimus Annus* estimated that the right of man to economic initiative has a strong theological foundation, because it springs from the fact that as *imago Dei*, the man is the creator of the material world. Moreover, it should be noted that the right to economic initiative vested in the man reinforces his dignity and contributes to the increase of the common good.

Work plays an important role as the source of human dignity in the papal teaching. It can be linked to the right to economic initiative, because from the anthropological perspective work is an activity of a person that not only comes from them but also transcends them and participates in the dignity of its subject and creator, revealing their intellect, free will, and the obligation to perform it. Therefore, the dignity of the subject of work – man – is more important to the Popes than the type of work performed.

As was mentioned before, establishing a definition of the common good in the teachings of the Popes is not an easy task. Various aspects are indicated while examining this concept: the temporal common good, the transcendental common good, the formal common good, and the material common good. The first attempt at formulating the definition was made by Leo XIII, who proclaimed that the common good was the primary social right. Accordingly, as universal law, it was granted legal status. The definition introduced by John XXIII gained general recognition by the teaching of the Church. It stated that *the common good incorporates the entirety of such conditions of social life in which people can reach their own personal excellence more fully and faster*. From John XXIII's standpoint *bonum commune* is subordinated to the vocation of a human person, and, although as an ethical idea rather than a sociological fact the common good takes precedence over the good of a human person – a possibility of a conflict between the two is ruled out. This is due to the fact that a pursuit of the common good is always a pursuit of personal good and a means of fulfilling man's vocation, i.e. salvation. One might discern in the Pope's definitions a connection of sorts between the concept of the man as a social creature and the idea of Christian personalism. In the papal teachings the category of *bonum commune* is tightly linked to the idea of natural law and is comprehended to be the fullest possible exercise of the human rights.

In the social teachings of the papacy both the ideas of *dignitas humana* and *bonum commune* are directly connected with the principles of subsidiarity, social solidarism, the organic conception of society, and the idea of natural law.

The concept of human dignity emerging from the papal ideas is not an easy one to capture; it appears to be a multifaceted and intricate category going beyond political or economic orders.

The dignity of man – a social creature – derives most of all from the idea of *imago Dei*, therefore the ontological dignity equal to all humans comes from God, who is the highest

truth and the greatest good, as well as the deepest source of existence of the human community. Consequently, the Creator is the dispenser of *dignitas humana*.

In the teaching of the Popes, human dignity is a natural, internal, inalienable attribute of every human, which confers a special status among the living creatures.

As an original axiological value, the dignity of man gains dominance among constitutional principles at the dawn of the twenty-first century. It appears today in the classical Aristotelian meaning as the metaphysical dimension of the state and the law, because it has been positioned prior to the state and the statutory law.

The uniqueness of the idea of the *dignitas humana* springs from the fact that even the man himself – the carrier of the dignity – cannot relinquish it. The category of human dignity laid the foundations for human rights and seems to be an idea beyond conditions that can be accepted by both Christians and non-believers as a basis of social life.

In conclusion we would like to note that on account of the social teachings of the papacy, *inter alia*, in a world filled with deconstruction of classical values and attempts to eradicate traditional ethics, human dignity is but one thing that remains a foundation and concomitantly a component of the common good of our humanity.

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