

DIGNITAS INFINITA: A CHRISTIAN PROPOSAL FOR A PLURALIST SOCIETY

*Dignitas infinita: una proposta cristiana
per la società pluralista*

D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON*

ABSTRACT: Drawing on three pivotal Catholic Church documents, this paper presents a unified Christian proposal for a healthy pluralistic society, emphasizing theological convergences shared with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *Dignitas Infinita* affirms the infinite, ontological dignity of every human person, rooted in being created and loved by God, distinct from mutable moral dignity. *Dignitatis Humanae* establishes human dignity as the basis for the inviolable right to religious freedom, obligating individuals and governments to seek and adhere to truth, thus promoting a healthy, confident pluralism. Lastly, *Rerum Novarum* emphasizes the dignity of workers and offers a moral framework to rise above political divisions. Focusing on virtue and shared identity as God's children provides a mechanism to foster peace and societal harmony.

KEYWORDS: Human Dignity, Religious Freedom, Pluralism, Moral Agency, Christian Social Teaching.

RIASSUNTO: Basandosi su tre documenti fondamentali della Chiesa cattolica, questo contributo presenta una proposta cristiana unitaria per una società pluralistica sana, sottolineando le convergenze teologiche condivise con la Chiesa di Gesù Cristo dei Santi degli Ultimi Giorni. *Dignitas Infinita* afferma la dignità ontologica infinita di ogni persona umana, radicata nell'essere creata e amata da Dio, distinta dalla dignità morale mutevole. *Dignitatis Humanae* stabilisce la dignità umana come base del diritto inviolabile alla libertà religiosa, obbligando gli individui e i governi a cercare e aderire alla verità, promuovendo così un pluralismo sano e fiducioso. Infine, *Rerum Novarum* sottolinea la dignità dei lavoratori e offre un quadro morale per superare le divisioni politiche. Concentrarsi sulla virtù e sull'identità condivisa come figli di Dio è un modo efficace per promuovere la pace e l'armonia sociale.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Dignità umana, Libertà religiosa, Pluralismo, Responsabilità morale, Dottrina sociale cristiana.

SUMMARY: I. *Preliminaries*. II. *Dignitas Infinita*. III. *Dignitatis Humanae*. IV. *Rerum Novarum*. V. *Conclusion*.

I. PRELIMINARIES

On behalf of Russell M. Nelson, president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we offer our condolences on the passing of Pope Francis and acknowledge his legacy of “courageous and compassionate leadership.”¹ It is no coincidence that *Dignitas Infinita* was promulgated during the pontificate of Pope Francis, who magnified human dignity through his example of “forgiveness[, ...] service[.]”² and care for the most vulnerable among us. Pope Francis, in his encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*, said:

The dignity of others is to be respected in all circumstances, not because that dignity is something we have invented or imagined, but because human beings possess an intrinsic worth superior to that of material objects and contingent situations. [...] That every human being possesses an inalienable dignity is a truth that corresponds to human nature apart from all cultural change. For this reason, human beings have the same inviolable dignity in every age of history.³

I congratulate the Catholic Church on the recent election of Pope Leo XIV and send my warmest regards to him. I admire Pope Leo’s “lifetime of faith and admirable character”⁴ and anticipate that human dignity will be a key theme in his pontificate.

Respect for human dignity is important to me personally and as a representative of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; it is important to Russell M. Nelson, the prophet and president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and it is important to all the leaders and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

¹ *First Presidency Offers Condolences on Passing of His Holiness Pope Francis*, Official Statement, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom, April 21, 2025: <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/first-presidency-condolences-his-holiness-pope-francis>. President Russell M. Nelson passed away on September 27, 2025, only four days after this lecture was delivered.

² *Ibidem*.

³ FRANCIS, Enc. *Fratelli Tutti*, October 3, 2020, n. 213.

⁴ *The First Presidency Offers a Message of Goodwill to Pope Leo XIV*, Official Statement, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom, May 19, 2025: <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/first-presidency-message-new-pope>.

Saints. We see common ground and look forward to mutually supportive efforts with the Catholic Church and Pope Leo in affirming and fostering human dignity.

* * *

I would like to focus my remarks on three key documents and their themes as we consider Christianity and a pluralistic society.

First, *Dignitas Infinita* and the deep theological rooting of human dignity in the life and person of Jesus Christ and in His divine role as the Savior of mankind.

Second, *Dignitatis Humanae*, the monumental Vatican II declaration on the Catholic Church's doctrine of religious freedom. Not only do I want to reflect on the right to religious freedom that this declaration boldly sets forth but also its clarification on the duties that individuals and society have to seek and adhere to truth. Here, I will highlight the important themes of moral agency and religious pluralism.

Third, and perhaps less obviously, the 1891 encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, which highlights the dignity of workers. I find *Rerum Novarum's* teachings on human dignity particularly relevant to navigating the political controversies we face today and to sustaining a healthy pluralism in society.

II. *DIGNITAS INFINITA*

Let me begin with *Dignitas Infinita*, the subject of this conference. *Dignitas Infinita* opens with a bold assertion about the inherent dignity of all people: "Every human person possesses an infinite dignity, inalienably grounded in his or her very being, which prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation the person may ever encounter."⁵

Although the concept of human dignity is recognized by many groups and individuals, *Dignitas Infinita* provides us with a deeply Christian conception of human dignity. Each human being possesses inherent dignity "simply because he or she exists and is willed, created, and loved by God."⁶ The ontological basis of human dignity is the love of

⁵ DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Decl. *Dignitas Infinita*, April 2, 2024, n. 1.

⁶ *Ibidem*, n. 7.

God and is in no way based upon the circumstances or conditions in which a person lives.

This infinite dignity creates for each human person a responsibility to treat every other human person with love and respect. This is not an abstract duty. It is rooted in the person and example of Jesus Christ, who calls us to act in accordance with our “nature as creatures who are loved by God and called to love others” and to exercise our freedom in alignment with “the law of love revealed by the Gospel.”⁷ The scriptures abound with teachings on justice and the importance of caring for the poor and downtrodden. Jesus’s own life, characterized by humble circumstances, demonstrated the dignity and worth of all people in all circumstances. Jesus sought out those who were rejected by society and affirmed “the value and dignity of all who bear the image of God, regardless of their social status and external circumstances.”⁸ Pope St. John Paul II asserted that human dignity is “a Gospel value that cannot be despised without greatly offending the Creator.”⁹

Christ’s incarnation is the highest evidence of the value of all human souls. As stated in *Dignitas Infinita*:

The dignity of the human person was revealed in its fullness when the Father sent his Son, who assumed human existence to the full [...]. By proclaiming that the Kingdom of God belongs to the poor, the humble, the despised, and those who suffer in body and spirit; by healing all sorts of illnesses and infirmities, even the most dramatic ones, such as leprosy; by affirming that whatever is done to these individuals is also done to him because he is present in them: in all these ways, Jesus brought the great novelty of recognizing the dignity of every person, especially those who were considered ‘unworthy.’¹⁰

Pope Francis invited the Church to “believe in a Father who loves all men and women with an infinite love, realizing that ‘he thereby confers upon them an infinite dignity.’”¹¹ For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the term “infinite” holds a unique meaning. Like other Christians, we, too, believe that life continues after death.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ *Ibidem*, n. 12.

⁹ Quoted in *ibidem*, n. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, n. 19.

¹¹ Quoted in *ibidem*, n. 6.

However, we also believe that our existence began before our mortal lives, and that our relationship with God stretches on infinitely before as well as after our mortal lives. As a fellow Latter-day Saint apostle explained,

There is one important identity we all share now and forever, one that we should never ever lose sight of, and one that we should be grateful for. That is that you are and have always been a son or daughter of God with spiritual roots in eternity. [...] Understanding this truth—really understanding it and embracing it—is life changing. It gives you an extraordinary identity that no one can ever take away from you. But more than that, it should give you an enormous feeling of value and a sense of your infinite worth. Finally, it provides you a divine, noble, and worthy purpose in life.¹²

While all humans possess an unalterable ontological dignity, *Dignitas Infinita* recognizes that we possess moral dignity, as well. Unlike ontological dignity, moral dignity can be lost when humans violate moral principles and stray from the light: “While people are endowed with conscience, they can always act against it.”¹³

Dignitas Infinita invites us to honor our moral dignity by reminding us that “the Creator calls each person to know him, to love him, and to live in a covenantal relationship with him, while calling the person also to live in fraternity, justice, and peace with all others.”¹⁴ This covenantal relationship is a vital aspect of our discipleship. President Russell M. Nelson, has said that “every man and every woman who participates in priesthood ordinances and who makes and keeps covenants with God has direct access to the power of God. We take the Lord’s name upon ourselves as individuals. We also take His name upon us as a people.”¹⁵

As *Dignitas Infinita* reminds us, “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.”¹⁶ As further

¹² M.R. BALLARD, *Children of Heavenly Father*, BYU Devotional, March 3, 2020: <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/m-russell-ballard/children-heavenly-father>.

¹³ DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Decl. *Dignitas Infinita*, n. 7.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, n. 18.

¹⁵ R.M. NELSON, *The Everlasting Covenant*, General Conference Leadership Meeting, March 31, 2022: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2022/10/04-the-everlasting-covenant?lang=eng>.

¹⁶ DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Decl. *Dignitas Infinita*, n. 64.

explained in *Dignitas Infinita*, “Human dignity helps to overcome the narrow perspective of a self-referential and individualistic freedom that claims to create its own values regardless of the objective norms of the good and of our relationship with other living beings.”¹⁷

Fully embracing the Creator’s call to love Him and live in peace with others aids our development as disciples of Christ and as people. Those who are truly devoted to the Savior recognize that religion is not just about doing good, but about *becoming* good. *Dignitas Infinita* asserts that “the ultimate destiny of human beings” is to “grow under the action of the Holy Spirit to reflect the glory of the Father in that same image and to share in eternal life.”¹⁸ The theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reflects the same understanding. The *Book of Mormon*, one of our books of scripture alongside the Holy Bible, encourages men and women to

pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with [the pure love of Christ], which [the Father] hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure.¹⁹

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints understand that the purpose of our life on earth is to fulfill this invitation—to become more like our Savior and develop His divine attributes. As we become better, more holy, and more like Christ, our “likeness to God” grows and, in the words of *Dignitas Infinita*, we “attain [our] highest dignity.”²⁰

As a brother in Christ, the call of *Dignitas Infinita* resonates with me. I am deeply grateful for this document and its assertion of gospel truths, which provide us with a reminder of the divinity of Christ and our responsibilities as His disciples. I am also grateful for this particular conception of human dignity, which among the many other conceptions, is clearly and profoundly centered not just on the truth that we are created in the image of God but that Jesus Christ is our Exemplar and our Redeemer.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, n. 26.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, nn. 20-21.

¹⁹ Moroni 7:47-48; see also 1 John 3:2-3.

²⁰ DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Decl. *Dignitas Infinita*, n. 22.

III. *DIGNITATIS HUMANAЕ*

The second document I would like to focus on is the 1965 Declaration of the Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae*. *Dignitatis Humanae* is a monumental achievement in the history of religious freedom. It is a significant theological exegesis of human dignity as the basis for the right to religious freedom and of the social duties we all have to protect and promote this sacred right. *Dignitatis Humanae* importantly recognizes that the shared responsibility for promoting and preserving religious freedom lies with governments and individuals.

Governments have a duty to promote the common welfare by protecting inviolable human rights and safeguarding the equality of citizens under the law.²¹ These duties necessitate protecting religious freedom and fostering favorable conditions for religious life to facilitate the living and sharing of truth.²² As I have noted elsewhere, when governments protect religious freedom, the common welfare benefits: “Governments that protect religious freedom have fewer social conflicts and greater levels of social cohesion.”²³

Individuals also bear an essential responsibility in preserving and promoting religious freedom. It is our social responsibility to “have respect both for the rights of others,” “for [our] own duties toward others,” and “for the common welfare of all.”²⁴ Pope Francis beautifully described this reciprocal social responsibility to others, saying: “We need each other, and are entrusted to each other’s care.”²⁵

The associational value of human dignity also reminds us that religious freedom is important because of the virtues and values that it promotes. Societies that value religious freedom foster citizens who are open-minded, curious, and tolerant, who seek and value the truth. Societies that value

²¹ Cfr. II VATICAN COUNCIL, Decl. *Dignitatis Humanae*, December 7, 1965, n. 6.

²² Cfr. *ibidem*, nn. 2-3.

²³ D.T. CHRISTOFFERSON, *Religious Liberty: The Basis of a Free and Just Society*, address delivered at the First Annual Forum on Law and Religion of the Southern Cone, published January 8, 2022: <https://talkabout.iclrs.org/2022/01/08/religious-liberty-the-basis-of-a-free-and-just-society>.

²⁴ II VATICAN COUNCIL, Decl. *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 7.

²⁵ FRANCIS, *Meeting with the Leaders of Other Religions and Other Christian Denominations*, September 21, 2014: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/september/documents/papafrancesco_20140921_albania-leaders-altre-religioni.html.

religious freedom will encourage habits of the heart such as reverence, awe and wonder, as well as faith, hope, and charity and traits of character such as humility, kindness, respect, and love. Societies that value religious freedom will encourage people to develop habits of serving and volunteering in their communities, of building social bonds that are especially important at a time when there is so much evidence of twin crises of loneliness and an absence of meaning in peoples' lives. Religious freedom is closely tied to developing communities where human flourishing is possible.²⁶

Dignitatis Humanae also reminds us that religious freedom is a necessary element “to the creation of an environment in which men [and women] can without hindrance be invited to the Christian faith, embrace it of their own free will, and profess it effectively in their whole manner of life.”²⁷ In other words, religious freedom fosters an environment in which individuals may exercise moral agency.

Moral agency, the right of choice to live our lives according to the truth as we understand it, is essential to the divine plan. *Dignitatis Humanae* profoundly articulates that individuals, as creations of God endowed with moral agency and made to participate in divine law, are “bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth” and are “bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known.”²⁸ One of my fellow leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints taught that, although God desires for us to follow His commandments and live in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, “He gives us the dignity of choosing.”²⁹

²⁶ Empirical studies show that religiously active individuals are generally more involved in civic organizations, are more likely to volunteer in their communities, and give financially more, and more often, to both religious and secular causes, and are more actively engaged in democratic and political processes than their non-religious counterparts. See D.T. CHRISTOFFERSON, *Religious Freedom—Protecting the Good Religion Does*, address given at the G20 Interfaith Forum, Fourth Plenary Session, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 27 September 2018; transcript available at <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/g20-interfaith-forum-transcript-elder-christofferson-religious-freedom>. See also E.A. CLARK, *The Impact of Religion and Religious Organizations*, «Brigham Young University Law Review» 49:1 (2023) 20-26, 32-36.

²⁷ II VATICAN COUNCIL, Decl. *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 10.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, n. 2.

²⁹ D.G. RENLUND, *Choose You This Day*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints General Conference, October 2018: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/10/choose-you-this-day?lang=eng>.

While both The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Catholic Church hope that all men and women will “come to God, the end and purpose of life,”³⁰ we understand that religious freedom and moral agency will inevitably lead individuals to divergent judgments of conscience. Thus, in addition to our “grave obligation toward Christ [...] to understand the truth received from Him, faithfully to proclaim it, and vigorously to defend it,” we must also honor our equally grave obligation to have charity, love, “prudence[,] and patience” with our brothers and sisters who have chosen different paths.³¹ Pope St. John Paul II observed that “[t]rue religious freedom shuns the temptation to intolerance and sectarianism, and promotes attitudes of respect and constructive dialogue,” thus “contribut[ing] decisively to human fraternity.”³² Here is found the foundation for what one has called a “confident pluralism” in society.³³

Studies show that in most countries with high legal restrictions on religious freedom and high levels of social hostilities involving religion, “there is almost always a dominant religious group that is a majority or supermajority.”³⁴ However, Professor Brett Scharffs, director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University, has detailed that in countries with a Catholic majority or supermajority, almost none have high legal restrictions or social hostilities involving religion. Professor Scharffs concluded that *Dignitatis Humanae*’s bold doctrine of religious freedom likely played a role “in this remarkable pattern of low legal restrictions and social hostilities in Catholic-majority countries.”³⁵

³⁰ II VATICAN COUNCIL, Decl. *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 3.

³¹ *Ibidem*, n. 14.

³² JOHN PAUL II, *Message of John Paul II to the Albanian Nation*, April 25, 1993: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1993/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19930425_nazione-albanese.html.

³³ See J.D. INAZU, *Confident Pluralism, Surviving and Thriving through Deep Difference*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2016.

³⁴ B.G. SCHARFFS, *Religious Majorities and Restrictions on Religion*, «Notre Dame Law Review» 91:4 (2016) 1419-1443. See also *Religious Restrictions Around the World*, Pew Research Center, December 18, 2024: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/feature/religious-restrictions-around-the-world>.

³⁵ SCHARFFS, *Religious Majorities and Restrictions on Religion*, 1419-1420.

Dignitatis Humanae counsels us to seek and live divine truth, to encourage our governments to protect the inviolable right to religious freedom, and to deal “in justice and civility” with our brothers and sisters, respecting the rights of all and maximizing our duty to all.³⁶ In the words of the II Vatican Council, “in order that relationships of peace and harmony be established and maintained within the whole of mankind, it is necessary that religious freedom be everywhere provided with an effective constitutional guarantee and that respect be shown for the high duty and right of man freely to lead his religious life in society.”³⁷

IV. *RERUM NOVARUM*

For my third observation, I reach much further back in time to 1891 and Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*, which Pope Leo XIV cited as an inspiration in selecting his papal name.³⁸ Some commentators have speculated that Pope Leo XIV’s choice of name recognized that “Leo XIII laid the foundation for modern Catholic social teaching, envisioning a Church that did not act as a direct player in the conflicts of the day but instead stood above them, offering a broader moral vision rooted in human dignity.”³⁹ I am in no position to judge the accuracy of this speculation, but I do like the idea.

Rerum Novarum was issued as a response to then-contemporary debates between socialists and capitalists. Rather than limiting himself to the political camps of the day, Pope Leo XIII acknowledged that there are questions for which “no practical solution [...] will be found apart from the intervention of religion and of the Church.”⁴⁰ By focusing on principles of duty, labor, virtue, and charity, Pope Leo XIII showed that the gospel provides a higher and more truth-based method of engaging with political debates. He affirmed “without hesitation

³⁶ Cfr. II VATICAN COUNCIL, Decl. *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 7.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, n. 15.

³⁸ Cfr. LEO XIV, *Address to the College of Cardinals*, May 10, 2025: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2025/may/documents/20250510-collegio-cardinalizio.html>.

³⁹ K. KELAIDIS, *The First American Pope Is Notable for Reasons You Might Not Expect*, «VOX», May 8, 2025: <https://www.vox.com/religion/412142/new-pope-robert-prevost-american-leo-vatican-catholic>.

⁴⁰ LEO XIII, Enc. *Rerum Novarum*, May 15, 1891, n. 16.

that all the striving of men will be vain if they leave out the Church. It is the Church that insists, on the authority of the Gospel, upon those teachings whereby the conflict can be brought to an end, or rendered, at least, far less bitter; the Church uses her efforts not only to enlighten the mind, but to direct by her precepts the life and conduct of each and all.”⁴¹ Using the terminology of *Dignitas Infinita*, the Church uses her efforts to inspire all to honor their ontological dignity by choosing moral dignity. Pope Leo XIII affirmed that religion is not just about *doing* good but about *becoming* good, as individuals and as societies.

Rerum Novarum also emphasized the inherent moral qualities of humans and the importance of treating all men with dignity: “From contemplation of this divine Model, it is more easy to understand that the true worth and nobility of man lie in his moral qualities, that is, in virtue; that virtue is, moreover, the common inheritance of men, equally within the reach of high and low, rich and poor; and that virtue, and virtue alone, wherever found, will be followed by the rewards of everlasting happiness.”⁴² Virtue, morality, and dignity belong to all human beings, regardless of circumstance.

Recognizing our shared dignity allows us to look beyond our differences and reminds us of what is most important about being human. Pope Leo XIII asserted that this shared morality would inspire landowners to engage in charitable efforts more willingly: “Whoever has received from the divine bounty a large share of temporal blessings, whether they be external and material, or gifts of the mind, has received them for the purpose of using them for the perfecting of his own nature, and, at the same time, that he may employ them, as the steward of God’s providence, for the benefit of others.”⁴³ He invited laborers, too, to be reconciled with landowners, reminding them of the dignity and value of labor and asserting that it is “just and right that the results of labor should belong to those who have bestowed their labor.”⁴⁴ By adhering to true gospel principles, Pope Leo XIII engaged with the debate while refusing to align with the extremism of either side.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² *Ibidem*, n. 24.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, n. 22.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, n. 10.

In our day, we likewise understand that there is often no “right side” to political divides, and that entrenched sides of partisan debates contain elements of truth while being incomplete or flawed. Standing above the debates and focusing on true principles such as human dignity provides a mechanism to help us navigate these controversies.

As Pope Leo XIII stressed in *Rerum Novarum*:

The Church possesses a power peculiarly her own. The instruments which she employs are given to her by Jesus Christ Himself for the very purpose of reaching the hearts of men, and derive their efficiency from God. They alone can reach the innermost heart and conscience, and bring men to act from a motive of duty, to control their passions and appetites, to love God and their fellow men with a love that is outstanding and of the highest degree and to break down courageously every barrier which blocks the way to virtue.⁴⁵

Rerum Novarum reminds us that as disciples of Christ, we can still engage with issues while remaining above partisanship. We do this by speaking religious truths that may not be entirely in accord with either side of debates and by continuously adhering to those principles. As explained by Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*, when these “precepts prevail, the respective classes will not only be united in the bonds of friendship, but also in those of brotherly love. For they will understand and feel that all men are children of the same common Father, who is God.”⁴⁶

In today’s world, religious leaders face similar challenges to those that inspired *Rerum Novarum*. Conflicts within societies across the world demand the attention of religious leaders. A focus on the shared dignity of all humans on all sides of all conflicts will lead us toward more peaceful, loving, and tolerant societies. As stated in *Rerum Novarum*, “‘If sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and co-heirs with Christ.’ Such is the scheme of duties and of rights which is shown forth to the world by the Gospel. Would it not seem that, were society penetrated with ideas like these, strife must quickly cease?”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, n. 26.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, n. 25.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

V. CONCLUSION

Exactly two weeks ago, the president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Russell M. Nelson, celebrated his 101st birthday, noting, “Living to 101 is a privilege I never anticipated.” He has witnessed uncounted changes over the last century, but his birthday message was about unchanging truths. Under the title, *We All Deserve Dignity and Respect*, his words coincide with the teachings we are discussing today. President Nelson wrote:

Each of us has inherent worth and dignity. I believe we are all children of a loving Heavenly Father. But no matter your religion or spirituality, recognizing the underlying truth beneath this belief that we all deserve dignity is liberating—it brings emotional, mental, and spiritual equilibrium. [...] A century of experience has taught me this with certainty: anger never persuades, hostility never heals, and contention never leads to lasting solutions. [...] If we embrace these eternal truths—honoring our own worth, treating others with dignity, and nurturing our families—our lives, and our world, will be steadier and more joyful.⁴⁸

I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to address you today and for our shared commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ.

As disciples of Christ, we have a solemn responsibility to advocate for human dignity, moral agency, and religious pluralism. I am deeply appreciative of the Catholic Church’s commitment to these concepts and for the shared values of our two churches.

May the truths contained in *Dignitas Infinita*, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and *Rerum Novarum* help guide us as we seek to promote human dignity and rise above the perilous divisions of our time.

It is my firm conviction, even knowledge, that Jesus Christ is our living, resurrected Redeemer, and that, in the words of the scripture, “the Father [...] hath given all things into his hand.”⁴⁹ I humbly pray for His blessing upon each and all of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

⁴⁸ R.M. NELSON, *Russell M. Nelson: We All Deserve Dignity and Respect*, «Time», September 5, 2025: <https://time.com/7315003/russell-nelson-dignity-respect>.

⁴⁹ John 3:35.

