



COLLOQUIA

Thursday, November 11 | 3:15-4:30 p.m.

Panel 1: “It Was Then That You Comforted Me”

“A Lonely Death’: Dying While Living During COVID-19”

Emily Southerton, Penn Medicine: Lancaster General Health

The global pandemic, SARS-CoV-2, disrupted holistic end of life care for many individuals. Many elderly and Covid positive people died alone without attendance to their emotional and spiritual needs. Innumerable faithful and religious people died alone and were denied access to spiritual end of life care, that which I argue is a concern of human dignity. As we prepare for perhaps a resurgence, it is appropriate to discuss end of life rituals in the Catholic tradition and safe effective spiritual enrichment opportunities for those experiencing or planning for death regardless of their Covid infectious status.

“Honoring Dignity When Life is Short: Three Strategies for Walking with Someone through Miscarriage, Stillbirth, or Infant Loss”

Abigail Jorgensen, University of Notre Dame

This talk, "Honoring Dignity When Life is Short," would focus on how the dignity of parents and of children can be obscured or ignored in situations of early death (miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant loss). In this talk, I would provide three practical suggestions – accessible for beginners and helpful for those experienced in walking with others in grief – for honoring the dignity of all in such situations. These strategies are results of both my academic research on family formation and my work in the birth world, both secular arenas in which I strive to honor human dignity in early death.

“The Dignity of the Bereaved: When Grief and Self-Help Culture Collide”

Dorian Speed, University of St. Thomas, Houston

Recognizing the dignity of those who mourn means accepting that their sadness is not a reflection on one’s own inability to say or do the right thing to help. A cultural shift towards accompaniment, rather than an emphasis on self-help, is much needed as we confront the fallout of the pandemic and consider how we may heal. I intend to discuss my own experience of bereavement, having lost my mother at the start of the pandemic, as well as the ways in which the Catholic understanding of human dignity is essential in comforting those who grieve.

Panel 2: “At the End of All Things”

“Who Am I Today? Who Will I Be Tomorrow?: Life, Death, and Responsibility in the *Divine Comedy*”

Matias Sur, Duke University

In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante establishes a relationship between the “name” of a human being and the soul’s immortality, which can help us better understand how the naming of a human person is important to our anthropology and human dignity. I will demonstrate this by showing how the soul’s name, character, and public role on Earth “live on.” Although death separates the person’s body and soul, death does not erase their personhood. Dante provides us with a deep message concerning human anthropology and human dignity: who we are on Earth is who we will be in the next.

“Treebeard Is Enough: Naming in the Bible & Tolkien”

Alex Lessard, Adeodatus/The Cornerstone Forum

For the 2021 dCEC Fall Conference, I propose a talk entitled “‘Treebeard Will Do’: Names & Callings in the Bible & Tolkien.” This brief paper will address the indispensable question of human dignity through an exploration first of identity and mission as revealed in biblical naming and calling, and then in the narrative sub-creation of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*

“Take and Eat: Re-Imagining Augustinian Friendship in Tolkien’s Fellowship of the Ring”

Robert McFadden, C.S.C., Holy Cross College

In this paper, I consider how J.R.R. Tolkien allows for a recovery of a common understanding of human dignity. Tolkien adopts an Augustinian worldview, and argues that individuals assert their human dignity through the formation of friendships which conquer the fear of death. In particular, Tolkien learns from Augustine that these friendships arise in light of the Eucharist and through the art of myth-making. Therefore, I show how Tolkien creates these friendships in *The Lord of the Rings* in order to demonstrate the gift of the Eucharist and the need for human beings to establish dignified friendships with Christ.

Panel 3: Render Unto Caesar

“Lost in Translation: Catholic Liturgy and the Sacramental Dignity of Rulership”

Paweł Figurski, Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences

In the twentieth-century critical editions of the Roman Canon of the Mass and its translations within the official modern Catholic Missals as the “First Eucharistic Prayer,” there is no regular invocation of rulers. This lack stands in contrast to the nearly two-thousand-year tradition of invoking monarchs during the Eucharistic liturgies of the Western and Eastern Churches, including the Roman liturgy. The proposed paper narrates the perplexing history of invoking rulers by name within the Christian worship and the now lost sacramental meaning of this practice for understanding political power within the Catholic tradition.

“Public Reason Theism: A New Articulation of Political Liberalism”

Kevin Scott, University of Notre Dame

I argue that public reason liberalism, properly understood, allows for significant public affirmation of theism. This form of civil theism offers several advantages over agnostic forms of political liberalism, better aligning with common intuitions and providing more coherent foundations for human rights doctrine. Public reason theism offers a forward-looking articulation of liberal democracy which is nonetheless in continuity with the best of the American political tradition (e.g. Declaration of Independence, Social Gospel, Civil Rights Movement).

“Human Dignity and Human Rights in Jacques Maritain”

Timothy Shah, University of Dallas

In ways that are extraordinarily relevant to today’s salient political and philosophical debates, Jacques Maritain creatively retrieved St. Thomas to develop a rich account of human dignity. From this account, furthermore, he articulated an unusual theory of human rights that (though later castigated by the likes of Alasdair MacIntyre) equipped him to critique perennial heresies of the Right (nationalism, integralism) and the Left (liberalism, individualism) with equal ferocity and clarity. If these extremes are to be navigated in our day, we would do well to retrieve key elements of Jacques Maritain’s evergreen defense of human dignity and human rights.

Panel 4: Rights and Wrongs: Acknowledging Our Interdependence

“You Have Value’: Reaffirming Human Dignity in a Secular World”

Alessandro Rovati, Belmont Abbey College

The paper puts in dialogue two recent books that masterfully analyze how American law and medicine threaten human dignity: O. Carter Snead's *What It Means to Be Human* and Charlie C. Camosy's *Losing Our Dignity*. It highlights the continuities between the two and shows the critical distinction between Snead's philosophical appeal to an embodied anthropology and Camosy's insistence on the need to ground human dignity's defense on theological convictions. In its

conclusion, the paper proposes a fruitful way forward by considering the example of the Meeting Point International, a Ugandan NGO that assists individuals and families who struggle with HIV/AIDS.

“Dignity and Frailty in a Rights Scheme”

Alberto Díaz Rivero, Universidad de Los Andes, Chile

The purpose of the presentation is to problematize the consequences derived from the study of dignity and fragility in a deontological rights scheme. I would like to compare and propose a vision of rights based on Alasdair MacIntyre's theory of dependency and aging, for which I will take into account other contemporary discussions on care, frailty and rights.

“The Beatitudes as a Way to Amend Human Rights’ Distorted Understanding of Dignity”

Irene Gonzalez-Hernandez, Archdiocese of Mexico

The present crisis of confusion and explosion of “new” human rights attests to a profound transformation of the concept of human dignity that has been reduced exclusively to individual will, the exaltation of spirit over body, and that regards every denial of nature and its conditioning as a liberation and progress. I will expound on two concepts: inherent dignity and reflexive dignity, with their characteristics and limitations. Then we will be able to understand, by contrast, the wisdom that the Beatitudes offer as an incarnational spirituality and life-plan towards a more humane understanding of the human condition, over human rights.

Panel 5: The Mind Shall Not Be Educated at the Expense of the Heart

“Human Dignity and the First Year of Human Life; Portmann and Montessori”

Susan Waldstein, Franciscan University of Steubenville

Because he has mind, man has a richer way of living than other animals. Humans’ condition at birth and first year of development are a sign of their unique way of being animal. Mammals have two modes of infancy; the lower ones like mice are helpless at birth; the higher ones are immediately alert and on their feet like foals and apes. But humans are a most peculiar mixture of helpless and alert. Portmann calls the family, where this second period of embryonic growth takes place, the social uterus.

“Human Dignity, Vulnerability and Education”

Jorge Lopez, Francisco de Vitoria University

The reflections in this paper answer two related questions: are the perfection and excellence (*areté*) compatible with the "imperfection" of being vulnerable? And what role does vulnerability play in the Christian educational paradigm?

According to the Christian paradigm, excellence resides not so much in the absence of defects but in the presence of communion. Assuming this perspective, the Greek educational paradigm is enriched. Through vulnerability, perfection -- that is communion -- is reached. It requires a character education model that integrates intelligence, will, and affectivity.

**“Newman and Hesburgh: Consecrating Human Excellence through Liberal Education”
Brennan Buhr, University of Notre Dame**

Father Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., strove to build Notre Dame into a great Catholic university, an institution to “consecrate all our human excellence to the transforming influence of Christ in our times.” I argue that Hesburgh’s vision of the university, centered around the student’s intellectual formation, is similar to St. John Henry Newman’s ideal espoused in his *Idea of a University*. Still, Hesburgh broke from Newman by embracing the modern research university’s emphasis upon scholarly excellence. I maintain that there is an abiding tension between Catholic liberal education, with its emphasis upon the student’s intellectual growth, and the research model.