

PRESERVING HUMAN DIGNITY IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE WORLD

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Abstract

Human dignity is a fundamental concept in human rights. It recognizes the inherent worth and value of every human being, irrespective of their origin, status, or any other characteristic. The increasing interconnectedness of the modern world has led to a surge in inter-cultural interactions and co-living arrangements. Inter-cultural living, involves interactions and exchanges between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In this context, safeguarding human dignity is essential to prevent conflicts and promote mutual respect and understanding. The article explores the core tenets of human dignity, analyzes the complexities of inter-cultural living, and presents the ways and means to safeguard human dignity in the emerging inter-cultural living.

Key Words: Human Dignity, Spiritual Dignity, Rational Dignity, Social Dignity, Moral Dignity, Inter-Cultural Living, Cultural Sensitivity, Cultural Pluralism

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1. Introduction

The dawn of the 21st century has ushered in an era of unprecedented global interconnectedness. Advances in communication, transportation, and technology have facilitated the movement of people, ideas, and goods across geographical boundaries, giving rise to a global village characterized by vibrant and complex inter-cultural interactions. From bustling urban centers with diverse populations to online communities spanning the globe, individuals are increasingly interacting with those from different cultural backgrounds. This shift presents an extraordinary opportunity for mutual enrichment, fostering understanding, and building bridges between diverse communities.

Human dignity, a concept both profound and elusive, lies at the heart of ethical and legal frameworks across the globe. It is the bedrock upon which human rights are built, the guiding star for just societies, and the intrinsic value that distinguishes us as a species. Fundamentally, human dignity is the inherent value and worth that all individuals possess merely by virtue of their humanity. It is not earned, nor is it dependent on any particular characteristic, such as intelligence, beauty, social status, or physical ability. It is a fundamental right, predating and transcending any specific legal or political system. This inherent worth is often described as inviolable, meaning it cannot be violated or taken away. It is a protective shield against dehumanization and a source of moral obligation that demands respect for every individual, regardless of their circumstances.

Today the whole world discusses human dignity when the mass deportation of undocumented migrants is happening in the nation, like the USA. Deportation of undocumented migrants, a policy often justified on grounds of national security and economic concerns, is a particularly fraught area where the potential for violations of human dignity is high. The inherent power imbalance between the state and the individual, coupled with the vulnerabilities often experienced by migrants, necessitates a rigorous examination of existing policies and a call for significant reforms.

This article deals in detail with the concept of human dignity, highlights culture as an inevitable component of any society, discusses and a few ways to safeguard human dignity in the inter-cultural living.

2. What is Human Dignity?

Human dignity is inherent to every human being, inalienable and independent. The term human dignity is not an acquired title, rather an inborn one. "It is because humanity is considered to exist in the image and likeness of God that this reflexive likeness can be taken as a criterion for human dignity."¹ And for this reason it is not a privilege, nor a right but an inalienable and indivisible reality of human existence. That is why people say that dignity is unassailable. Daniel P. Sulmasy explains dignity as: "something one may have or something one may perceive in another or in oneself."² The present law of certain countries disregards not just human dignity alone but a human's existence too.

3. Paradigms of Dignity

Dignity has been known by various labels; spiritual dignity, rational dignity, social dignity and moral dignity, to name a few. F. Podimattam would view human dignity from three unique perspectives. Firstly, it denotes the basic sense of human rights. Secondly, it encompasses the entirety of the individual, viz., his/her physical, intellectual and psychological aspects. Thirdly, it envisions human fulfilment, which is important for the genuine good of human nature.³ When one traces back the concept of dignity in the annals of history one sees different paradigms.

3.1. Spiritual Dignity

Humans are undoubtedly spiritual creatures that subsequently need to be spiritually free to enjoy their full capabilities. Being spirit and body with emotions makes us uniquely sentient beings – with dignity, freedom and deserving equal humanity. The concept of a spiritual dignity was the idea that emerged in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This was in the context of a gulf between a purely worldly life and a transcendent life in close relationship with God. Humanism was the basic principle upon which this new pattern of dignity was shaped.⁴ As is well known, in the Middle Ages human existence was viewed with a pessimistic spirituality in which matter

¹ Mette Lebech, "What is Human Dignity?" *Maynooth Philosophical Papers*, ed., Mette Lebech, Maynooth: Maynooth University Press, 2004, 66.

² Daniel P. Sulmasy, "Death and Human Dignity," *Linacre Quarterly*, Vol. 67, no. 4 (1994): 27.

³ Cf. Felix M. Podimattam, *Why be Moral*, Delhi: Media House, 2005, 52.

⁴ Cf. Roberto Andorno, "Human Dignity and Human Rights as a Common Ground for a Global Bioethics," 223-240.

was considered evil. Human being as creature from the earth was always presented as sinful and dangerous. However, Christian theologians were brave enough to go back to the scripture and interpret the worth of human existence and thus spiritual dignity was defined. Spiritual dignity is the awareness that a human being has worth, by virtue of being born. The spiritual soul is valuable. But certain actions can devalue that spirit. This is more along the lines of reducing the human entity to the level of an animal. One might distinguish between external dignity and internal dignity. A person's external dignity represents 'bodily integrity', whereas internal dignity is his or her 'spiritual integrity'. A growing body of literature shows that modernity – specifically the spread of neoliberalism and its soft power over individuals and groups – suffocates peoples' spiritual dignity now more than ever before.⁵ With physical slavery made illegal by international law, the forces of postmodernity have turned to the spiritual enslavement of people. Slavery destroys the spiritual dignity of a person. It takes from them their rights to live as a human and have control over their life.

3.2. *Rational Dignity*

The notion of rational dignity came up in the philosophical schools of the 17th and 18th centuries. They tinted the rational nature of human being and the limits of this faculty. The universal nature of human reason and the moral equality were dealt with in utter seriousness. They denied the need for a spiritual transformation to achieve this equality and uniqueness. The notion of human dignity has been the subject of many centuries of philosophical inquiry. Most of the explanations emphasize the rational capacities and the free will that characterize human beings, and make them something absolutely unique among living beings. Philosophers like Descartes gave it an existential dimension. The words, '*I think; therefore I exist*',⁶ gave a universal equality to all the individual's human reasoning and consciousness. Gratuitous prominence given to the reason was not accepted by many contemporaries and it had faced criticism from all quarters. Philosophers like Pascal stressed on the statements regarding the limits of human reason and did not want to express reason without the divine elements. "All the dignity of man consists

⁵ Cf. Alexander Daniel Sieber, *Towards Spiritual Dignity, Opting Out of Neoliberalism's Cultural Imperialism*, New York: Columbia University, 2018, 1.

⁶ René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, trans. by John Veitch, Munich: C. H. Beck, 1901, 7.

in thought. Thought is therefore by its nature a wonderful and incomparable thing.”⁷ Moreover, the dignity of human being according to Pascal eventually lies in the awareness of the greatness and finitude of the human nature. The moral Christian understanding gave a sober basement to the concept of rational dignity and this was later accepted by other thinkers. Immanuel Kant was one of them who valued dignity more than anything. According to him the only way to be considered human, is when one considers human beings as ends in themselves. “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means and always at the same time as an end.”⁸ He states humanity has much more elevated status than the animal nature. Nature based primarily on the instinct for survival, procreation, and sociability denotes animal nature whereas humanity differentiates itself with the rational capacity to set ends, use appropriate means to achieve them and organize them into a whole. At the same time, human nature combines with personality to give ourselves moral laws and fix accountability for following them.⁹

Stoics are of the opinion that the reasoning capacity of a person defines human dignity. This idea omits a good number of people like children below the age of reasoning, mentally challenged and severely sick people. Others say that the amount of freedom and autonomy that a person enjoys decides the dignity. This also is faulty because it would exclude all those who are unable to enjoy freedom owing to social, structural, cultural and family problems. Freedom and autonomy are the main principles of individuality but it does not mean that one can separate individuality from the concept of a human person. Most of the debates concluded that the ability to reason and the capacity to choose freely brand human beings as something absolutely unique among living creatures. When one tries to radicalize or isolate the human person one departs from the truth. This trend of thought leads to social evils. It is then one has to remember about the destiny of one’s existence.

⁷ Blaise Pascal, *Pascal’s Pensées (Thoughts)*, trans. by W. F. Trotter, Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2003, 165.

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed., and trans. by Allen W. Wood, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002, 46-47.

⁹ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by L. W. Beck, New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1959, 428-429.

3.3. Social Dignity

Every human being has a basic right to be respected by fellow beings. Every person has the right to be free and to express one's moral beliefs through words and actions that will help them grow as they use their talents to help others. People have the right to be free of fear. They have the right to find peace in understanding and accepting who they are, but only if it does not violate others' rights and beliefs. Each person's rights end where the dignity of another begins.

The cry for social dignity became very loud in the 19th century and this mainly argued for the equality of men and women. A few women thinkers fought for the enfranchisement of women which was very uncommon during those years. The situation in the society, or of the world in a larger perspective, was so pathetic that though there had been all the prosperity in the agricultural sector, the majority of people were starving and the number of illiterates was on the rise. More than ever people were discussing freedom and independence in every nook and corner of the world but the stigma of colonialism and domination of the wealthy nations was at increase. And the people were victims of social injustice and psychological bondage.

People's ethnic, cultural and community consciousness was degraded owing to the geo-politics such as the Cold War between the super powers, viz., USA and Soviet Union. Social, political, economic, ethnic and cultural debates were an everyday occurrence. Besides, in the aftermath of the two World Wars, horrifying aspects arose in the minds of the people. Newer means of media and communications came up, but they somehow lacked the motivation to send out messages stressing the fundamental principles of human life and existence. Material growth was the major concern of the people and so they set apart less time for spiritual empowerment.

Social activists raised their voices against anomalies and atrocities such as bonded labour and slavery which were inflicted on the working class especially during the years of the industrial revolution. These anomalies retreated in Europe after the emergence of social dignity consciousness. Experts say that "the concept of dignity was used to denounce injustice and to promote human rights. This clearly shows that dignity is not a merely empty rhetorical term, but rather, the source from which all the basic rights derive their substance."¹⁰

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, "The Concept of Human Dignity and the Realistic Utopia of Human Rights," *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 41, no. 4 (July 2010): 466.

Secondly, dignity was invoked to defend collective and social rights, which were promoted all around the world. This historical fact negates the notion that dignity is an individualistic, liberal and western ideological construct.¹¹ Pope John Paul II reminds us that real human dignity demands the recognition of both “the spiritual destiny of the human person and moral structure of freedom.”¹²

3.4. Moral Dignity

Moral dignity is within the scope of private ethics – the individual’s intrinsic value – and collective ethics – the value of intertwining the social fabric and harmonious coexistence. The intrinsic value helps an individual to form a moral consciousness. Intrinsic value “is a sign of growth, it is a sign of progress, and it is a sign of maturity. It shows the flowering of the human person into a consciousness of his true dignity.”¹³ Formation of consciousness is so important that it is upon which an individual found, moral values, one’s value of life, discerning justice and making the right decision and judgement. Major Greek and Roman philosophers highlighted moral dignity as the uniqueness of human beings. They designated some qualities innate to human nature, like free will and rationality, by means of which every individual would be able to reach and develop moral ideals and virtues like goodness, prudence and benevolence.¹⁴ Later, they coined a universal understanding of otherness and equality of human beings, and these are documented in history. Besides it reminds one constantly of one’s own inherent dignity and the responsibility towards the society and the world at large. Human dignity means not only possessing strong moral values that help society to prosper and improve, but also following through on them. Human dignity involves and demands respect among the different people of any society. “A given treatment of another is qualified as unworthy just because it fails to give to the other, what is due to him or her as a person having dignity.”¹⁵ Every human being has the

¹¹ Cf. Andorno, “Human Dignity and Human Rights as a Common Ground for a Global Bioethics, 223-240.

¹² John Paul II, “Address to the United Nation’s General Assembly,” *Origins*, Oct. 19 (1995): 270.

¹³ J. Leon Hooper, (ed.) *Bridging the Sacred and the Secular: The Selected Writings of John Courtney Murray*, Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1986, 206.

¹⁴ Cf. Roberto Andorno, “Human Dignity and Human Rights as a Common Ground for a Global Bioethics,” *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 34, 3 (2009), 223-240.

¹⁵ John F. Crosby, “Why Persons Have Dignity,” in *Life and Learning IX: Proceedings of the Ninth University Faculty for Life Conference, June 1999 at Trinity International*

dignity, value and worth because he or she is a human being created by God. Hence one arrives at a notion that human dignity's moral proposition is based on the human person. This dignity is independent of anything else that exists within or outside human person. This human dignity is inseparable, nor quantitative but certainly qualitative. No one is excluded from this dignity. Studies and debates have taken this topic to such a level that today the concept of human dignity is universally understood as an ethical and legal principle, underlining that all human beings have innate merit and absolute rights by the mere fact of being human.

4. Human Dignity Today

The dignity of human being gives special meaning and aim to the existence of the human person. The concept of human dignity plays an increasing role in contemporary society more than ever. "Human dignity is not the largesse of any other human being, group, system or state. It is therefore to be respected, protected and promoted and no human being may be made use of or sacrificed for the sake of someone or something."¹⁶ Today in every society there are visible instances of violence against human dignity. The contradiction is that the Constitutions of all the countries assure the dignity of the human person, but unfortunately the violence against human dignity is always on the increase.

Human dignity is inseparable, and at the same time, it lasts till the end of life. Today there is a major group which debates that dignity is relative and it need not be a universal principle. It is unfortunate that today violations against human dignity are very common. In the name of religion, in the name of patriotism, in the name of wealth, for the sake of sex, and in the atmosphere of business, politics etc., people dishonour the dignity of the human person. These oppressors are under the wrong notion that the concept of dignity is merely theological and social and not inviolable. They try to value persons purely in terms of their utility to society, where they conveniently forget the unemployed, marginalised and mentally challenged who do not have much to contribute to the society or who do not hold any title or high profile. The public worth of a person shall not be set by

University, Deerfield III, 79-92, ed., Joseph W. Koterski, Washington, DC: University Faculty for Life, 2000, 2.

¹⁶ Thomas Srampickal, "Abortion and its Evil," in *Catholic Contributions to Bioethics: Reflections on Evangelium Vitae*, eds., Baiju Julian and Hormis Mynatty, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007, 221.

offices of command, judicature, and public employment; or by names and titles. This should never be the principle. Human beings have a value or a worth qualitatively different from that of anything else in the world, that this dignity is inalienable in the sense that it can never be lost and that it is never permissible to merely use a human being to attain some end or purpose'.¹⁷ One has to understand that human dignity is inborn with the human person and it is proper to persons by virtue of their being human. Dignity is independent and has nothing to do with any segment or hierarchy. "Dignity is inherent to each and every person simply because of his or her being human. As such, dignity is a category of being, not just of having".¹⁸

5. Human Dignity in the Intercultural Living

Today the debasement of dignity mostly occurs at the places where intermingling of the culture exists, and mostly it is among the migrant communities. "Human being is understood as an independent, autonomous subject whose independence must be safeguarded from the incursions of society or community in all cases."¹⁹ Culture has become so as an integral part of human life, in such a way that sometimes people become aggressive and fight with those who stand against their culture. Anthropologists see culture as "the integrated system of learned behaviour patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance".²⁰ When the dignity of the human person is revered, and his or her rights are recognised and secured, creativeness and reciprocity thrive, and also the innovativeness of the human temperament is discharged through good actions.

The proliferation of inter-cultural living environments, while offering numerous benefits, can inadvertently create conditions that erode human dignity. Inter-cultural living environments are often characterized by power imbalances. These imbalances can stem from socioeconomic disparities, political marginalization, or historical legacies of colonialism and oppression. When power is unevenly

¹⁷ Dwyer, s. v. "Dignity of Person," 724.

¹⁸ Berma Klein Goldewijk, "From Seattle to Porto Alegre: Emergence of a New Focus on Human Dignity and the Implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," in Berma Klein Goldewijk, Adalid Contreras Baspineiro, P. César Carbonari, eds., *Dignity and Human Rights, The Implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, New York: Intersentia Transational Publishers, 2002, 2.

¹⁹ Dwyer, s. v. "Dignity of Person," 725.

²⁰ Adamson E. Hoebel, *Anthropology: The Study of Man*, 4d, New York: McGraw Hill, 1972, 6.

distributed, individuals from less powerful groups are at greater risk of exploitation, abuse, and denial of their rights. Differences in cultural norms, communication styles, and values can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and conflicts in inter-cultural settings. These misunderstandings can erode trust, create social divisions, and lead to the devaluation of certain cultural practices.

Addressing the threats to human dignity in the context of inter-cultural living requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that encompasses the promotion of intercultural dialogue and empathy.

5.1. Consider Culture as Common Legacy

Culture is a broad term, and the existence and essence of a person are embedded in a culture. No person can grow without a culture; nor can one be totally alienated from culture. Culture “signifies the way different human communities organize themselves to find meaning through the complex interaction of their economic, social, political, aesthetic and religious dimensions of life.”²¹ The truth regarding culture is that it has a tradition, and it has an influence on the present. However proudly one attempts to show that one’s culture is not affected by the environment, no culture remains as it has been. The culture that humans are in, has undergone a lot of changes to get the form of today. There is no tenure for this change, and it is an ongoing process; and it never ceases. Any dispute triggered in the name of culture is ignorant of this factor. As it is known to all, every culture has a value system, and this has originated according to the tradition and context of a certain period of history. Hence, it is better to consider cultural diversity as common heritage of humanity. Cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. This acceptance shall avoid all kinds of debasement of human dignity and as a result openness, peaceful co-existence, innovation, creative thinking etc. continue to exist.

5.2. Understand Cultural Diversity as Cultural Pluralism

Diversity means the existence of the many groups of individuals among a society, whereas pluralism means that a society in which diversity is accepted and supported. Every human being is a product of cultural influence. “The term culture means the specific way in

²¹ S.M. Michael, “The Emerging Cultural Challenges to Christian Mission Today,” 21.

which human beings belonging to a given people cultivate their relationship with nature, with each other, and with God in order to arrive at an authentic and full humanity. It is the shared lifestyle that characterizes different peoples around the earth, and so one can speak about a “plurality of cultures”.²² People assimilate into a particular culture through learning and this learning need not be a conscious effort. Some are easily inserted into a culture whereas others have to make a deliberate attempt to be inserted into a culture. One can also say that a person does not possess culture but rather belongs to it. Culture is “a complex reality that includes spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features.”²³ Culture is very broad and comprises lifestyles, food and clothing, ways of communication, the arts, structures and traditions of family and society, education, law and administration. As every society is embodied with diverse cultural elements a harmonious co-existence has to be ensured and guaranteed where all citizens are included, accepted and encouraged to live as the essential parts of the society.

5.3. Culture as a Factor in Integral Development

Culture and its diverse elements broaden the horizons of the integral development of everyone. Culture is an engine of social development. Generally, people misconstrue development as something related merely to economic growth. Development here means not just in terms of economic growth, but it also means a deeper understanding reaching to the different realms of intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. Because culture is a “fundamental component of the vitality of any society; it is the sum total of people’s creative activities, its methods of production and of appropriation of material assets, its form of organization, its beliefs and sufferings, its work and its leisure, its dreams and its successes”²⁴ In this sense there is everything that comes under the purview of culture and it has to play a major role in the development of the society; it is multidimensional and its role in identifying the community is pivotal. If, then, culture in the broadest sense is a

²² Cf. GS, 53; EN, 20. Document of the Third General Congress, Puebla de Los Angeles, Mexico, 1979: Conference of Latin American Bishops, as quoted in James A. Scherer, Stephen B. Bevans, eds., *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization, Part I*, Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992, 100.

²³ Aram I, “The Incarnation of the Gospel in Cultures: A Missionary Event,” in James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans, ed., *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999, 30.

²⁴ UNESCO: *Thinking Ahead*, Paris 1977, 20.

process of community identification, a particular way of living and producing, of being and willing to be, and if development is the overall aim of civilization for the complete and inclusive fulfilment of man, we could go one step further and say that culture implies development just as development implies culture.²⁵ Thus it is possible and indeed necessary to talk of a cultural model of development. This way of integral development is essential in the present scenario because today the attitudes of individualism and independence are at increase and these affect the relationship between the individuals and the social nature of mankind. The integral growth shall not limit one from dependence to independence rather it should take one to the next realm of independence to interdependence. Sustainable and integral development makes it necessary to strike a balance, achieving the maximum of development opportunities and preserving at the same time the assets and the intangible elements that constitute the cultural identity of a society in particular and a nation in general.

5.4. Elevating One's Dignity by Encountering Others' Dignity

The existing cultures of today have undergone a lot of transformation. Hence, there should not be any dispute in the name of culture. "Other cultures are not 'enemies' from which we need to protect ourselves, but differing reflections of the inexhaustible richness of human life".²⁶ Rootedness in one's culture gets an elevated status when one is able to hold strong to the humanizing values, and this value system includes and demands respect for the culture of others. Sometimes Christians think that they are mandated to civilise a society denying totally the existing culture, which indeed distance people from the Gospel message. "Only when we let the [...] communities, aided by the Holy Spirit, encounter the Gospel in their own particular culture, will the Church be enriched by the fruit of God's Spirit dwelling in the diverse cultures and become genuine catholic."²⁷ Only that kind of cultural integration where human values and human identities are respected, carry on the mission of Jesus. "I cannot truly encounter another unless I stand on firm foundations, for

²⁵ Cf. Pierre Pascallon, "The Cultural Dimension of Development" in *Intereconomics*, Vol. 21, Issue, 1, January- February, 1986, 38.

²⁶ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti: Encyclical on Fraternity and Social Friendship*, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vatican, 2020, 147.

²⁷ Paul Puthanangady, "Christian Community as a Multi-cultural Reality," in K. Kunnumpuram, E. D'Lima, J. Parappaly, eds., *The Church in India in Search of a New Identity*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1997, 178-179.

it is on the basis of these that I can accept the gift the other brings and in turn offer an authentic gift of my own. I can welcome others who are different, and value the unique contribution they have to make, only if I am firmly rooted in my own people and culture".²⁸ Showing respect to the other culture itself is a sign of a cultured person and it is a sign that one accepts the identity of the other. The one who hold this principle will be able to show justice to others in his thoughts, words and actions. Being open to other cultures is an inclusivism that Jesus practised. This inclusive attitude provides the serenity and solitude to listen to the whispering of God, which is essential for the growth in faith life. As a follower of Christ the cultural transformation therefore should motivate one to reform one's own culture from the dehumanizing elements, if any, after the model of Jesus. Finally it cannot be ignored that "in matters of culture, it is the community's sensibility that is decisive."²⁹ And how beautiful it is if this sensibility is based on a generous and just conscience as that of Jesus.

5.5. *Building a Culture of Dignity*

Culture is an inevitable part of any society. "Humanity, as created in the image of God, is widely regarded as establishing the original uprightness and dignity of human nature."³⁰ If one does not express a Christian culture of accepting the dignity of fellow being through one's life, one gives a counter witness to the dynamism of the Word of God. The foundation of the Christian culture says that human persons are created in the image and likeness of God. Divine dignity is the foundation of human dignity, and the latter is the revelation of the former.³¹ The Gospel values have tremendous power to immerse itself into any society. We are to build a culture that gives place for the poor and oppressed, *Dalit* and downtrodden, ignored and intellectuals. Human beings, more importantly as Christians and as co-creators have the responsibility to join the venture of building a culture of dignity and this will definitely change the world. Preserving the dignity of human life is a courageous act. Without human dignity there is only despair; without human dignity a person is entirely and

²⁸ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 143.

²⁹ T. Menampampil, "Conversion: The Cultural Dimension," *Mission Today* 10, 1 (2008): 26.

³⁰ A.E. Mc Grath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Oxford/Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994, 370.

³¹ Kendall R. Soulen and Linda Woodhead, "Contextualizing Human Dignity," in Kendall R. Soulen and Linda Woodhead, eds., *God and Human Dignity*, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006, 8.

totally destitute, whether one works the entire day for minimum wages or a homeless person in city. Culture is considered to be in crisis when there are conflicting cultural trends with opposing value systems affecting human hearts and communities, social structures and religious associations adversely. 'Dignity consciousness' is what today the generation lacks. The absence of 'dignity consciousness' in one person causes the debasement of dignity. Hence a 'dignity education' is essential to build a culture of dignity. Revering the individuals and respecting the values existing in a society will unquestionably build a culture of dignity. Hence two essential elements to build a culture of dignity are dignity consciousness and dignity education. For the successful establishment of a culture of dignity it is important to have not only the interpersonal respect for dignity but also to be mindful of the importance of developing policies that honour dignity.

6. Conclusion

Human dignity is not a static or monolithic concept. It is a dynamic and evolving ideal, a tapestry woven from historical, philosophical, and social threads. It serves as a vital compass, guiding us toward a more just and humane world. By continuously reflecting on its meaning and implications and by actively working to uphold the dignity of all individuals, we can strive to create a society that truly values the inherent worth of every human being. It is an ongoing process, a commitment that requires vigilance, compassion, and an unwavering belief in the shared humanity that binds us together. Safeguarding human dignity in the context of inter-cultural living is not merely a moral imperative; rather, it is essential for creating a just and equitable society. The future of inter-cultural living depends on our collective commitment to safeguarding human dignity. This requires a continuous process of learning, adapting, and working towards a more just and equitable world. The challenges are significant, but the potential rewards – a world of greater understanding, empathy, and collaboration – are worth striving for. We must remain vigilant in defending human dignity as we navigate the increasingly complex and interconnected landscape of inter-cultural living.