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Editorial

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the beginning of the 21st century a lot is being said about dignity in its numerous varieties. Human dignity: of a woman, of a man, of a child constitutes the basis of any social, religious, legislative, or historical discussions. Escalation and emphasis on dignity is so powerful that it may appear that we have got lost in the basic understanding of this concept. Far too easily and too often are people lavish with this magnificent and significant attribute of human personality.

The dictionary of Polish language defines „godność” („dignity”) as a sense of, or awareness of one’s own value, respect for oneself, pride, honour. It is about a sense of dignity, about an attribute of some subject. Therefore, dignity is strictly associated with value. The etymological dictionary by Alexander Brückner states that the word „wartość” („value”) was borrowed from a German word „Würde” and it simply means „godność” („dignity”). Thus, what determines dignity, the quality of an object or man is value. However, *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna* under this entry states that the term value is most often used interchangeably with the term good in its broadest meaning and means everything that is precious and worth yearning, which is the aim of some human aspirations. Therefore, to talk about „dignity” means to talk about the most reputable, good, dear, what has an attribute of magnificence.

The following issue of „The Horizons of Education” is entitled „The concerns for dignity”, which might seem a bit „ungrammatical”. However, it has to be stressed that it is not about dignity as an inalienable attribute of a subject. The aim of the topic formulated in this way is very simple: it is about how personified dignity cares for itself and for the subjects it gives special value

to. We attempted at approaching our issue from the side of „dignity”. Is it feasible?

The first article printed is the address of cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, the prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, which was delivered on April 22nd 2006 in Cracow in the University School of Philosophy and Education „Ignatianum” on the occasion of the central celebrations of the Jubilee Year of the Society of Jesus. Cardinal Grocholewski mentioned the role Catholic universities should play in contemporary world, founded on of John Paul II’s teaching. He highlighted the fundamental difference between Church and Catholic universities, at the same time emphasizing the need for training, education of the Catholic intelligentsia of various professions in the latter.

We are introduced into the subject of dignity by Arno Anzenbacher, who analyzes it from three points of view. Firstly, he discusses the legal-ethical dimension of dignity emphasizing man’s subjectivity. Then, he asks about the essence of man’s dignity, referring to biblical and philosophical texts (including Kant and Hegel). Finally, a contemporary look: and here the author recognizes threats resulting from ceasing treating dignity as a universal ethical norm, protecting every human being through pluralization process.

Dignity was thoroughly discussed by John Paul II during his pontificate. On this basis cardinal Nagy begins with the definition of man as a person and the resulting rationality, morality and consciousness. Following John Paul II’s thought, he indicates Jesus Christ as a model of an adult, which transferred onto human nature makes that it acquired special dignity and richness of humanity.

One of the spheres of social life, where it is most difficult to talk about dignity is politics. Despite this fact, such attempts have to be made. Hanna Suchocka begins this attempt with a definition of political activities, whose aim is to gain or hold power. And power should take care of the common good of its citizens establishing the order of social life through law. Next, the author gives an example of the second half of the 20th century, when the principle of solidarity got the upper hand over the communist principle of class hatred (the class struggle). Solidarity, as a social movement, opposed indecent life and at the same time aimed at honest and decent politics based on the truth. What proves ne-

cessary here is freedom, which, as it turns out, often turns into freedom without limitation – „noisy liberalism”, moral indifference destroying human dignity in various ways. The author concludes that legislation based on the natural law, which can be also found in the Polish constitution from 1997, guarantees respect and protection for human dignity. However, ratifying constitution in itself does not guarantee respecting and applying the principles of dignity in politics, but it has to be attempted at in practice.

Psychology of the last decades draws attention to the significance of a positive sense of one's own value. In this light, Bernard Grom presents Kant's mind ethics, according to which man is obliged to provide himself with „moral recognition” and to guard his dignity. This train of thought is continued in more detail on the basis of the Bible, since beginning with the creation and man's likeness to the Creator and redemption, man should love himself and appreciate his own value, i.e. guard dignity.

Particular sensitivity, as far as a sense of dignity is concerned, belongs to children. Stanisław Ruciński in his article seeks the answer to the question about how to find child's dignity in an educational conflict. He used a story of an event he had been the witness to, i.e. two small children playing in a sandpit. This play later turned into a conflict between them. Intervening, an adult tried to protect the dignity of the wrongdoer and the harmed. As a consequence, he draws a conclusion that it is perhaps not about caution, but about concern, accompanying and love towards the child.

The same issue, though from a different perspective, is dealt with by Barbara Smolińska-Theiss. Analyzing the history of discovering child's dignity in Western societies, the author states that despite the fact that such „discovery” was made relatively late, the past century might be deciphered as the time of trampling on child's dignity as a result of the dominance of totalitarian systems. The threats for child's dignity, as viewed by the author, are to be sought first of all in the social-economic dimension. Finally, the author highlights the necessity to draw attention to epistemological, axiological and transcendental dimension considering pedagogical concern for child's dignity.

The reflection upon dignity cannot lack in concern for marriage, i.e. this family unit to which dignity should have greatest rights. Janusz Kowal SJ describes the changes taking place, as

far as the institution of marriage is concerned, in international and national legislation, as defined by its nature and monogamous model, in equal rights for women and freedom of choice of the spouse. In this viewpoint, the author more thoroughly analyzes the changes that take place in Catholic Church, emphasizing greater and greater respect for the very institution of marriage, as well as protection of dignity of people who create it.

The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century present rapid technological progress in many spheres of life. In addition, progressing secularization of politics and culture make that one can get lost in this rush, which determines an exceptional status of man in the world, namely his dignity and inviolability. Wojciech Bołoz CSSR in his article first refers to the definition of this dignity, quoting international declarations of human rights, and then religious and rational justification. Thanks to that, dignity became a universal value. Dignity demands special and exceptional treatment, as regards bioethics, i.e. medical procedures within the scope that does not violate inalienable human rights.

In the last article, Karol Tarnowski undertakes phenomenological deliberations concerning the relationship between faith and violence, and tries to reveal the mechanism, which makes that power and faith change into a „believing power”. This is how various kinds of religious fanaticisms and unlimited ability to rule over the autonomy of others arise. Meanwhile, the source of experience of faith is pre-trust, seeking and clinging on to the truth, which opens a kind of pre-hope. In the end, it makes man open to his mind rising towards the ethos of internal truth of faith, which leads to the affirmation and enriching of existence as such, caring about human dignity.

At the beginning, I stressed that the editorial staff together with the Authors of the texts set themselves an undoubtedly difficult task: how does dignity care about itself and about these subjects it grants status? Have we succeeded? May the Readers judge it by themselves. We only wish to ask you for sharing your judgement with us, which will let you and us understand dignity better and live and breathe it.

Wishing peaceful reading!