



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

“Fratelli tutti”

“Brothers and Sisters: From the Same Womb”

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When I was a young lad growing up and studying classical languages, I learned that, in Greek, the words for brother and sister meant, etymologically “from the same womb (*a-delphos/a-delphē*).” This expression has stayed with me and helped me understand several puzzling situations in life.

For, if brothers and sisters are united by the fact of their origin from the same womb, then they are united in dignity, united in honour, united in rights, while maintaining differences in attitudes and habits; and the rest of humanity is so constituted – *products of wombs, brothers and sisters* all of us!

We are all, biblically at least, considered to be from the same origin, from the same father, but I am from Africa, and many are from Europe and many are from China, and you can see our differences.

If we are so different, can we still talk about being one? Yes, we can. The womb which makes us all one can be the womb of our parents, but it is also the womb of mother earth, the planet which feeds us.

We are one because we share a common womb of world culture, which determines what we study and what we pay attention to and how our lives are guided. We share a common womb of history, with all the world wars and everything that has happened that has brought us to this point. And, lately, these days, we share the common womb of a common healthcare threat and crisis: the covid-19 pandemic.

We are all, in so many ways, from the same womb. This, then, should lead to a common sense of our human dignity that does not leave anybody behind.¹ But in the reality of life, some are left behind along the roadside, left behind in culture, left behind in development, left behind in incomes, left behind in education.

All kinds of experiences separate us and make us unequal and uneven, incurring various types of “*human dignity deficits*.”

So, let us consider this pandemic a wake-up call. Let us go looking for our brothers and sisters whose humanity and dignity are dimmed and reduced to a flicker by modern day slavery and human trafficking. Let us go looking for our brothers who are discarded and left behind. Let us go and look for our sisters who have been abandoned or left along the roadside.

Let us go looking for the men and women whose absence make us feel less whole and less wholesome, and bring them all together, and make real the unity and the wholesomeness of the human family of God's creation.

For, we know that God works all things together

for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

For those God foreknew, He also predestined

to be conformed to the image of His Son,

so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those He predestined, He also called;

those He called, He also justified;

those He justified, He also glorified. (Rom.8:28-30)