



Asian Journal of Religious Studies

“The Lord is truly among us.”

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Contents

Editorial: Healing the Contagious Illness	3
Christian Life between Memory and Hope.....	5
<i>Thomas Padiyath</i>	
Christ, the Risen Lord of Mercy	11
<i>Antony J. D’Cruz, O. Praem</i>	
Excesses in God’s Name: Evaluation Vinod Victor’s Outlook Article.....	16
<i>VM Jose SJ</i>	
Interview Of His Grace Archbishop Anil Couto.....	20
<i>Francis Gonsalves, SJ</i>	
Papal Seminary Completes 125 years.....	24
<i>Rt. Rev. Thomas Dabre</i>	
Homily Notes	27
Book Review: A Call to Commitment	38
<i>Nivedita Antony</i>	
Review Article: Pope Francis: His Impact and Relevance for the Church and Society	41
<i>Arun CST</i>	



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Editorial

Healing the Contagious Illness

Behind the indifference toward human life lies a contagious illness that blinds people to the challenges and struggles of others, Pope Francis said.

Like the mythical figure Narcissus, people risk becoming infected by a “contagious spiritual virus” that turns them into “mirrored men and women who only see themselves and nothing else,” the Pope said.

The Pope addressed the Pontifical Academy for Life as it began its general assembly on June 26, 2018, reflecting on the theme “Equal beginnings, but then? A global responsibility.”

“Evil looks to persuade us that death is the end of all things, that we have come to the world by chance and that we are destined to end in nothingness. By excluding the other from our horizon, life withdraws in itself and becomes just a good to be consumed,” he said.

The Pope told members that the “ethical and spiritual quality of life in all its phases” must inspire the Church’s “behaviour toward human ecology,” as is reported by Junno Arocho Esteves in “Catholic Herald.”

He also said that life from conception, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age, as well in those moments when it is “fragile and sick, wounded, offended, demoralised, marginalised and those cast aside” is “always human life”.

“When we surrender children to deprivation, the poor to hunger, the persecuted to war, the elderly to abandonment, we

are not doing our own work but rather the dirty work of death. And where does the ‘dirty work’ of death come from? It comes from sin,” he added.

Pope Francis also highlighted the need for “a global vision of bioethics” inspired by Christian thought, in which the value of one’s life is not determined by sickness and death but by the “profound conviction of the irrevocable dignity of the human person”.

Citing his 2015 encyclical, “*Laudato Si’*: On Care for Our Common Home,” the Pope called for a “holistic vision of the person” and the importance of articulating clearly the universal human condition “beginning from our body”.

“Our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation,” the Pope said.

Encouraging the Pontifical Academy for Life’s work in promoting a culture of life in the field of bioethics, Pope Francis said that this culture must always look toward “the final destination” where every person is called to be in communion with God.

“To recognise and appreciate this faithfulness and dedication to life raises gratitude and responsibility in us and encourages us to generously offer our knowledge and experience to the whole human community,” the Pope said. Can we be agents of life? Can we heal the indifference towards life? As requested by the Holy Father, can we collectively be truly grateful and responsible for ourselves and the larger world?

Kuruvilla Pandikattu
Editor