

Samaritanus bonus: The human person in the centrality of his integrity

22 September 2020

The address of Undersecretary Gambino at the presentation of the Letter on the care of persons in critical and terminal phases of life

First of all, “the vulnerability of every human being, body and spirit, mysterious marked by the desire for infinite love for which he has been destined from all eternity”; secondly, “the principle that caring for others who are in a state of need is not only a question of the ethics of social solidarity or of beneficence,” but is even more “the recognition of the inestimable value of one’s life as an insurmountable limit in the face of any claim of autonomy”; and last but not least, “the foundation of any juridical order: the worth of every person at any stage of life or condition of existence.”

These are the three cornerstones which the Undersecretary of our Dicastery, Gabriella Gambino, explored in depth this morning in the Sala Stampa, commenting on the Letter “Samaritanus Bonus,” on the care of persons in critical or terminal phases of life, which was edited by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and presented today at a press conference.

“Care,” explained the Undersecretary, “cannot be reduced to simply attending to the sick from a medical or psychological perspective, but must branch out into a virtuous attitude of devotion and concern for the other, which finds its substance in caring for the whole person, for those who are in a state of need.” It is this caring which, she continued, “supports the encounter between ‘I’ and ‘You,’ thereby calling man out of the state of insignificance and anxiety into which his illness has thrown him, and helping him to rediscover the unity of body and spirit. This aspect,” she clarified, “is full of pastoral and bioethical implications, which should lead us to modify the way the critically and terminally ill are cared for in many contexts.”

Faced with the “complexity of the medical management of sickness and death,” before a “secularized culture and legislation that confounds us on the value of suffering and of our life,” Gambino concluded that with the Letter Samaritanus Bonus “the Church desires to restore the centrality of man in his integrity, a unified totality of body and spirit; and to remind us that we are children of a Father who has loved us to the end, who is the only one who can make sweet the burden of our suffering.”



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