



DICASTERIUM  
PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA

## **A BRIDGE TOWARDS HEAVEN THE MAGISTERIUM OF FRAGILITY IN A TIME OF STRENGTH**

*The Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life is organising a study day on pastoral care for the elderly on 10 June in Rome.*

On 10 June 2026, the study day entitled “A Bridge Towards Heaven: The Magisterium of Fragility In A Time Of Strength” will be held in Rome, in the Sala Pio XI of Palazzo San Calisto. The event is organised by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life as part of its competence regarding the pastoral care of the elderly (cfr. PE, 128 §1).

The meeting aims to initiate a structured theological reflection on old age, offering ecclesial communities the tools to move beyond a narrow welfare-based paradigm, to instead embrace a new vision in which older people are fully valued as active participants in the life of the Church.

The event will be attended – both in person and online – by 220 people from around 45 countries, representing 40 Episcopal Conferences, religious congregations, ecclesial associations, and academic institutions.

### **Fragility as a proposition**

In an age characterised, in the various spheres of human coexistence, by the exhibition of force, the Church continues to propose a different anthropology: that of vulnerability embraced, of weakness transfigured, of old age understood in the light of faith. As Pope Leo XIV stated on several occasions, fragility is a ‘bridge towards heaven’ and an opportunity to recognise the tenderness of God, who never forgets his children. Furthermore, the Holy Father has pointed to the recognition of fragility as a path to peace: “When we acknowledge our fragility,” the Pope added, “hearts become open to supporting one another and to invoking the One who can grant what no human power can ensure: the profound reconciliation of hearts and, with it, true peace.” (Address of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, *Meeting with the Algerian community*, 13 April 2026)

The talks scheduled for the day, delivered by experts from various disciplines and from different backgrounds and countries, will therefore help us to understand how fragility is not merely a coincidence, but a privileged path to knowing God – and to that mutual care which lies at the heart of Christian life.

These reflections echo the words of Pope Leo in *Magnifica Humanitas*:

*“Our relationship with life seems to be in crisis today. Everything that appears as a “limit” — incapacity, illness, old age, suffering, vulnerability — tends to be seen primarily as a defect to be corrected, rather than as a reality through which our humanity matures and opens itself to relationship. And yet we must remember that humanity flourishes not despite limitations, but often through them.” (Magnifica Humanitas, n. 118)*

In the Magisterium of Pope Leo XIV, fragility – that of the elderly, but not solely – ceases to be a limitation to be concealed and instead becomes a ‘bridge’, transforming those whom the world would cast to the margins into witnesses and guides for the entire People of God. The elderly, therefore, are not merely recipients of care, but active participants, who, through their very vulnerability, show the Church the way to tenderness and spiritual strength.

Following the opening address by the Prefect, Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the day’s programme includes four sessions of reflection, and two opportunities for discussion.

The speakers will be: Prof. Rosanna Virgili (Pontifical Lateran University); Monsignor Giacomo Canobbio (Theological Faculty of Northern Italy); His Excellency Monsignor Vincenzo Paglia (Fondazione Età Grande); Rev. Fr. Justin Glyn, S.J. (Catholic Theological College, Melbourne and Consultor of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life); Dr Aleksandra Bonarek (Pontifical University of John Paul II, Krakow, and Member of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life); Rev. Fr. Albert Evrard, S.J. (Catholic University of Toulouse); Rev. Fr. Antonio Gaytán (Augustinian Patristic Pontifical Institute); Prof. Talitha Cooreman-Guittin (University of Fribourg); Rev. Sr. Antonella Meneghetti (Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences “Auxilium”).

The closing remarks of the Day will be delivered by His Excellency Monsignor Dario Gervasi, Adjunct Secretary of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

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***Accreditation and participation procedures***

Journalists and media representatives wishing to interview available participants should submit a request via the Holy See Press Office's online accreditation system at: <https://press.vatican.va/accreditamenti>

Accredited journalists and media representatives may conduct interviews only during the scheduled breaks at the following times: from 11.00 to 11.30; from 16.00 to 16.30.

*(On arrival, please ask to be seen by the staff of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life)*

**For more information:**

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