



International
Congress Renovabis

Dialogue and Encounter Between East and West



29th International Congress Renovabis

9 - 11 September 2025

in Berlin and as Livestream

Inviolable and Vulnerable.

**Human Dignity between Universal Claim
and Social Conflict Lines in Europe**

In an increasingly polarized society, human dignity is often instrumentalized and questioned. However, for Christians, it remains inalienable, as it is bestowed upon every person as the image of God. With this congress, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of human dignity and its protection while also discussing the dilemmas we face in our respective countries and its social and political contexts. This raises the question of where the greatest challenges to the protection of human dignity lie today and what social and political tensions are emerging in Europe. What responsibility do politics, the church, religious communities and society as a whole have to do to preserve and strengthen everybody's human dignity?

International Congress Renovabis

The International Congress Renovabis, which has been held annually since 1997, serves to inform and discuss important developments in the church and society in Central and Eastern Europe, but also addresses topics of pan-European significance. Thanks to the participation of numerous guests from all parts of Europe, the congress has developed into an important forum for dialogue between East and West.

Programme

Tuesday, 9 September 2025

Venue: Catholic Academy in Berlin

from 15:00 Registration and distribution of congress documents at the reception

16:00 **Welcome, opening of the Congress and Introduction**

- Archbishop Dr Heiner Koch, Archdiocese of Berlin, Germany
- Rev. Prof. Dr Thomas Schwartz, Renovabis Managing Director, Freising, Germany

From Being Made in God's Image to Social Responsibility – The Dimensions and Controversies of Human Dignity

Moderation:

Dr Karlies Abmeier, Chairwoman of the Diocesan Council of Catholics in the Archdiocese of Berlin, Germany

16:15 **Living in Dignity. Dimensions of Human Dignity and its Challenges**

Introductory Lecture by Prof. em. Dr Ingeborg Gabriel, Professor of Social Ethics, University of Vienna, Austria

17:00 Impulses and Talk

Courage for Dignity – Civil Society and its Struggle for Human Rights

Presentation by Oleksandra Matviichuk, Nobel Peace Price Laureate, Ukrainian lawyer, human rights activist and Chairwoman of the Center for Civil Liberties, Kyiv, Ukraine (possibly online)

Politics with a Duty – Dignity as a Compass for Development and Cooperation

Presentation by Johann Saathoff, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Berlin, Germany

18:30 Musical Duo Yanushkevych

Afterwards Buffet dinner in the foyer

Wednesday, 10 September 2025

Venue: Catholic Academy in Berlin

from 08:00 Registration and distribution of congress documents at the reception

09:00 **Spiritual impulse**

09:10

**Human Dignity between Relationality and Autonomy:
Challenges and Dilemmas through the Lens of Assisted Suicide**

- Prof. Dr Roman Globokar, Associate Professor and Director of the Institute for Moral Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
- Sr Giustina Olha Holubets SAMI, Bioethicist, Founder and Director of the Perinatal Hospice 'Imprint of Life', Corresponding Member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, Lecturer at UCU Lviv, Ukraine
- Prof. Dr Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl, Professor of Theological Ethics at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences Berlin (KHSB), Director of the Berlin Institute for Christian Ethics and Politics, Berlin, Germany
- Prof. em. Dr Jean-Pierre Wils, Professor of Philosophical Ethics and Cultural Philosophy, Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands

Moderation:

Dr Claudia Pfrang, Director of the Domberg Academy, Freising, Germany

11:00

Coffee break

When Dignity Is Vulnerable – Facing Human Challenges compassionately

11:30

Case study work in dialogue groups:

'What to do when there is no easy answer?'

- We are all made in God's image – enabling participation and dignity through communication
with Jelena Ankić, Caritas Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia, and Sigfried Spindlbeck, Caritas Upper Austria, Linz, Austria
- Being a Shepherd means Protecting – Restoring Dignity where Trust was Broken
with Fr Dr Benedek Dobszay OFM, Head of Human Dignity Strategy of the Hungarian Religious Orders, organiser of the safeguarding training at the Sapientia College of Theology, member of the 'Gyerekasztal' (Children's Table) working group, Budapest, Hungary
- The Protection of Life as Respect for the Dignity Inherent in Every Man
with Andrejka Kričej, organisation 'Zavod Biser', Maribor, Slovenia
- Close to the Brokenhearted –Support for Victims of Human Trafficking
with Gina-Maria Stoian, organisation 'ADPARE', Bucharest, Romania
- Dignity in Withdrawal? Addiction Prevention between Personal Responsibility and Systemic Failure
with Amir Hasanović, Director of NARKO-NE, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

13:00

Buffet lunch in the foyer

14:15

Departure for excursions

Human Dignity in Practice – Go, Listen, Understand

15:00

Excursions to local best practice examples in Berlin and **discussion group** in the academy

- **A Roof for the Night – a Place of Dignity for the Homeless**
How can dignity be preserved when one is without shelter and often faces exclusion? Night shelters as places of safety and humanity.
Location: Emergency Overnight Shelter Franklinstraße
Discussion partner: Jürgen Mark
Language: German
- **The Dignity of Mother and Child – Supporting and Counselling during Pregnancy**
Insights into the work of pregnancy conflict counselling.
Location: Donum vitae
Accompaniment: Bettina Locklair
Languages: German/English
- **What remains when Home is lost**
Guided tour through the permanent exhibition of the Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation.
Location: Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation
Languages: German/English
- **Companionship to the End – Hospice Work as a Service to Life**
Accompanying the dying is an act of deep humanity. Treating people with dignity until the end.
Location: Hospice Pankow
Discussion partner: Tobias Neumann
Languages: German/English
- **I was a Stranger and you took me in – Insights into the Everyday Lives of Refugees**
Visit to a refugee shelter. What does it mean to start anew in a foreign country? Exploring challenges in a new homeland and the struggle for a life in dignity.
Location: Zeughof refugee shelter by Diakonie Berlin-Brandenburg
Discussion partner: Hallow Salam
Languages: German/English
- **Recognize. React – A Crowd of Hidden Stories**
An art installation with over 100 T-shirts, printed with powerful illustrations from an international child safeguarding course. Each shirt tells a story – of joy, belonging, pain or harm – and together they form a silent ‘crowd’.
Location: St. Thomas church
Discussion partners: Experts from the international safeguarding project
Language: English

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- **Violence against Women in the Context of Tradition, Poverty and Exploitation**

In conversation with experts, causes and consequences of gender-based violence are explored – with a focus on concrete courses of action.

Location: Catholic Academy in Berlin

Discussion partners: Sr. Alma Zogu, Emma Winter et al.

Languages: German/Italian

17:30 **Gathered around the Centre –
Presentation of the Church Interior of St Hedwig's Cathedral**

Archbishop Dr Heiner Koch

Location: Bebelplatz, 10117 Berlin

18:00 **Holy Mass at St Hedwig's Cathedral**

19:00 Dinner at the tavern 'Erdinger am Gendarmenmarkt'

Location: Jägerstr. 56, 10117 Berlin

Thursday, 11 September 2025

7:45 Opportunity to attend a Holy Mass at St Adalbert
(with concelebration option for bishops and priests)
Location: Torstr. 168, 10115 Berlin

Venue: Catholic Academy in Berlin

from 08:30 Registration and distribution of congress documents at the congress reception

Seek Justice, Help the Oppressed – Dignity under Pressure and Christian Responsibility

Moderation: Dr Paulina Hauser, German Caritas Association, Berlin, Germany

09:00 **Spiritual impulse**
Father Vyacheslav Okun SJ

09:10 **From Image to Reality – Voices on Human Dignity from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe**

- Country focus 1: Bulgaria
Schengen and Border Protection: Approaches to Refugees
Presentation by Diana Dimova, organisation 'Mission Wings', Stara Zagora, Bulgaria
- Country focus 2: Armenia
Refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh to Armenia
Presentation by Dr Harutyun Harutyunyan, Theological Faculty of the Yerevan State University and Community Development NGO, Yerevan, Armenia

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- Country focus 3: Ukraine
Confronting the Trauma of War: Between Secrecy and the Experience of Loss
Presentation by Fr Norbert Frejek SJ, Jesuit community in Ukraine, Chernivtsi, Ukraine

10:15 Coffee break

10:45 **The Future of Human Dignity in Europe – The Role of the Church in Solving Pressing Issues**

Fishbowl discussion with:

- Prof. Dr Regina Polak, Professor of Practical Theology, Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Vienna, Austria
- Metropolitan Grigorije Durić, Metropolitan of the Serbian Orthodox Christians in Germany, Berlin, Germany

12:30 **Summary**

Rev. Prof. Dr Thomas Schwartz, Freising, Germany

12:50 **Closing and Conclusions**

Archbishop Dr Heiner Koch, Archdiocese of Berlin, Germany

13:00 Buffet lunch in the foyer and end of the congress

Updates to the congress programme and additional information can be found at: www.renovabis.de/congress

Dialogue groups

All congress participants are cordially invited to take part in the dialogue groups on Wednesday morning, 10 September. This programme item offers the opportunity to discuss specific social and ethical dilemmas in small groups. These questions will be discussed in the groups based on one or more case studies. For each case study, a thematic input is offered by an expert who presents the issues and introduces the topic. The problem description refers to human dignity from ethical, philosophical, and social perspectives, and explores possible approaches for practical guidance. After half the time, the groups are switched. This allows everyone to discuss two topics. Registration for the dialogue groups takes place on site.

Excursions

All congress participants are also cordially invited to take part in one of the excursions on **Wednesday afternoon, 10 September**. Small groups will visit local facilities in Berlin which exemplify dignified approaches to challenging situations. These excursions offer the opportunity to get to know specific areas of practice and to talk to local experts. Parallel to the excursions, a discussion group is offered at the Academy. Here, too, there is the opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss a thematic focus in greater depth. **Please indicate which group you are joining when you register.** This will help us with organisational planning and with coordinating group sizes with the institutions visited.

Speakers, participants in the panel discussions and moderators:

Dr Karlies Abmeier

Chairwoman of the Diocesan Council of Catholics in the Archdiocese of Berlin, Germany

Jelena Ankić

Caritas Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia

Diana Dimova

Organisation 'Mission Wings', Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

Fr. Dr Benedek Dobszay OFM

Head of Human Dignity Strategy of the Hungarian Religious Orders, organiser of the safeguarding training at the Sapientia College of Theology, member of the 'Gyerekasztal' (Children's Table) working group, Budapest, Hungary

Metropolitan Grigoriye Durić

Metropolitan of the Serbian Orthodox Christians in Germany, Berlin, Germany

Fr. Norbert Frejek SJ

Jesuit community in Ukraine, Chernivtsi, Ukraine

Prof. em. Dr Ingeborg Gabriel

Professor of Social Ethics, University of Vienna, Austria

Prof. Dr Roman Globokar

Associate Professor and Director of the Institute for Moral Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Dr Harutyun Harutyunyan

Theological Faculty of the Yerevan State University and Community Development NGO, Yerevan, Armenia

Dr Paulina Hauser

German Caritas Association, Berlin, Germany

Amir Hasanović

Director of the organisation 'NARKO-NE', Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sr. Olha Holubets SAMI

Bioethicist, Founder and Director of the Perinatal Hospice 'Traces of Life', Corresponding Member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, Lecturer at UCU Lviv, Ukraine

Archbishop Dr Heiner Koch

Archdiocese of Berlin, Chairman of the Renovabis 'Aktionsrat', Berlin, Germany

Andrejka Kričej

Organisation 'Zavod Biser', Maribor, Slovenia

Prof. Dr Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl

Professor of Theological Ethics at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences Berlin (KHSB), Director of the Berlin Institute for Christian Ethics and Politics, Berlin, Germany

Oleksandra Matviichuk

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Ukrainian lawyer, human rights activist and Chairwoman of the Center for Civil Liberties, Kyiv, Ukraine

Dr Claudia Pfrang

Director of the Domberg Academy, Freising, Germany

Prof. Dr Regina Polak

Professor of Practical Theology, Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Vienna, Austria

Johann Saathoff

Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Berlin, Germany

Rev. Prof. Dr Thomas Schwartz

Renovabis Managing Director, Freising, Germany

Sigried Spindlbeck

Caritas Upper Austria, Linz, Austria

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Gina-Maria Stoian

Organisation 'ADPARE', Bucharest, Romania

Prof. em. Dr Jean-Pierre Wils

Professor of Philosophical Ethics and Cultural Philosophy, Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands

and others

Organisational information

Conference languages: German, English and Italian (simultaneous interpreting)

Registration

To register for **in-situ participation** in the 29th International Congress Renovabis in Berlin, please fill in the online form on the Renovabis website:

<https://www.renovabis.de/en/mitmachen/international-congress-renovabis/anmeldung-zum-internationalen-kongress>

The registration deadline is **24 August 2025**. A confirmation will be timely sent to you by e-mail. Please note: Your registration is only valid after receipt of this confirmation. Due to the space available, the number of presence participants is limited. Registrations will be considered according to the date of receipt.

No registration is required to use the **livestream**.

Follow the congress free of charge via livestream

Those who are unable to attend this year's Renovabis Congress in Berlin will have the opportunity to follow the plenary sessions of the Congress in all three conference languages via livestream. A link will be available on the Renovabis website in advance of the event: www.renovabis.de/congress. There won't be any livestream broadcast of the dialogue groups and excursions on Wednesday.

Participation fees for on-site participants

Those attending the congress **in-situ in Berlin** pay **100,- EUR** for participation (including meals). Guests from Central and Eastern Europe pay **half** the fee, i.e. **50,- EUR**. With the confirmation of registration, you will receive the request to transfer the fee together with the necessary details.

Please note: In case of **cancellation of your registration** after 31 August, only 50 percent of any fees will be refunded. If you cancel after 7 September, no refund will be possible.

On-site registration

In view of the necessary registration in the Catholic Academy in Berlin (Hannoversche Str. 5B, 10115 Berlin), we ask all participants to arrive timely.

Opening hours of the congress reception:

- 9 September: 15:00 - 19:30
- 10 September: 8:00 - 16:00
- 11 September: 8:30 - 12:30

Venues:

Plenary sessions and meals

(except dinner on Wednesday, 10 September)

Catholic Academy in Berlin

Hannoversche Str. 5B, 10115 Berlin

Rooms for the dialogue groups will be announced on site

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Excursions

Addresses will be announced on site

Presentation of church interior and Holy Mass (evening on Wednesday, 10 September)

St Hedwig's Cathedral

Bebelplatz, 10117 Berlin

Dinner (Wednesday, 10 September)

Tavern 'Erdinger am Gendarmenmarkt'

Jägerstr. 56, 10117 Berlin

Holy Mass (morning on Thursday, 11 September)

St Adalbert

Torstr. 168, 10115 Berlin

We recommend that guests travelling by car find out about parking facilities in the vicinity of the Catholic Academy in Berlin or at the respective hotels.

Accommodation and meals

Please indicate in the registration form which **meals** you would like to attend.

If you would like to stay overnight, we ask you to find your own **accommodation**. The following hotel has a room contingent available for participants of the congress to book/call off independently (by 9 August at the latest), stating the keyword 'Renovabis':

B&B Hotel Berlin Mitte

Albrechtstr. 25

10117 Berlin

Phone: +49 (0)30 / 526 800-0

Fax: +49 (0)30 / 526 800-99

E-mail: berlin-mitte@hotelbb.com

www.hotel-bb.com/en/hotel/berlin-center

If you have any **questions** please contact:

Renovabis

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kongress@renovabis.de