

Our Success is measured by our humanity

We have been living in a materialistic world, where success is measured by fat wallets, thin waists, the house size, the prize of the car and the jewels I wear. This self-centered and utilitarian approach to life sees a disabled person as a curse, an embarrassment, a burden to the family and to society. We have been living in a society where “to be disable” became a synonym of “to be disposable”.

What has made us lose our compassion? Why are we so selfish? Why do societies look down on the less physically or mentally able...and able for what? Why do we classify people according to external, material and superfluous parameters? This approach to life is not African. In fact, individualism is radically opposed to the beautiful African way of life.

Some may say that it is a legal problem. I say it is a human problem. We have lost our way and the direction to where we were going. We have put in place all sort of laws which protect the disabled. Our constitution set the tone for social change. It mentions the term “disability/disabilities” at least 15 times. The Constitution also imposes a duty on all State organs and public officers to address the needs of vulnerable groups within society, including the disabled. Persons with disabilities are also mentioned in at least 65 other laws of Kenya, dealing with basic rights, education, equality of opportunity, sexual offenses, the right to vote, etc.

We ask ourselves, are these protections a reality in today's Kenya? This should be the true measure of our humanity, the measure of our success.

We live in a world where the disabled is disposable together with the poor, the unborn and the elderly. They are sacrificed on the altar of comfort so that others (considered to be more able) may leave carefree, without worries. This was never the African way. We were not utilitarian, cold, dry and heartless people. Spiritual degradation and the blind acceptance of an individualistic and selfish way of life has undermined our humanity.

Africa may not, for the time being, be at the forefront of science and technology. We cannot put a man on the moon. But we are the best at feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, accompanying the lonely and crying with the suffering. No one can outdo Africa in generosity, compassion, and fraternity.

Today's world is being tested by COVID. We have been given a chance to reexamine who we are, why we are here, for how long and for what purpose. If we can answer these questions in a satisfactory manner, we will build back better.

In his recent letter **Fratelli Tutti**, Pope Francis says, **“When the dignity of the human person is respected, and his or her rights recognized and guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the creativity of the human personality is released through actions that further the common good.”**

Ladies and gentlemen, this deep respect founded on dignity is what I have witnessed in and through Orione Centre. At Orione, there is true creativity and independence thriving for the common good. This Centre is an incredible show of humanity. The effort of many students, the love and care of teachers and administrators, the support of relatives and friends, has made it possible to show love and humanity to those who our modern society often considers disposable, or less human.

The spirit of Orione must permeate government, legislators, leaders, policy makers. I dream with the “Orionisation” of society. Orione stands here as an oasis of what Africa must preach to the world, which is that building back better is done through dignity, caring for all, and accompanying those who need it most.

Ladies and gentlemen, this will be the true measure of humanity’s success, no matter where we are and how little we may seem to be but history will judge our humanity by the way it dealt with the most vulnerable.

Thank you very much.

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