

Ten After Ten Session 84: The Dignity of the Human Person

1700 The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God (article 1); it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude (article 2). It is essential to a human being freely to direct himself to this fulfillment (article 3). By his deliberate actions (article 4), the human person does, or does not, conform to the good promised by God and attested by moral conscience (article 5). Human beings make their own contribution to their interior growth; they make their whole sentient and spiritual lives into means of this growth (article 6). With the help of grace they grow in virtue (article 7), avoid sin, and if they sin they entrust themselves as did the prodigal son to the mercy of our Father in heaven (article 8). In this way they attain to the perfection of charity.

1701 It is in Christ, “the image of the invisible God,” that man has been created in the image and likeness of the Creator. It is in Christ, Redeemer and Savior, that the divine image, disfigured in man by the first sin, has been restored to its original beauty and ennobled by the grace of God.

1702 The divine image is present in every man. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the unity of the divine persons among themselves.

1703 Endowed with a spiritual and immortal soul, the human person is the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake. From his conception, he is destined for eternal beatitude.

1704 The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection in seeking and loving what is true and good.

1705 By virtue of his soul and his spiritual powers of intellect and will, man is endowed with freedom, an “outstanding manifestation of the divine image.”

1706 By his reason, man recognizes the voice of God which urges him to do what is good and avoid what is evil. Everyone is obliged to follow this law, which makes itself heard in conscience and is fulfilled in the love of God and of neighbor. Living a moral life bears witness to the dignity of the person.

1707 Man, enticed by the Evil One, abused his freedom at the very beginning of history. He succumbed to temptation and did what was evil. He still desires the good, but his nature bears the wound of original sin. He is now inclined to evil and subject to error.

1708 By his Passion, Christ delivered us from Satan and from sin. He merited for us the new life in the Holy Spirit. His grace restores what sin had damaged in us.

1709 He who believes in Christ becomes a son of God. This filial adoption transforms him by giving him the ability to follow the example of Christ. It makes him capable of acting rightly and doing good. In union with his Savior, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness. Having matured in grace, the moral life blossoms into eternal life in the glory of heaven.

1716 The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus’ preaching. They take up the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham. The Beatitudes fulfill the promises by ordering them no longer merely to the possession of a territory, but to the Kingdom of heaven.

1717 The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection... they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ’s disciples.

1718 The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it.

1719 The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude. This vocation is addressed to each individual personally, but also to the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise and live from it in faith.

1720 The New Testament uses several expressions to characterize the beatitude to which God calls man:

—the coming of the Kingdom of God;

—the vision of God: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”;

—entering into the joy of the Lord;

—entering into God’s rest.

1721 God put us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to come to paradise... With beatitude, man enters into the glory of Christ and into the joy of the Trinitarian life.

1722 Such beatitude surpasses the understanding and powers of man. It comes from an entirely free gift of God: whence it is called supernatural, as is the grace that disposes man to enter into the divine joy.

1723 The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement—however beneficial it may be—such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love.

1724 The Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and the apostolic catechesis describe for us the paths that lead to the Kingdom of heaven. Sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we tread them, step by step, by everyday acts. By the working of the Word of Christ, we slowly bear fruit in the Church to the glory of God.