

Module Three Introduction: Our Vocation to Beatitude & Freedom

CCC nn.1691-1748

Basic Outline for Module Three / Pillar Three of the CCC, the *Imitatio Christi*

Section One:

This Week:

- Introduction: the catechetical context for catechesis on the Moral Life in Christ 1691-1699
- I. The theological context for this catechesis: **Man in the *imago Dei*** 1700-1715
N.B. presumes the nature of Man (*what* he is) and Man in the bigger picture of the Journey of salvation history (*where* he is), all in Parts One & Two of the CCC
- II. The goal of the moral life in Christ: our **vocation to Beatitude (Love)** 1716-1729
- III. The nature of **Freedom** to attain the goal 1730-1748

Next Week:

- IV. The nature of free **human acts** that move us toward (or away from) the goal 1749-1761
Specifically: the symphony of intellect & will in choosing freely in truth for love
- V. A closer look at our embodiment: the **passions** & their relation to choosing 1762-1775

In Two Weeks:

- VI. A closer look at the judgment of reason in light of truth for choosing freely: **conscience** 1776-1802
- VII. The *internal principle of human action* that perfects the powers of intellect & will for choosing freely: the cardinal & theological **virtues**, the **gifts & fruits** of the **Holy Spirit** 1803-1845

Future Lessons:

- VIII. The **Abuse of Freedom (Sin)** and the **Mercy** of God Who Is Love 1846-1876
- IX. The moral life in Christ as it transforms our relations & **community** in Love (Chap Two)
The solidarity of the persons in *imago Dei*, the justice of God in society 1877-1948
- X. The *external principles of human action* (then interiorized): **Law & Grace** (Chap Three)
Law as expression of Truth to enlighten; Grace as power & Life to act 1949-2029
- XI. Mother **Church** as interpreter of Law and dispenser of Grace 2030-2051

- XII. Section Two: The **Decalogue** as revealed expression of the **Natural Law**, fulfilled in the Evangelical Law of Freedom / of Christ / of Holy Spirit / of Grace / of the Gospel/ of Love, orienting us toward the goal of the *Imitatio Christi*: **our vocation to Beatitude (Love)** 2052-2557

Marvelous texts on our topic for today (all available on-line):

John Paul II:

- General Audience, Wednesday, 26 August, 1998 "Man is invited to fellowship with God."
- General Audience, Wednesday, 2 September, 1998 "The Holy Spirit is the true source of Freedom."

Benedict XVI:

- Address to Plenary Meeting of Pontifical Biblical Commission, 27 April, 2006 "Freedom attains its perfection when directed toward God."
- Homily to former students, 30 August, 2009 "The Law, as Word of Love, is not contradiction of Freedom"
- Message on the Ten Commandments "To Educate Us in Liberty and Love," 10 September, 2012.

Cardinal Avery Dulles:

- "John Paul II and the Truth about Freedom," *First Things*, no. 55 (August/ September 1995), 36-41.

Pope Francis:

- Message to "10 Squares for 10 Commandments," 10 June, 1913.

Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas
Grant me grace, O Merciful God,
to desire ardently all that is pleasing to Thee,
to examine it prudently,
to acknowledge it truthfully,
and to accomplish it perfectly
for the praise and glory of Thy Name. Amen.

THE CCC CONTEXT

Introduction: The catechetical context for moral theology 1691-1699

Introduction to Part Three: What the moral life really is

1691 The New Dignity of Man in Likeness of 2nd Adam, New Way of Love
 (n.b. St. Leo’s sermon on Feast of Incarnation)

Moral Life’s Connection to Parts One and Two of Catechism

1692 Part One: God’s action toward man in Incarnation & Paschal Mystery & outpouring of Holy Spirit to transform us into the Body (Church) of the Head (Christ) / Bride of Bridegroom / Fully adopted sons of the Father in the Son of the Father
 Part Two: Process of redemption & divinization via continuation of the process in the dispensation of the sacraments / communion of the Church => new power to love

The Trinitarian Source and Aim of the moral life:

1693 in Christ, our aim is communion with the *Father*; therefore, “perfection”...
 1694 via the imitation of *Christ* (participation)...
 1695 & interior transformation by *Spirit* to desire, discern, decide, do in love = holiness, divinization

1696 That all leads to a new Way of Love (Life)

1697 **Therefore, catechesis (teaching) on the moral life** = teaching on:

- Holy Spirit
- Grace
- Beatitude(s)
- Reality of sin & forgiveness
- Human virtue (cardinal virtues)
- Christian virtue (theological virtues)
- Great commandment to love God & neighbor = Decalogue
- Communion in love in the Church, the Body, the New Society of the Divinized

Part Three, Chapter One 1700-1876

1699: Part Three, Chapters Two (**life of divine love**) & Three (**gift of salvation**)

1698 And **all begins and ends with Christ Jesus**, the Way of Love embodied, Trinitarian Love made manifest in our midst, made manifest in and through us and our works.
 i.e. = a Eucharistic moral theology = a moral theology of the Self-gift outpoured in love that leads to the *communio* of the Body

THE EXPERIENCE



Three questions that provide a experiential context for moral theology:

1. Where am I now? (Honestly, as my untempered, untutored self *now*?)
2. Where am I meant to go? (What am I meant to be? What is ‘me excellently’ capable of? What am I designed to be, called to be? What is the nature of Man?)
3. How do I get there? (How do I then live? What should I *do*? What is the *way*?)

I. The theological context for moral theology: the journey of salvation history (1701-1715)

THE BIG PICTURE

The Catechism presumes and expounds upon a comprehensive anthropology (vision of Man, the human person) both in terms of

1. The nature of Man (what he is) in the *imago Dei*
2. Man in the bigger picture (where he is) of salvation history (his own and communally)

Therefore, Part Three of the Catechism presumes from Part One an answer to Question Two:

- CCC 279-421 catechesis on creation and fall, on nature of Man, on nature of evil
= **Original Man Created** in the *imago Dei*
= **Fallen “historical” Man**
- 422ff catechesis on the 2nd Adam, the True Man, Jesus Christ, and his work in concert with the Holy Spirit to restore the likeness to the image
= **Eschatological / Redeemed Man** “in fullness of time” in the 2nd Adam...
= ...and us individually and corporately “already but not yet”, our individual drama intersecting with the greater drama of salvation history
- 988-1060 catechesis on the “Four Last Things” and the hoped-for glorification of Man in the life of the Trinity (cf. CCC 234, 257-260)
= **Eschatological / Glorified Man** “in the life of the age to come”

The moral life is rooted in a history of God’s activity. We need to perceive Reality correctly. Our understanding of history and the human drama is shaped by God’s Economy (that is, how He works in space and time both on the grand stage of world history and on the equally dramatic stage of our own lives).

The *Imitatio Christi*: “[h]aving matured in grace, the moral life blossoms into eternal life in the glory of heaven” (1709, 1715) n.b. Fontes here = *Gaudium et Spes*, 11-24 “What is man?”

THE JOURNEY

The moral life is a trajectory, a journey, a call (vocation) toward...happiness (beatitude).

***Gaudium et Spes*, 22:** “[O]nly in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light...Christ...in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, makes man fully manifest to himself and brings to light his exalted vocation.”

Jesus reveals not only the Face of God...

...but the face of true humanity: finally, here is what it means & looks like to be fully human!
“I’m only human” now means: “I have a vocation to perfection, completion, God-likeness, divinization, the ability to love as God loves, happiness (beatitude)! (cf. CCC 260, 294)

***Gaudium et Spes*, 24:** “This likeness [between the union of the divine Persons and the unity of God’s sons in truth and charity] reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.”

And happiness (beatitude) is the God-likeness attained only—paradoxically—through self-gift (dying to self) in imitation of the True Adam, Jesus.

Conversely, sin is the diminishment of the human, the disintegration of self, the diminishment of freedom => the ice-cold static word-less cannibalistic narcissism of Satan “Me, myself, and I” vs. the refulgent, fruitful, good-diffusive, soaring out from self of Father, Son, Holy Spirit in Love.

Excursus: A note on the sources of Catholic moral thinking (the science of moral theology): *fides et ratio*, faith and reason, revelation and rationality

“The Church’s moral reflection, always **conducted in the light of Christ**, the “Good Teacher”, has also developed in the specific form of the theological science called “moral theology”, a **science** which accepts and **examines Divine Revelation while at the same time responding to the demands of human reason**. Moral theology is a reflection **concerned with “morality”, with the good and the evil of human acts and of the person who performs them**; in this sense it is accessible to all people. But it is also “theology”, inasmuch as it acknowledges that the **origin and end** of moral action are found in **the One who “alone is good”** and who, by **giving himself to man in Christ, offers** him the **happiness of divine life**.” [emphases added]

John Paul II on moral theology, from his encyclical on the moral life, *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth), 29 (1993)

II. The goal of the moral life in Christ: our vocation to Beatitude / Happiness / Love (1716-1729)

**WHAT WE WANT:
THE GOAL of JOURNEY**

- Why do I do what I do? Why do I do ANYTHING I do? Answer: “**I want to be happy**” (1718)
- What is “happiness”?
 - **Objective happiness** = the state of possessing / attaining “the good” [beatitude]
 - **Subjective happiness** = the delight / joy of possessing a true good [joy, satisfaction]
 - The natural hierarchy of the good (see Diagram)...and what reason therefore tells us about the normative character of the good (the natural inclinations => the natural law).
- As **created man**: I cannot not want to be happy, I cannot not desire the good...
As **fallen man**: ...but I can be mistaken both about what the good truly is, about the ordering of lesser goods relative to greatest good, about how to move toward any given good, and—even if I know what is true good—about in fact being able to attain it! My desiring, discerning, deciding, and doing is flawed!
 - We have a vision / intellect / paradigm problem (Is this a true good?)
 - We have a capability / will / power problem (Am I able to move toward the good, and do so consistently?)
 - Romans 7:14-25 “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”
Who will show me the way? Whence comes the power to go there?
- “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” *Gaudium et spes*, 22
Beatitude = The Face of God in Christ Jesus! = the 2nd Adam, and in him, **redeemed / divinized man** through the Gospel paradox of dying to self, of giving self away in love (the Beatitudes) (*Gaudium et spes*, 24). (N.b. Sermon on Mount / Beatitudes = THE basis of Christian moral life. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure...)
- The *summum bonum* = being able to love as he loves, to be able to be in **Friendship with Him** = Charity / Love / *Caritas*. This is the divine nature, HE is our final goal, **HE is our end**. *Imitatio Christi!*
- Our *telos* is *theosis* by *kenosis*! (1719,1721,260,1726) **The True Good = A Person: “FOLLOW ME!”**

Note well!

- **Action / any act begins with the end / good it seeks**
- **We become what we do**, we take on the quality of the good (perceived good) we choose. We take on a “quality of soul” that is connatural with any given good (or perceived good).
- **I am therefore responsible for what I become**; my choices determine what kind of person I become. I become what I do, I become the things I choose...
- Self-gift is an act of a free and responsible creature, one made in *imago Dei*...

**FREEDOM TO
REACH THE GOAL**

III. The nature of Freedom to attain the goal (1730-1748)

- **False / inadequate notions of freedom:** the freedom of indifference = “ability to do what I want”
 - Indifferent to objective truth or existence of hierarchy of good
 - See Handout: “Throwing Curves”

- **True Notion of freedom:** the freedom of excellence = “ability to do what ought to do in order to attain the good...and the Greatest Good.”
 - Desiring, discerning, deciding, doing with excellence in accordance with the good (and all goods in the hierarchy of the good).
 - The relationship between freedom & truth: true freedom is grounded on truth. Therefore, true freedom welcomes and seeks wisdom of law oriented to the good.
 - The relationship between freedom & love: true freedom is ordered toward love. Therefore, true freedom is compatible with, indeed fosters, dying to self.

- **“Freedom” = both “freedom from” and “freedom for.”**
- There is no rivalry between freedom & grace, between freedom & law, between freedom & truth.
- Our freedom is contingent freedom (the freedom of a creature who is made in *imago Dei* for own sake, *capax Dei*, able to love...or not). There is *ordo amoris*, so too an ordering of freedom.
 - We are free only to extent that can desire, discern, decide, and do what is truly pleasing to Him.
 - **“The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes”** (1733).
 - **“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”** --Jesus, quoted in John 8:32
 - “By fully complying with the Father’s will, ‘the crucified Christ reveals the authentic meaning of freedom; he lives it fully in the total gift of himself and calls his disciples to share in his freedom.”
-- John Paul II, general audience, Sept 2, 1998 (quoting his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 85).

- **Freest Man who ever lived:** Jesus, the 2nd Adam (refashioning the 1st Adam)
- **Freest Act ever done:** “Not my will, Father, but thine be done”
(recapitulating the grasping of Adam & Eve)
- **Freest Imitator:** Mary: “Be it done to me according to Thy Word.” “Do whatever He tells you.”
- **Sin** = “the abuse of freedom” (1733, 1739)
 - Slavery: the Gollum Syndrome “We likes it we does, My Precious!”

- Growth in Freedom: The **FOOTBALL** example
 - 1) Know the Ultimate Goal, for this end /*telos* orders all other acts.

 - 2) Follow the wisdom of the Law to stay in the game, to act in way that moves me toward the goal.
 - This is not just “license to choose”, but strength of will to choose right things in right way.
 - “Being authentic” = when our actions & choices are true to the Goal (not nec. what we *think* is the goal).
 - Saying “yes” to the goal always involves saying “no” to other things.
 - The goal is not “to follow the rules”, but if we don’t follow the rules, we won’t reach the goal.
 - Even negative rules have a positive purpose.
 - The key is to KNOW HOW THE RULES CONNECT TO ATTAINING THE GOAL.

 - 3) Cultivate Interior Skills, Excellences, & Strengths that enable you see the truth & choose for the goal consistently, easily, and joyfully = VIRTUE = RIGHT, EFFECTIVE ORDERING OF SOUL
 - This is not just wanting to exercise...but wanting the right things in the right way at the right time.
 - This is “owning” ourselves so that we have POWER to PERFORM in the right way at the right time.
 - This is not what we do when we’re at our best, but is the excellence we achieve in the day-to-day.
(Everyone makes a great play sometimes; the great players perform with excellence all the time).
 - We’re only as skilled / virtuous as our weakest power.
 - “The virtuous man is he who *freely* practices the good.” CCC 1804

 - 4) Foundationally & ultimately: RECEIVE THE POWER of FAITH, HOPE, LOVE =>
GRACE / GIFT / THE INDWELLING TRINITY