

Week One

The Human Person-Subject of Faith and Reason

- Created in the image and likeness of God
- The multidimensional nature of the Human Person
- Truth as the Object of the Human Intellect
- Good as the Object of the Human Will
- Faith and Reason as Vehicles of Apprehending Truth

Objective: This lecture is meant to introduce participants to the complex and multidimensional nature of the human person. The goal is to see how the human person, though made up of different dimensions is yet a single subject capable of carrying out different tasks or activities. For instance, the act of thinking (reasoning) and the act of believing, though distinct cohere or exist in a single subject. Hence the same subject who is capable of carrying out a rational operation can also, at the same time, carry out an operation that pertains to the act of believing, that is, faith. And so, the one who thinks is the same as the one who believes. Thinking and Believing, that is reason and faith, are not mutually exclusive.

Goal: At the end of this lecture, candidates should be able to clearly explain the interconnections between the different aspects of the human person and how these aspects play out in the day to day life of both the individual and society.

Summary of the Topic:

The Creed (Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed) contains, in synthesis, the principal truths of our faith as Christians. The first article of that Creed states that ***we believe in One God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen, visible and invisible.*** This first article of the Creed is itself a synthesis or summary of what is contained in the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis, which tells the story of creation. Of all that is created by God, the human person holds a very special place. The human person is said to have been created in the image and likeness of God.

Although created from material substance, hence the human person can be said to be ***homo materialis***, the human person is nonetheless endowed with a spiritual element since he/she bears in him/herself the spirit of God in whose image and likeness he/she was made. Hence man/woman, in addition to being ***homo materialis*** is also a ***homo spiritualis***. And so, the human person is a composite but unified (single) being. He/she is a unified being insofar as he/she is a single acting being, but he/she is a composite being insofar as he is both ***body*** and ***soul***. As a composite being, the human person has several dimensions. These include: ***physical, spiritual, emotional, psychological*** and ***intellectual*** dimensions. Apart from the first dimension (physical) which pertain to the material part of man, that is, his body; all other dimensions are aspects of his soul. Usually, a delicate balance is maintained among these different dimensions of the human person. The human person is at his optimum when these different dimensions work harmoniously together. Whereas, when the delicate balance among these various dimensions are upset, the human person suffers and ceases to thrive.

When man is said to bear the image and likeness of God in him, some Christian thinkers often associate this to refer to two fundamental faculties in man: his ***intellect*** and ***will***. These two faculties distinguish the human person from all other earthly creatures. Being endowed with the intellectual faculty or the faculty

of reason, hence he is said to be *homo intellectus* or *homo rationalis*, man always consciously seeks to know, hence he is referred to as *homo sapiens*. That which the intellect seeks, that is, its object is **truth**. The human mind is ever inquiring, always seeking to know the truth about what is. But the highest of all that is, that is, the highest truth is God himself, who is the Truth Himself.¹ Indeed, this quest to know is, according to Pope John Paul II, one that is placed by God in the human heart. God, in other words, have placed in the very heart and spirit of man a certain restless curiosity that constantly impels him to seek truth.

It is interesting to note that Pope John Paul in his encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*, speaks of *contemplation of the truth* not just a mere knowing of the truth. In this way, the Pope establishes a distinction between **truth** and **fact** on one hand; and **contemplation** and **knowing** on the other hand. Truth is much deeper and broader concept than facts. Contemplation involves more than mere knowing. Contemplation is a deeper and higher form of knowing. One must, therefore, go beyond mere knowing if he is to arrive at the truth of something. Whereas, if one remains at the level of mere knowing, he may come to a knowledge about a lot of facts about something but not necessarily the truth of that thing. For instance, one may know that XYZ is, but may not come to a full grasp of why XYZ is.

We noted that there are different levels of truth. Man's restless quest for truth is such that he is not contented with stopping at or remaining at one level of truth but carries on that quest until it arrives at the highest and most sublime truth beyond which there is no other truth. This Ultimate Truth is what, Christians have come to identify as God or better still, the God who has revealed himself as the Ultimate and Absolute Truth is him which Christians have come to believe in and worship. In some sense, therefore, the aspect of the human person which seeks to worship God is in some way connected to his intellectual faculty. The intellect reaches out to the highest truth (God) and in reaching out to this highest truth, the human person is moved to honor and worship him in one form or the other. Hence, the human person is said to be fundamentally a *homo religiosus*.

The second important faculty of the soul in which the human person is said to bear the image and likeness of God is his will, that is, his volitional faculty. The human person is endowed with the faculty of freewill which enables him act freely without external or internal compulsion. And so, man is said to be *homo libero* or *homo libertus*. Just as truth is the object of the intellectual faculty, the object of the volitional faculty is **the Good**. The human will ordinarily desire or wills that which it considers as good. But the highest of all good is God himself, who is Goodness himself. And so, we see that that the two most fundamental faculties of the human person: the intellect and will, orientate or moves the human person ultimately towards God who is the Absolute and Highest Truth and Goodness. In seeking the good, which is the object of his volitional faculty, the human person will often have to judge which of his actions are right or wrong; good or bad. Because it is in the nature of man to make this judgement, the human person is said to be *homo moralis* or *homo ethicus*.

In addition to these fundamental or essential faculties of the human person, the human person has other important elements or aspects. Among them is the social dimension of the human person. By his very nature, the human person is created for a life of communion. The human person was not created to be a solitary being, but rather a being that enters into relationship or communion with other persons.² It is in

¹ In fact, there are various levels of truth, requiring various levels or degrees of knowing.

² The first and indeed the highest communion that the human person is called to enter into is the communion with God which forms the matrix or framework for communion with his fellow human beings. So, there is the vertical

entering into a network of relationships that each human person discovers and indeed, fulfils his own being. In fact, the human person can only thrive and flourish only when he enters into a network of healthy relationships with other persons. Thus, the human person is said to be ***homo socialis***, that is, a social being.

As a social being, human beings live in communities or societies. But in order for such societies or communities to thrive and flourish which in turn enables the persons who live in them to thrive and flourish, they need to be properly organized or well-ordered. In other words, such communities or societies need to be governed or administered. And so, it is in the very nature of the human person not only to enter into a network of relationships by establishing communities but even more importantly to ensure that such communities are well ordered, organized or governed. That aspect of the human nature that seeks the well-ordering of the community or society in which he lives is called **politics**. And so, man, as the famous Greek philosopher, Aristotle, would say is a **political animal** or a **political being**. Man is **homo politico**. But as we can attest from our own lives and experiences the human person seeks to enhance his live by engaging in one form of economic or entrepreneurial activity or the other. Thus, the human person is also a **homo economicus**.

Now, all these dimensions, faculties, elements make up what we consider as the human person. Although we may have succeeded in identifying these various aspects or dimensions of the human person, they do not collectively exhaust what or who the human person is. The human person is much more than the sum total of all these dimensions. This is because, the human person has in himself an aspect of the one in whose image he is created. In other words, the human person has an aspect of mystery in him. Thus, the human person is ultimately a **homo mysterioso**. Man is a mystery because he has in him an aspect of God who is Mystery himself.

Further Reading Texts

1. Catechism of the Catholic Church nos. 355-373; 1700-1715; 1877-1948
2. "Gaudium et Spes" in *Documents of the Second Vatican Council*; nos. 11-32

Study Questions

1. What are the faculties that direct us to God and in what way do they direct us to God?
2. Can a human person be said to have fully achieved his/her human potentiality if he/she neglects any aspects or dimensions of his/her human nature? If not, why?
3. What does it mean that the human person has a vocation to live in communion? In what way or ways does he/she live out this vocation?
4. Is it possible for one to be religious and at the same political? If Yes, how?
5. To know and love God are said to be among the primary vocations of man. How does man accomplish this vocation?

Quotation to Remember

The Glory of God is Man Fully Alive (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Adversus Haereses, Bk. IV, 20, 7); and The Glory of Man is God (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Adversus Haereses, III, 20, 2)

and horizontal dimensions to this communion. The absence of either of them makes that communion incomplete and unfruitful. This is dual communion is summed up in the New Law of Christ: Love of God and Love of Neighbor.