VOCATIONAL
DISCERNMENT

SECULAR INSTITUTE
LAY SERVANTS OF JESUS CHRIST PRIEST

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TOPIC 2

THE VOCATION OF MAN: LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

METHODOLOGY

Guide to study the texts personally:

1. Read the text and underline the ideas you want to highlight or the doubts that arise. Take note of them.

2. Bring to prayer the underlined ideas that you would highlight and the doubts about the text. Explain what calls you feel God is making to you for your daily life.

3. What commitment emerges from these calls? How can you bring them to life? Where do you find resistance?

Presentation of the questions worked on to the person in charge of the formation process.

THE VOCATION OF MAN: LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

(Catechism of the Catholic Church)

1699. Life in the Holy Spirit fulfils man's vocation. 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 one); it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude (article two). It is up to the human being to freely reach this realization (article three). By his deliberate acts (article four), the human person conforms, or does not conform, to the good promised by God and attested to by the moral conscience (article five). Human beings build themselves up and grow from within: they make their entire sensitive and spiritual life a material for their growth (Article Six). With the help of grace, they grow in virtue (article seven), avoid sin and, if they have committed sin, have recourse like the prodigal son (cf. Lk 15:11-31) to the mercy of our Father in heaven (article eight). In this way they access the perfection of charity.

1. MAN, IMAGE OF GOD

1701. "Christ, [...] in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, man fully manifests himself to man and reveals to him the greatness of his calling" (GS 22:1). In Christ, "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15; cf. 2 Cor 4:4), man was created "in the image and likeness" of the Creator. In Christ, Redeemer and Saviour, the divine image altered in man by the first sin has been restored to its original beauty and ennobled by God's grace (GS 22).

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 (cf. Chapter Two).

1703. Endowed with a "spiritual and immortal" soul (GS 14), the human person is the "only creature on earth whom God has loved for his own sake" (GS 24:3). From its conception it is destined for eternal beatitude."

1704. The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By reason he is able to understand the order of things established by the Creator. By its will it is capable of directing itself to its true good. It finds its perfection in the search for and love of truth and goodness (cf. GS 15:2).

1705. By virtue of his soul and his spiritual powers of understanding and will, man is endowed with freedom, "an eminent sign of the divine image" (GS 17).

1706. Through his reason, man knows the voice of God that impels him "to do [...] good and to avoid evil" (GS 16). Every man must follow this law that resounds in the conscience and is realized in the love of God and neighbor. The exercise of moral life proclaims the dignity of the human person.

1707. "Man, persuaded by the Evil One, abused his freedom from the beginning of history" (GS 13:1). He succumbed to temptation and committed evil. He retains the desire for the good, but his nature bears the wound of original sin. He has become inclined to evil and subject to error.

"Hence man is divided within himself. For this reason, every human life, singular or collective, appears as a struggle, certainly dramatic, between good and evil, between light and darkness." (GS 13:2)

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

1709. "He who believes in Christ is made a child of God. This filial adoption transforms him by giving him the possibility of following the example of Christ. It makes him capable of acting rightly and of doing good. In union with his Saviour, the disciple attains the perfection of charity, holiness. The moral life, matured in grace, culminates in eternal life, in the glory of heaven.

2. OUR VOCATION TO BEATITUDE

I. The Beatitudes

1716. The beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus' preaching. With them Jesus collects the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham; but he perfects them by ordering them not only to the possession of an earth, but to the kingdom of heaven:

> *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
> *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*
> *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*
> *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,*
> *for they will be satisfied.*
> *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*
> *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*
> *Blessed are those who seek peace,*
> *for they will be called children of God.*
> *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,*
> *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Blessed are you when they revile you, persecute you,
and falsely say all kinds of evil against you for my sake.
Rejoice and rejoice, for your reward will be great in heaven.
(Mt 5:3-12)

1717. The Beatitudes depict the face of Jesus Christ and describe his charity; they express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and his Resurrection; they illuminate the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are paradoxical promises that sustain hope in tribulations; they announce to the disciples the blessings and rewards already begun; they are inaugurated in the life of the Virgin Mary and all the saint

II. The Desire for Happiness

1718. The beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the heart of man in order to draw him to Himself, the only one who can satisfy him:

"Surely all of us want to live happily, and there is no one in the human race who does not give his assent to this proposition even before it is fully enunciated" (St. Augustine, De moribus Ecclesiae catholicae, 1, 3, 4).

"How is it, Lord, that I seek you? For in seeking you, my God, I seek a happy life, make me seek you so that my soul may live, for my body lives from my soul and my soul lives from you" (Saint Augustine, Confessions, 10, 20, 29).

"God alone satisfies" (St. Thomas Aquinas, In Symbolum Apostolorum scilicet "Credo in Deum" expositio, c. 15)..

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 one personally, but also to the whole Church, a new people of those who have accepted the promise and live by it in faith.

III. Christian Beatitude

1720. The New Testament uses various expressions to characterize the beatitude to which God calls man: the coming of the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt 4:17); the vision of God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8; cf. 1 Jn 3:2; 1 Cor 13:12); entry into the joy of the Lord (cf. Mt 25:21, 23); the entrance into God's rest (Heb 4:7-11):

> *"There we will rest and see; we will see and love each other; we will love and praise. This is what will happen at last without end. And what other end have we but to reach the Kingdom that will have no end? (St. Augustine, De civitate Dei, 22, 30).*

1721. Because God has put us in the world to know Him, serve Him, and love Him, and thus to go to heaven. Beatitude makes us share in the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4) and in eternal life (cf. Jn 17:3). With it, man enters into the glory of Christ (cf. Rom 8:18) and into the joy of the Trinitarian life

1722. Such beatitude surpasses human intelligence and strength alone. It is the fruit of God's free gift. That is why we call it supernatural, just as we also call supernatural the grace that disposes man to enter into divine joy.

> *"'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Certainly, according to his greatness and his inexpressible glory, "no one will*

see God and go on living," because the Father is unapproachable; but his love, his kindness towards men and his omnipotence go so far as to grant those who love him the privilege of seeing God [...] 'for what is impossible with men is possible with God'" (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Adversus Haereses, 4, 20, 5).

1723. The promised beatitude places us before decisive moral choices. He invites us to purify our hearts of their evil instincts and to seek God's love above all else. It teaches us that true happiness lies neither in wealth or well-being, nor in human glory or power, nor in any human work, however useful, such as sciences, techniques, and arts, nor in any creature, but only in God, the source of all good and all love:

"Money is the idol of our time. To him the multitude, the mass of men, instinctively pays homage. These measure happiness according to fortune, and, according to fortune also, they measure honorability [...] All this is due to the conviction [...] that with wealth everything is possible. Wealth, therefore, is one of the idols of our day, and notoriety is another [...] Notoriety, the fact of being recognized and making noise in the world (what might be called a press fame), has come to be regarded as a good in itself, a sovereign good, an object of true veneration" (John Henry Newman, Discourses addresed to Mixed Congregations, 5 [Saintliness the Standard of Christian Principle]).

1724. The Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount and the Apostolic Catechesis describe to us the paths that lead to the Kingdom of Heaven. Through them we advance step by step through the acts of each day, sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Made fruitful by the Word of Christ, we slowly bear fruit in the Church for the glory of God (cf. the parable of the sower: Mt 13:3-23).

3. THE FREEDOM OF MAN

1730. God created rational man by conferring on him the dignity of a person endowed with initiative and control of his actions. "God wanted to 'leave man in the hands of his own decision' (Sir 15:14), so that he may seek his Creator without coercion and, clinging to Him, may freely arrive at full and happy perfection" (GS 17):

> *"Man is rational, and therefore like God; he was created free and master of his acts" (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Adversus haereses, 4, 4, 3).*

I. Freedom and responsibility

1731. Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, to perform deliberate actions by oneself. By free will each one disposes of himself. Freedom is in man a force of growth and maturation in truth and goodness. Freedom reaches its perfection when it is ordered to God, our beatitude.

1732. Until he is definitively confronted with his ultimate good, which is God, freedom implies the possibility of choosing between good and evil, and therefore of growing in perfection or of faltering and sinning. Freedom characterizes properly human acts. It becomes a source of praise or reproach, of merit or demerit.

1733. To the extent that man does more good, he also becomes freer. There is no true freedom except in the service of good and justice. The choice of disobedience and evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to the slavery of sin (cf. Rom 6:17).

1734. Freedom makes man responsible for his actions to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and asceticism increase the dominion of the will over one's own acts.

1735. The imputability and responsibility of an action can be diminished or even eliminated because of ignorance, inadvertence, violence, fear, habits, disordered affections and other psychological or social factors.

1736. Every act directly willed is attributable to its author:

Thus the Lord asks Adam after sin in paradise: "What have you done?" (Gen 3:13). Likewise to Cain (cf. Gen 4:10). So too the prophet Nathan to King David, after his adultery with Uriah's wife and his death (cf. 2 Sam 12:7-15).

An action may be indirectly voluntary when it results from negligence with respect to what should have been known or done, for example, an accident caused by ignorance of the highway code.

1737. An effect can be tolerated without being willed by the one who acts, for example, the exhaustion of a mother at the bedside of her sick child. The bad effect is not imputable if it has not been willed either as an end or as a means of action, such as death that occurs while helping a person in danger. For the bad effect to be attributable, it must be foreseeable and the person acting must have the possibility of avoiding it, for example, in the case of a homicide committed by a drunk driver.

1738. Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. Every man must give each one the respect to which he is entitled. The right to the exercise

of freedom is a requirement inseparable from the dignity of the human person, especially in moral and religious matters (cf. DH 2). This right must be recognized and protected civilly within the limits of the common good and public order (cf. DH 7).

II. Human Freedom in the Economy of Salvation

1739. Freedom and sin. Man's freedom is finite and fallible. In fact, the man erred. He sinned freely. By rejecting the project of God's love, he deceived himself and became a slave to sin. This first alienation engendered a multitude of alienations. The history of humanity, from its origins, bears witness to misfortunes and oppressions born of the human heart as a result of the misuse of freedom.

1740. Threats to freedom. The exercise of freedom does not imply the right to say and do anything. It is false to conceive of man "as the subject of this freedom as a self-sufficient individual who seeks the satisfaction of his own interest in the enjoyment of earthly goods" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instr. Libertatis Conscientia, 13). On the other hand, the economic, social, political and cultural conditions required for the just exercise of freedom are too often ignored and violated. These situations of blindness and injustice burden the moral life and place both the strong and the weak in the temptation to sin against charity. By departing from the moral law, man attacks his own freedom, chains himself, breaks fraternity with his fellow men and rebels against divine truth.

1741. Liberation and salvation. By His glorious Cross, Christ obtained salvation for all men. He rescued them from the sin that had held them in bondage. "Christ set us free to be free" (Gal 5:1). In him we share in "the truth that sets us free" (Jn 8:32). The Holy Spirit has been given to

us, and, as the Apostle teaches, "where the Spirit is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17). From now on we rejoice in the "freedom of the children of God" (Rom 8:21).

1742. Libertad y gracia. The grace of Christ is in no way opposed to our freedom when it corresponds to the sense of truth and good that God has placed in the heart of man. On the contrary, as Christian experience testifies, especially in prayer, as we become more docile to the promptings of grace, our inner truth and our assurance increase in trials, as well as in the face of the pressures and constraints of the outside world. By the work of grace, the Holy Spirit educates us in spiritual freedom to make us free collaborators in his work in the Church and in the world.

> *"Almighty and merciful God, put away all evil from us, so that our body and spirit may be freely disposed and do your will" (Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Collect: Roman Missal)*

4. THE MORALITY OF HUMAN ACTS

1749. Freedom makes man a moral subject. When he acts deliberately, man is, as it were, the father of his acts. Human acts, that is, freely performed after a judgment of conscience, are morally qualified: they are good or bad.

I. Sources of morality

1750. The morality of human acts depends:
— of the object chosen;
— the purpose sought or the intention;
— of the circumstances of the action.

The object, the intention and the circumstances form the "sources" or constituent elements of the morality of human acts.

1751. The object chosen is a good towards which the will deliberately tends. It is the matter of a human act. The object chosen morally specifies the act of will, according to whether reason recognizes it and judges it according or not to the true good. The objective rules of morality enunciate the rational order of good and evil, attested to by conscience.

1752. In front of the object, the intention is placed on the side of the subject who acts. The intention, because it is linked to the voluntary source of the action and because it determines it by reason of the end, is an essential element in the moral qualification of the action. The end is the first term of the intention and designates the objective sought in the action. Intention is a movement of the will towards an end; he looks at the end of the work. It points to the expected good of the action undertaken. It is not limited to the direction of each of our actions taken in isolation, but can also order several actions towards the same goal; it can direct all life towards the ultimate end. For example, a service done to someone is meant to help others, but it can be inspired at the same time by the love of God as the ultimate goal of all our actions. The same action can therefore be inspired by several intentions, such as doing a service to obtain a favor or to satisfy vanity.

1753. A good intention (for example, to help one's neighbor) does not make a behavior that is in itself disordered (such as lying and slander) good or just. The end does not justify the means. Thus, the conviction of an innocent person cannot be justified as a legitimate means of saving the people. On the contrary, an evil intention added (such as vainglory) makes evil an act that in itself can be good (such as almsgiving) (cf. Mt 6:2-4).

1754. Circumstances, including consequences, are the secondary elements of a moral act. They contribute to aggravating or diminishing the moral goodness or malice of human acts (e.g., the amount of money stolen). They can also attenuate or increase the responsibility of the actor (such as acting out of fear of death). Circumstances cannot in themselves modify the moral quality of acts; they can do neither good nor just an action that is bad in itself.

II. Good Acts and Bad Acts

1755. The morally good act presupposes at the same time the goodness of the object, the end, and the circumstances. A bad purpose corrupts action, even if its object is good in itself (such as praying and fasting to be seen by men).

The object of the election can by itself vitiate the whole act. There are specific behaviors — such as fornication — that it is always a mistake to choose, because their choice entails a disorder of the will, that is, a moral evil.

1756. It is, therefore, erroneous to judge the morality of human acts by considering only the intention that inspires them or the circumstances (environment, social pressure, coercion or need to act, etc.) that are their framework. There are acts that, in and of themselves, regardless of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely unlawful by reason of their object; for example, blasphemy and perjury, homicide and adultery. It is not permissible to do evil in order to obtain good.

5. THE MORALITY OF THE PASSIONS

1762. The human person is ordered to beatitude by means of his deliberate acts: the passions or feelings he experiences can dispose it and contribute to it.

I. The passions

1763. The term "passions" belongs to the patrimony of Christian thought. Feelings or passions designate the emotions or impulses of the sensibility that incline us to act or not to act by reason of what is felt or imagined as good or bad.

1764. The passions are natural components of the human psyche, they constitute the place of passage and ensure the link between the sensible life and the life of the spirit. Our Lord points to the human heart as the source from which the movement of the passions springs (cf. Mk 7:21).

1765. The passions are numerous. The most fundamental is the love that the attraction of the good awakens. Love causes the desire for the absent good and the hope of obtaining it. This movement culminates in the pleasure and enjoyment of the good possessed. The apprehension of evil causes hatred, aversion, and fear in the face of the evil that may ensue. This movement culminates in sadness because of the present evil or in the anger that opposes it.

1766. "To love is to wish someone well" (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1-2, q. 26, a. 4, c). The other affections have their strength in this original movement of the human heart towards the good. Only the good is loved (cf. Saint Augustine, De Trinitate, 8, 3, 4). "Passions are evil if love is bad, good if it is good" (St. Augustine, De civitate Dei, 14, 7).

II. Passions and the Moral Life

1767. In themselves, the passions are neither good nor bad. They receive moral qualification only to the extent that they depend on reason and will. The passions are called voluntary "either because they are ordered by the will, or because the will is not opposed to them" (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1-2, q. 24, a. 1, c). It belongs to the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions are regulated by reason (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1-2, q. 24, a. 3, c).

1768. The deepest feelings decide neither morality nor the holiness of persons; they are the inexhaustible repository of the images and affections in which the moral life is expressed. The passions are morally good when they contribute to a good action, and bad in the opposite case. The right will orders to good and beatitude the sensible movements it assumes; the evil will succumbs to disordered passions and exacerbates them. Emotions and feelings can be assumed in virtues, or perverted in vices.

1769. In the Christian life, the Holy Spirit carries out his work by moving the whole being, including its pains, fears and sorrows, as he appears in the agony and passion of the Lord. When lived in Christ, human sentiments can reach their consummation in charity and divine beatitude.

1770. Moral perfection consists in the fact that man is moved to good not only by his will, but also by his sensitive appetite, according to the words of the Psalm: "My heart and my flesh cry out for joy to the living God" (Ps 84:3).

6. MORAL CONSCIENCE

1776. "In the depths of his conscience man discovers a law that he does not give to himself, but to which he must obey and whose voice resounds, when necessary, in the ears of his heart, always calling him to love and to do good and to avoid evil [...]. Man has a law inscribed by God in his heart. Conscience is the most secret nucleus and tabernacle of man, in which he is alone with God, whose voice resounds in the depths of his heart" (GS 16).

I. The Dictate of Conscience

1777. Present in the heart of the person, the moral conscience (cf. Rom 2:14-16) commands him, at the right time, to do good and avoid evil. It also judges concrete choices by approving those that are good and denouncing those that are bad (cf. Rom 1:32). It testifies to the authority of truth with reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is attracted and whose commandments he accepts. The prudent man, when he listens to the moral conscience, can hear God speaking to him.

1778. Moral conscience is a judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he intends to do, is doing or has done. In all that he says and does, man is obligated to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. Through the dictates of his conscience man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law:

Conscience "is a law of our spirit, but it goes beyond it, it gives us orders, it means responsibility and duty, fear and hope [...] Conscience is the messenger of the one who, both in the world of nature and in that

of grace, through a veil speaks to us, instructs us, and governs us. Conscience is the first of all the vicars of Christ" (John Henry Newman, Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, 5).

1779. Each one must pay close attention to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This need for interiority is all the more necessary because life often impels us to dispense with any reflection, examination or interiorization:

> *"Return to your consciousness, interrogate it. [...] Return, brethren, to the interior, and in all that you do, look to the witness, God" (Saint Augustine, In epistulam Ioannis ad Parthos tractatus 8:9).*

1780. The dignity of the human person implies and demands the rectitude of the moral conscience. Moral conscience includes the perception of the principles of morality ("synderesis"), their application to concrete circumstances through a practical discernment of reasons and goods, and ultimately the judgment formed about the concrete acts that are to be performed or have been performed. The truth about the moral good, declared in the law of reason, is recognized practically and concretely by the prudent dictate of conscience. A man who chooses according to this judgment or judgment is called prudent.

1781.Conscience makes it possible to assume responsibility for the acts performed. If man commits evil, the just judgment of conscience can be in him the witness of the universal truth of the good, as well as of the malice of his concrete choice. The verdict of the opinion of conscience is a guarantee of hope and mercy. By making clear the fault committed, it recalls the forgiveness to be asked, the good to be practiced and the virtue to be cultivated without ceasing with the grace of God:

"We will be at ease before him, if our conscience condemns us, for God is greater than our conscience and knows all things" (1 Jn 3:19-20).

1782. Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom in order to make moral decisions personally. "He must not be forced to act against his conscience. Nor should he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters" (DH 3)

II. The formation of conscience

1783. Conscience must be formed, and moral judgment must be clarified. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. He formulates his judgments according to reason, in accordance with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. The education of conscience is indispensable to human beings subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings.

1784. The education of conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the inner law recognized by the moral conscience. A prudent education teaches virtue; it preserves or heals from fear, selfishness and pride, from unhealthy feelings of guilt and from movements of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. The education of conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.

1785. In the formation of conscience, the Word of God is the light of our journey; We must assimilate it in faith and prayer, and put it into practice. We must also examine our conscience by attending the cross of the Lord. We are assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or counsel of others, and guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church (cf. DH 14).

III. Deciding in conscience

1786. Faced with the need to make a moral decision, the conscience can formulate a right judgment in accordance with reason and divine law, or on the contrary an erroneous judgment that departs from them

1787. Man is sometimes confronted with situations that make moral judgment less certain, and the decision difficult. But he must always seek what is just and good and discern the will of God expressed in the divine law.

1788. To this end, man strives to interpret the data of experience and the signs of the times thanks to the virtue of prudence, the counsel of knowledgeable persons and the help of the Holy Spirit and his gifts.

1789. In all cases some rules are applicable:

— It is never permissible to do evil in order to obtain good.

— The "golden rule": "All [...] whatever you would have men do to you, do it to them also" (Mt 7:12; cf. Lk 6:31; Tb 4:15).

Charity must always act with respect for one's neighbour and for one's conscience: "By sinning against your brethren, and wounding their consciences, you are sinning against Christ" (1 Cor 8:12). "The good thing is [...] do not do anything that will cause your brother to fall, stumble or be weak" (Rom 14:21).

IV. Misjudgment

1790. The human person must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were to act deliberately against the latter, he would condemn himself. But it happens that the moral conscience can be affected by ignorance and can form erroneous judgments about acts planned or already committed.

1791. This ignorance can often be attributed to personal responsibility. This is what happens "when man does not concern himself with seeking truth and goodness and, little by little, through the habit of sin, his conscience becomes almost blind" (GS 16). In these cases, the person is guilty of the evil he commits.

1792. Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad examples received from others, servitude to passions, the claim to a misunderstood autonomy of conscience, rejection of the authority of the Church and of her teaching, lack of conversion and charity can lead to deviations of judgment in moral conduct.

1793. If, on the other hand, ignorance is invincible, or erroneous judgment without responsibility on the part of the moral subject, the evil committed by the person cannot be imputed to him. But it is still an evil, a deprivation, a disorder. Therefore, it is necessary to work to correct the moral conscience of its errors.

1794. A good and pure conscience is illuminated by true faith. For charity proceeds at the same time "from a pure heart, from an upright conscience and from sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5; 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3; 1 Pt 3:21; Acts 24:16).

> *"The greater the predominance of the right conscience, the more individuals and groups turn away from blind will and strive to conform to objective norms of morality" (GS 16)..*

7. THE VIRTUES

1803. "Whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, honorable, whatever is virtue and praiseworthy, all these things bear in mind" (Phil 4:8).

Virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. With all his sensitive and spiritual strengths, the virtuous person tends towards the good, seeks it and chooses it through concrete actions.

"The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, De beatitudinibus, oratio 1)..

I. Human virtues

1804. Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of the understanding and of the will that regulate our actions, order our passions and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They provide ease, mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is the one who freely practices the good.

Moral virtues are acquired through human forces. They are the fruits and germs of morally good acts. They dispose all the powers of the human being to harmonize with divine love.

Distinction of the Cardinal Virtues

1805. Four virtues play a fundamental role. That is why they are called "cardinals"; all the others are grouped around them. These are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. "Do you love justice? The virtues are the fruit of her efforts, for she teaches temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude" (Wis 8:7). Under other names, these virtues are praised in numerous passages of Scripture.

1806. Prudence is the virtue that disposes of practical reason to discern in all circumstances our true good and to choose the right means to achieve it. "A cautious man ponders his steps" (Prov 14:15). "Be wise and sober to pray" (1 Pt 4:7). Prudence is the "right rule of action," writes St. Thomas (Summa Theologiae, 2-2, q. 47, a. 2, sed contra), following Aristotle. It is not to be confused with shyness or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. She is called charioteer virtutum: she leads the other virtues by indicating rule and measure. It is prudence that directly guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man decides and orders his conduct according to this judgment. Thanks to this virtue we apply moral principles without error to particular cases and overcome doubts about the good we should do and the evil we should avoid.

1807. Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give to God and to one's neighbor what is due to them. Justice toward God is called "the virtue of religion." With regard to men, justice disposes us to respect the rights of each one and to establish in human relations the harmony that promotes equity with respect to persons and the common good. The just man, often evoked in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by the habitual rectitude of his thoughts and conduct towards his neighbour. "As a judge, do not do injustice, either for the sake of the poor or out of respect for the great; you shall judge your neighbour in righteousness" (Lev 19:15). "Masters, render to your slaves what is just and equitable, bearing in mind that you also have a Master in heaven" (Col 4:1).

1808. Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness and constancy in the pursuit of the good in difficulties. It reaffirms the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in moral life. The virtue of fortitude makes us capable of overcoming fear, even of death, and of facing trials and persecutions. It enables them to go to the point of

renunciation and the sacrifice of their own lives to defend a just cause. "My strength and my song is the Lord" (Ps 118:14). "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33).

1809. Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and seeks balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the dominance of the will over the instincts and keeps desires within the limits of honesty. The moderate person directs his sensitive appetites towards the good, maintains a healthy discretion and does not allow himself to be led "to follow the passion of his heart" (cf. Sir 5:2; 37:27-31). Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: "Do not pursue your lusts, your desires, bridle" (Sir 18:30). In the New Testament it is called "moderation" or "sobriety." We must "live in moderation, justice and godliness in the present age" (2:12).

"There is nothing for the highest good like loving God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. [...] which preserves from the corruption and impurity of love, which is proper to temperance; which makes him invincible to all discomforts, which is the characteristic of fortitude; which makes him renounce all other vassalage, which is proper to justice, and, finally, which makes him always on guard to discern things and not to be surreptitiously deceived by lies and fallacy, which is proper to prudence" (St. Augustine, De moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae, 1, 25, 46).

Virtues and Grace

1810. Human virtues acquired through education, through deliberate acts, and perseverance, always maintained in effort, are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God's help they forge character and give ease in the practice of good. The virtuous man is happy to practice them.

1811. It is not easy for man wounded by sin to maintain moral balance. The gift of salvation through Christ gives us the grace to persevere in the pursuit of the virtues. Each one must always ask for this grace of light and strength, have recourse to the sacraments, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, follow his invitations to love the good and guard against evil.

II. The Theological Virtues

1812. The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues that adapt man's faculties to the participation of the divine nature (cf. 2 Pt 1:4). The theological virtues refer directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have as their origin, motive, and object the Triune God.

1813. The theological virtues found, animate and characterize the moral action of the Christian. They inform and enliven all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and meriting eternal life. They are the guarantee of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity (cf. 1 Cor 13:13).

Faith

1814. Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and in all that He has said and revealed to us, and which the Holy Church proposes to us, because He is the truth itself. By faith "man gives himself entirely and freely to God" (DV 5). That is why the believer strives to know and do God's will. "The just [...] he will live by faith" (Rom 1:17). Living faith "works through charity" (Gal 5:6).

1815. The gift of faith remains in those who have not sinned against it (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1545). But "faith without works is dead" (Jas 2:26): deprived of hope and charity, faith does not fully unite the faithful to Christ or make him a living member of his Body.

1816. The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live by it, but also profess it, bear firm witness to it and spread it: "All [...] may they live prepared to confess Christ before men and women and to follow him on the way of the Cross in the midst of the persecutions that the Church never lacks" (LG 42; cf. DH 14). Service and the witness of faith are required for salvation: "Every . . . whoever declares himself for me before men, I will also declare myself for him before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32-33).

Hope

1817. Hope is the theological virtue by which we aspire to the Kingdom of Heaven and to eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in the promises of Christ and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Let us hold fast to the confession of hope, for the author of the promise is faithful" (Heb 10:23). "The Holy Spirit whom he poured out upon us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that we might be justified by his grace and be made heirs in hope of eternal life" (3:6-7).

1818. The virtue of hope corresponds to the longing for happiness placed by God in the heart of every man; it assumes the hopes that inspire the activities of men; purifies them to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; protects from discouragement; he sustains in every faintness; He dilates the heart in the expectation of eternal beatitude.

The impulse of hope preserves from selfishness and leads to the joy of charity.

1819. Christian hope gathers and perfects the hope of the chosen people, which has its origin and its model in Abraham's hope in God's promises; a hope fulfilled in Isaac and purified by the trial of sacrifice (cf. Gen 17:4-8; 22:1-18). "Hoping against all hope, he believed, and was made the father of many nations" (Rom 4:18).

1820. Christian hope is manifested from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the Beatitudes. The beatitudes raise our hope to heaven as to the new promised land; they trace the path to it through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and his passion, God keeps us in "the hope that does not fail" (Rom 5:5). Hope is "the anchor of the soul", sure and firm, which penetrates... "where Jesus entered for us as a forerunner" (Heb 6:19-20). It is also a weapon that protects us in the fight for salvation: "Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, with the helmet of the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:8). He brings us joy in trial itself: "With the joy of hope; constant in tribulation" (Rom 12:12). It is expressed and nourished in prayer, particularly in that of the Lord's Prayer, a summary of all that hope makes us desire.

1821. We can therefore look forward to the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him (cf. Rom 8:28-30) and do his will (cf. Mt 7:21). In every circumstance, each one must hope, with God's grace, "to endure to the end" (cf. Mt 10:22; cf. Council of Trent: DS 1541) and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for good works done with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church implores that "all men [...] be saved" (1 Tim 2:4). She hopes to be in the glory of heaven united to Christ, her husband:

"Wait, wait, you don't know when the day or the hour will come. Watch carefully, for everything passes with brevity, although your desire makes the certain doubtful, and the short time long. Behold, the more you fight, the more you will show the love you have for your God and the more you will rejoice with your Beloved with joy and delight that can have no end" (Saint Teresa of Jesus, Exclamations of the Soul to God, 15, 3)

Charity

1822. Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for himself and our neighbor as ourselves for God's sake.

1823. Jesus makes charity the new commandment (cf. Jn 13:34). By loving his own "to the end" (Jn 13:1), he manifests the love of the Father he has received. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus that they also receive in them. That is why Jesus says: "As the Father loved me, I also have loved you; abide in my love" (Jn 15:9). And again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

1824. Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the law, charity keeps the commandments of God and Christ: "Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (Jn 15:9-10; cf. Mt 22:40; Rom 13:8-10).

1825. Christ died for love of us while we were still "enemies" (Rom 5:10). The Lord asks us to love even our enemies like him (cf. Mt 5:44), to become neighbours to those who are farther away (cf. Lk 10:27-37), to love children (cf. Mk 9:37) and the poor as himself (cf. Mt 25:40, 45).

The Apostle Paul offers an incomparable description of charity: "Charity is patient, it is helpful; charity is not envious, it is not boastful, it is not conceited; it is decorous; it does not seek their interest; he is not irritated; it does not take evil into account; he does not rejoice in injustice; He rejoices in the truth. Everything excuses it. He believes everything. He expects everything. he endures all things" (1 Cor 13:4-7).

1826. If I do not have charity, the Apostle also says, "I am nothing...". And everything that is privilege, service, virtue itself... if I do not have charity, "it profits me nothing" (1 Cor 13:1-4). Charity is superior to all virtues. It is the first of the theological virtues: "Now faith, hope and charity subsist, these three. But the greatest of all is charity" (1 Cor 13:13)

1827. The exercise of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity. This is "the bond of perfection" (Col 3:14); it is the form of virtues; it articulates and orders them among themselves; it is the source and end of their Christian practice. Charity secures and purifies our human faculty of love. He elevates it to the supernatural perfection of divine love.

1828. The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He does not stand before God as a slave, in servile fear, nor as a mercenary in search of a wage, but as a son who responds to the love of "him who first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19):

> *"Either we turn away from evil for fear of punishment and are at the disposal of the slave, or we seek the incentive of reward and resemble mercenaries, or finally we obey for the sake of the love of the one who commands [...] and then we are in the disposition of children" (St. Basil the Great, Regulae fusius tractatae prol. 3).*

1829. Charity has joy, peace and mercy as its fruits. It requires the practice of good and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it gives rise to reciprocity; she is always selfless and generous; It is friendship and communion:

> *"The culmination of all our works is love. That is the end; to achieve this, we run; we run towards it; when we have arrived, we rest in him" (Saint Augustine, In epistulam Ioannis tractatus, 10, 4).*

III. Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

1830. The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions that make man docile to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

1831. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, intelligence, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God. They belong in fullness to Christ, the Son of David (cf. Is 11:1-2). They complete and bring to perfection the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in order to obey divine inspirations promptly.

> *"May your good spirit guide me on a level ground" (Ps 143:10).*

> *"All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God . . . And, if children, also heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ" (Rom 8:14, 17*

1832. The fruits of the Spirit are perfections formed in us by the Holy Spirit as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve: "charity, joy, peace, patience, long-suffering, goodness, gentleness, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, continence, chastity" (Gal 5:22-23, vulg.).

8. SIN

I. Mercy and Sin

1846. The Gospel is the revelation, in Jesus Christ, of God's mercy towards sinners (cf. Lk 15). The angel announces to Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). And in the institution of the Eucharist, the sacrament of redemption, Jesus says: "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt 26:28).

1847. God, "who created you without you, will not save you without you" (St. Augustine, Sermo 169, 11, 13). The acceptance of his mercy requires of us the confession of our faults. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:8-9).

1848. As St. Paul affirms, "where sin abounded, [...] grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20). But in order to do its work, grace must uncover sin in order to convert our hearts and confer on us "righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 5:20-21). Like a doctor who discovers the wound before healing it, God, through his Word and Spirit, casts a living light on sin:

> *"Conversion requires the recognition of sin, it presupposes the interior judgment of one's conscience, and this, since it is the verification of the action of the Spirit of truth in man's intimacy, becomes at the same time the new beginning of the gift of grace and love: 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. In this "conviction concerning sin" we thus discover a "double gift": the gift of the truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Paraclete" (Dev 31).*

II. Definition of sin

1849. Sin is a fault against reason, truth, and an upright conscience; it is a lack of true love for God and for one's neighbor, because of a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and undermines human solidarity. It has been defined as "a word, an act or a desire contrary to the eternal law" (St. Augustine, Contra Faustum manichaeum, 22, 27; St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1-2, q. 71, a. 6).

1850. Sin is an offense against God: "Against you, you only, I have sinned, I have committed the iniquity which you hate" (Ps 51:6). Sin rises up against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from Him. Like the first sin, it is disobedience, a rebellion against God out of the desire to become "like gods", claiming to know and determine good and evil (Gen 3:5). Sin is thus "love of self to the point of contempt for God" (St. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, 14, 28). By this exaltation of self, sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience of Jesus who brings about salvation (cf. Phil 2:6-9).

1851. It is precisely in the Passion, in which Christ's mercy would triumph, that sin best manifests its violence and multiplicity: unbelief, rejection and mockery on the part of the leaders and the people, the weakness of Pilate and the cruelty of the soldiers, Judas' harsh betrayal of Jesus, Peter's denials and the abandonment of the disciples. Yet, in the very hour of darkness and of the prince of this world (cf. Jn 14:30), Christ's sacrifice secretly becomes the fountain from which the forgiveness of our sins will flow inexhaustibly.

III. The Diversity of Sins

1852. The variety of sins is great. Scripture contains several lists. The Letter to the Galatians opposes the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit: "The works of the flesh are known: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, discord, jealousy, anger, quarrels, divisions, dissensions, envy, drunkenness,, and the like, of which I warn you, as I have warned you, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (5:19-21; cf. Rom 1:19, 28-32; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5-8; 1 Tim 1:9-10; 2 Tim 3:2-5)

1853. Sins can be distinguished according to their object, as in every human act, or according to the virtues to which they are opposed, by excess or defect, or according to the commandments that they break. They can also be grouped according to whether they refer to God, neighbor or oneself; They can be divided into spiritual and carnal sins, or they can also be divided into sins of thought, word, deed, or omission. The root of sin is in the heart of man, in his free will, according to the Lord's teaching: "From within the heart come evil intentions, murders, adulteries, fornications. theft, false testimony, insults. This is what makes man unclean" (Mt 15:19-20). In the heart also resides charity, the principle of good and pure works, which is wounded by sin.

IV. The Gravity of Sin: Mortal and Venial Sin

1854. "It is appropriate to evaluate sins according to their gravity. The distinction between mortal and venial sin, already perceptible in Scripture (cf. 1 Jn 5:16-17), has been imposed in the tradition of the Church. The experience of men corroborates it."

1855. Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave infraction of God's law; it separates man from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, preferring an inferior good.

Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it.

1856. Mortal sin, which attacks in us the vital principle of charity, requires a new initiative of God's mercy and a conversion of heart that is ordinarily accomplished in the context of the sacrament of Reconciliation:

> *"When [...] the will is directed to a thing in itself contrary to the charity by which we are ordered to the ultimate end, sin, by its very object, has cause to be mortal [...] whether against the love of God, such as blasphemy, perjury, etc., or against the love of neighbor, such as murder, adultery, etc. [...] On the other hand, when the sinner's will is sometimes directed to a thing which contains in itself a disorder, but which is nevertheless not contrary to the love of God and neighbour, such as an idle word, a superfluous laugh, etc., such sins are venial" (Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1-2, q. 88, a. 2, c).*

1857. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions are required: "A mortal sin is that which has as its object a grave matter and which, moreover, is committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent" (RP 17).

1858. The grave matter is defined by the Ten Commandments according to Jesus' response to the rich young man: "Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not be unjust, honor your father and your mother" (Mk 10:19). The gravity of sins is greater or less: murder is more serious than theft. The quality of the

injured persons also counts: violence against parents is more serious than violence against a stranger.

1859. Mortal sin requires full awareness and full consent. It presupposes knowledge of the sinful character of the act, of its opposition to God's law. It also implies sufficiently deliberate consent to be a personal choice. Affected ignorance and hardening of heart (cf. Mk 3:5-6; Lk 16:19-31) do not diminish, but increase, the voluntary character of sin.

1860. Involuntary ignorance may diminish, and even excuse, the imputability of a grave fault, but it is assumed that no one is ignorant of the principles of the moral law which are inscribed in the conscience of every man. The impulses of sensibility and passions can also reduce the voluntary and free character of the fault, as well as external pressures or pathological disorders. The gravest sin is that which is committed out of malice, by deliberate choice of evil.

1861. Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love. It entails the loss of charity and the deprivation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by God's repentance and forgiveness, it causes exclusion from the Kingdom of Christ and eternal death from hell; So our freedom has the power to make choices forever, with no return. However, even if we may judge that an act is in itself a grave fault, we must entrust judgment on persons to God's justice and mercy.

1862. A venial sin is committed when the measure prescribed by the moral law is not observed in a minor matter, or when the moral law is disobeyed in serious matters, but without full knowledge or without full consent.

1863. Venial sin weakens charity; it involves an inordinate affection for created goods; it impedes the progress of the soul in the exercise of virtues and the practice of moral good; it deserves temporary penalties. Deliberate venial sin that remains unrepentant, disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin. However, venial sin does not break the covenant with God. It is humanly repairable with God's grace. "It does not deprive us of sanctifying grace, of friendship with God, of charity, and therefore of eternal beatitude" (RP 17):

> *"Man, while abiding in the flesh, cannot avoid all sin, at least minor sins. But these sins, which we call slight, do not consider them a small thing: if you consider them as such when you weigh them, tremble when you count them. Many small objects make a large mass; Many drops of water fill a river. A lot of grains make a lot. What is our hope then? First of all, confession..." (St. Augustine, In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus 1, 6).*

1864. "All sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven" (Mk 3:29; cf. Mt 12:32; Lk 12:10). There are no limits to God's mercy, but those who deliberately refuse to accept God's mercy through repentance reject the forgiveness of their sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit (cf. Dev 46). Such hardening can lead to final damnation and eternal perdition.

V. The Proliferation of Sin

1865. Sin creates a facility for sin; it engenders vice by the repetition of acts. Hence deviant inclinations that obscure the conscience and corrupt the concrete evaluation of good and evil. Thus, sin tends to reproduce and strengthen itself, but it cannot destroy the moral sense to its root.

1866. Vices can be catalogued according to the virtues to which they are opposed, or they can also be referred to the capital sins that Christian experience has distinguished following St. John Cassian (Conlatio, 5, 2) and St. Gregory the Great (Moralia in Job, 31, 45, 87). They are called capital because they generate other sins, other vices. They are pride, greed, envy, anger, lust, gluttony, and laziness.

1867. The catechetical tradition also recalls that there are "sins that cry out to heaven". They cry out to heaven: the blood of Abel (cf. Gen 4:10); the sin of the sodomites (cf. Gen 18:20; 19:13); the cry of the oppressed people in Egypt (cf. Ex 3:7-10); the lament of the stranger, of the widow and the orphan (cf. Ex 22:20-22); injustice towards the wage earner (cf. Dt 24:14-15; Jc 5:4).

1868. Sin is a personal act. But we have a responsibility for the sins committed by others when we cooperate with them:

- by participating directly and voluntarily;
- ordaining, advising, praising or approving them;
- not disclosing them or preventing them when they are obliged to do so;
- protecting those who do evil.

1869. Thus sin makes men and women accomplices of one another, causes concupiscence, violence and injustice to reign among them. Sins cause social situations and institutions contrary to divine goodness. The "structures of sin" are the expression and effect of personal sins. They induce their victims to commit evil in their turn. In an analogical sense, they constitute a "social sin" (cf. PM 16).