

### *True Happiness: Living in Christ*

**“Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.” Jesus Christ, John 15**

#### **Introduction from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)**

1692 The Symbol of the faith confesses the greatness of God's gifts to man in his work of creation, and even more in redemption and sanctification. What faith confesses, the sacraments communicate: by the sacraments of rebirth, Christians have become "children of God," "partakers of the divine nature." Coming to see in the faith their new dignity, Christians are called to lead henceforth a life "worthy of the gospel of Christ." They are made capable of doing so by the grace of Christ and the gifts of his Spirit, which they receive through the sacraments and through prayer. (CCC)

1695 "Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God," "sanctified . . . (and called to be saints)," Christians have become the temple of the Holy Spirit. This "Spirit of the Son" teaches them to pray to the Father and, having become their life, prompts them to act so as to bear "the fruit of the Spirit" by charity in action. Healing the wounds of sin, the Holy Spirit renews us interiorly through a spiritual transformation. He enlightens and strengthens us to live as "children of light" through "all that is good and right and true." (CCC)

1696 The way of Christ "leads to life"; a contrary way "leads to destruction." The Gospel parable of the two ways remains ever present in the catechesis of the Church; it shows the importance of moral decisions for our salvation: "There are two ways, the one of life, the other of death; but between the two, there is a great difference." (CCC)

1698 The first and last point of reference of this catechesis will always be Jesus Christ himself, who is "the way, and the truth, and the life." It is by looking to him in faith that Christ's faithful can hope that he himself fulfills his promises in them, and that, by loving him with the same love with which he has loved them, they may perform works in keeping with their dignity. (CCC)

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

##### **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. (CCC)

**True Happiness is...**

## **I. Living with Dignity, Like Christ (CCC 1691-1876)**

### **The dignity of being made in the image of God, like Christ**

The human Christ is the restored image of God with a soul that will never die; containing an intellect and will completely free to discern and choose good or evil ways of relating to the Father, fellow human beings, and the rest of creation. Our dignity as human beings is that we bear the image of God, like Christ, with a soul that will never die; containing an intellect and will completely free to discern and choose good or evil ways of relating to the Father, fellow human beings, and the rest of creation. However, the image of God in us has been wounded by Original Sin so that our intellect and will are inclined toward evil ways of relating to God, one another, and creation. The Good News/Gospel is that through Christ's Passion, the Holy Spirit, and Grace the image of God in us can be restored to its original beauty, like Christ. We experience true happiness in life as we, like Christ, realize the dignity of being made in the image of God and live accordingly; freely discerning and choosing good ways of relating to the Trinity, one another, and the rest of creation.

### **The dignity of living a life of Beatitude, like Christ**

As Christ freely exercises his intellect and will to figure out and live his vocation/calling to live a life of Beatitude, the Beautiful Life; so, too, as our souls are healed by his grace we can freely exercise our intellect and will to figure out and live our Christ-like vocation to Beatitude.

Christ learned and fully embodies the Beautiful Life. He recognizes that, being poor in spirit, he is wholly dependent upon our Father to live the Beatitudes. He mourns over the woundedness of humanity. Being meek, he willingly submits to our Father's way of being human. He hungers and thirsts for justice in the world and is achieving it through mercy. He has a heart clean of selfishness. He lives to make peace between people and our Father, between people, and between people and creation. Finally, he willingly undergoes persecution for living a life of justice for all people. Therefore, Christ is experiencing all the promises linked to the Beatitudes, a life of True Happiness.

We experience true happiness in life, like Christ, as we live with dignity by exercising our intellect and will to live our vocation to Beatitude; recognizing our complete dependence upon our Father to live the Beatitudes; mourning over humanity's woundedness; humbly submitting to our Father's way of being human; hungering and thirsting for justice and achieving it through mercy; having hearts clean of selfishness; living to make peace between our Father and people, between people, and between people and creation; and by willingly undergoing persecution for the sake of bringing justice to the world. Living that Beautiful Life is only possible as our souls are healed by God's grace. The result is that, like Christ, we experience all the promises linked to the Beatitudes, a life of True Happiness.

### **The dignity of responsibly exercising freedom, like Christ**

1730 God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions. "God willed that man should be 'left in the hand of his own counsel,' so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him." Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts. (CCC)

Christ Jesus, the image of the invisible God, lives with dignity and experiences true happiness because he has chosen to use the freedom of his intellect and will responsibly. Rather than exercising the freedom of his intellect and will by being lazy in forming his conscience, Christ has freely chosen to allow his conscience to be formed correctly by the Holy Spirit, grace, and catechesis from the Word of God and Tradition. The result is that he can judge what good and evil actions are and he knows how to control and use his passions (internal desires, drives and feelings) for the sake of relating well to God, people and creation.

Having the image of God being renewed in us by grace flowing through the Sacraments and prayer, we can experience true happiness as we live with dignity, like Christ, responsibly exercising the freedom of our intellects and wills to form our consciences. As we freely choose with our wills and intellects to allow the Holy Spirit, grace, and catechesis from the Word of God and Tradition to correctly form our consciences; then we will also be better able to judge what good and evil actions are and we will know how to control and use our passions for the sake of relating well to God, people, and creation, like Christ.

### **The dignity of living a virtuous life, like Christ**

The Holy Spirit infused the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, as well as the seven gifts of the Spirit, into Christ's soul at conception. Since then Christ has freely, responsibly and habitually exercised his intellect and will with his well-formed conscience. In so doing he has cultivated the human virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance in daily moral actions and passions. The result is that Christ's life continually bears the twelve fruits of the Spirit that translate into a dignified life of true happiness.

At Baptism the Holy Spirit infuses our souls with the theological virtues and gifts of the Spirit. Confirmation strengthens those virtues and gifts in us. As we, like Christ, freely, responsibly, and habitually exercise our intellects and wills with our well-formed consciences, we cultivate the human virtues in our daily moral actions and passions; bearing the fruits of the Spirit. This results in a dignified life of true happiness, like Christ.

### **The gift of God's mercy to restore our dignity**

Our dignity comes from being human beings made in the image of God with a soul consisting of a free intellect and will to figure out and choose to live for our calling to Beatitude, true happiness, like Christ. All sin/selfishness, mortal and venial, wounds and damages our intellects and wills so that we experience difficulty discerning with our consciences what are good and evil acts and choosing the good ones. The more we sin through acts of commission and omission, mortally and venially, against God, others, and ourselves; the more we wound and damage our intellects and wills, making it increasingly more difficult to discern good from evil and choosing good. We de-humanize ourselves, becoming like the beasts of the fields and seas.

God's mercy first shows us our wounds and damage by convicting our consciences of our selfishness. If we acknowledge and confess our self-centeredness, then God's mercy heals our wounds and damage through His mercy of grace and forgiveness made possible by Christ's Passion. We receive that mercy of grace and forgiveness through the Sacraments of Baptism, Healing (Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick) and the Eucharist. The more we respond to God's mercy and receive it, the more our intellects and wills are healed and restored so that we can better discern good from evil and choose the good ways of relating to the Trinity, one another, and creation. We become more fully alive as human beings with the dignity of being made in the image of God for true happiness, like Christ.