



From *The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition*

Person, Nature, & Human Flourishing

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§1: God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Saviour. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

§27: The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.- (Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes* 19 # 1)

§28: In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behaviour: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call man a religious being:

From one ancestor (God) made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "in him we live and move and have our being."  
(Acts 17:26-28)

§29: But this "intimate and vital bond of man to God" (GS 19 # 1) can be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected by man. (GS 19 # 1) Such attitudes can have different causes: revolt against evil in the world; religious ignorance or indifference; the cares and riches of this world; the scandal of bad example on the part of believers; currents of thought hostile to religion; finally, that attitude of sinful man which makes him hide from God out of fear and flee his call. (Cf. GS 19-21; Mt 13:22; Gen 3:8-10; Jon 1:3)

§30: "Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice."- (Psalm 105:3) Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart", as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God.

You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. and man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.- (St. Augustine, Conf. I, I, I: PL 32, 659-661)

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

We all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition, even before it is fully articulated.- (St. Augustine, De moribus eccl. 1, 3, 4: PL 32,1312)

How is it, then, that I seek you, Lord? Since in seeking you, my God, I seek a happy life, let me seek you so that my soul may live, for my body draws life from my soul and my soul draws life from you.- (St. Augustine, Conf. 10, 20: PL 32, 791)

God alone satisfies.- (St. Thomas Aquinas, Expos. in symb. apost. I)

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

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

- the coming of the Kingdom of God;- (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 2; 1 Cor 13:12)
- entering into the joy of the Lord;- (Mt 25:21-23)
- entering into God's rest:- (Cf. Heb 4:7-11)

There we shall rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end?- (St. Augustine, De civ. Dei 22, 30, 5: PL 41,804)

§1721: God put us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to come to paradise. Beatitude makes us "partakers of the divine nature" and of eternal life.- (2 Pet 1:4; cf. Jn 17:3) With beatitude, man enters into the glory of Christ. (Cf. Rom 8:18) and into the joy of the Trinitarian life.

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

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

It is true, because of the greatness and inexpressible glory of God, that "man shall not see me and live," for the Father cannot be grasped. But because of God's love and goodness toward us, and because he can do all things, he goes so far as to grant those who love him the privilege of seeing him.... For "what is impossible for men is possible for God." (St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 4,20,5: PG 7/1, 1034-1035)

§2548: Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. "The promise [of seeing God] surpasses all beatitude.... In Scripture, to see is to possess.... Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive." (St. Gregory of Nyssa, De beatitudinibus 6: PG 44, 1265A)

§2549: It remains for the holy people to struggle, with grace from on high, to obtain the good things God promises. In order to possess and contemplate God, Christ's faithful

mortify their cravings and, with the grace of God, prevail over the seductions of pleasure and power.

§2566: Man is in search of God. In the act of creation, God calls every being from nothingness into existence. "Crowned with glory and honor," man is, after the angels, capable of acknowledging "how majestic is the name of the Lord in all the earth." (Ps 8:5, 8:1) Even after losing through his sin his likeness to God, man remains an image of his Creator, and retains the desire for the one who calls him into existence. All religions bear witness to men's essential search for God. (Cf. Acts 17:27)

§2567: God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer, the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation.