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Person, Nature, & Human Flourishing

Aquinas College, Nashville, Tennessee

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NOTE: To access footnotes, click on footnote numeral hyperlinks which will lead to on-line version of the text.

§356: Of all visible creatures only man is "able to know and love his creator".^{[219](#)} He is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake",^{[220](#)} and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity:
What made you establish man in so great a dignity? Certainly the incalculable love by which you have looked on your creature in yourself! You are taken with love for her; for by love indeed you created her, by love you have given her a being capable of tasting your eternal Good.^{[221](#)}

§362: The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual. the biblical account expresses this reality in symbolic language when it affirms that "then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."^{[229](#)} Man, whole and entire, is therefore willed by God.

§363 In Sacred Scripture the term "soul" often refers to human life or the entire human person.^{[230](#)} But "soul" also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him,^{[231](#)} that by which he is most especially in God's image: "soul" signifies the spiritual principle in man.

§364 The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God": it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit.^{[232](#)}

Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honour since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day [233](#)

§365 The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the "form" of the body:[234](#) i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.

§366 The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God - it is not "produced" by the parents - and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.[235](#)

§367 Sometimes the soul is distinguished from the spirit: St. Paul for instance prays that God may sanctify his people "wholly", with "spirit and soul and body" kept sound and blameless at the Lord's coming.[236](#) The Church teaches that this distinction does not introduce a duality into the soul.[237](#) "Spirit" signifies that from creation man is ordered to a supernatural end and that his soul can gratuitously be raised beyond all it deserves to communion with God.[238](#)

§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 son¹ to the mercy of our

Father in heaven (article 8). In this way they attain to the perfection of charity.

§1703 Endowed with "a spiritual and immortal" soul,⁵ The human person is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake."⁶ From his conception, he is destined for eternal beatitude.

§1704 The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection "in seeking and loving what is true and good."⁷

§1705 By virtue of his soul and his spiritual powers of intellect and will, man is endowed with freedom, an "outstanding manifestation of the divine image."⁸