



**THE GIFT OF BEING
HUMAN**



“Life is about **THRIVING**”

The smell of his mom’s dinner was finally too much for young Alex Montoya—he came to the kitchen table, ready to be served, without his shirt on. But his mother sent him away with a stern warning never to do that again.

This would have been a typical scene in most families, but Alex is unique. “Chances are whenever I walk into the room, I will probably be the only one that is a triple amputee,” he said.

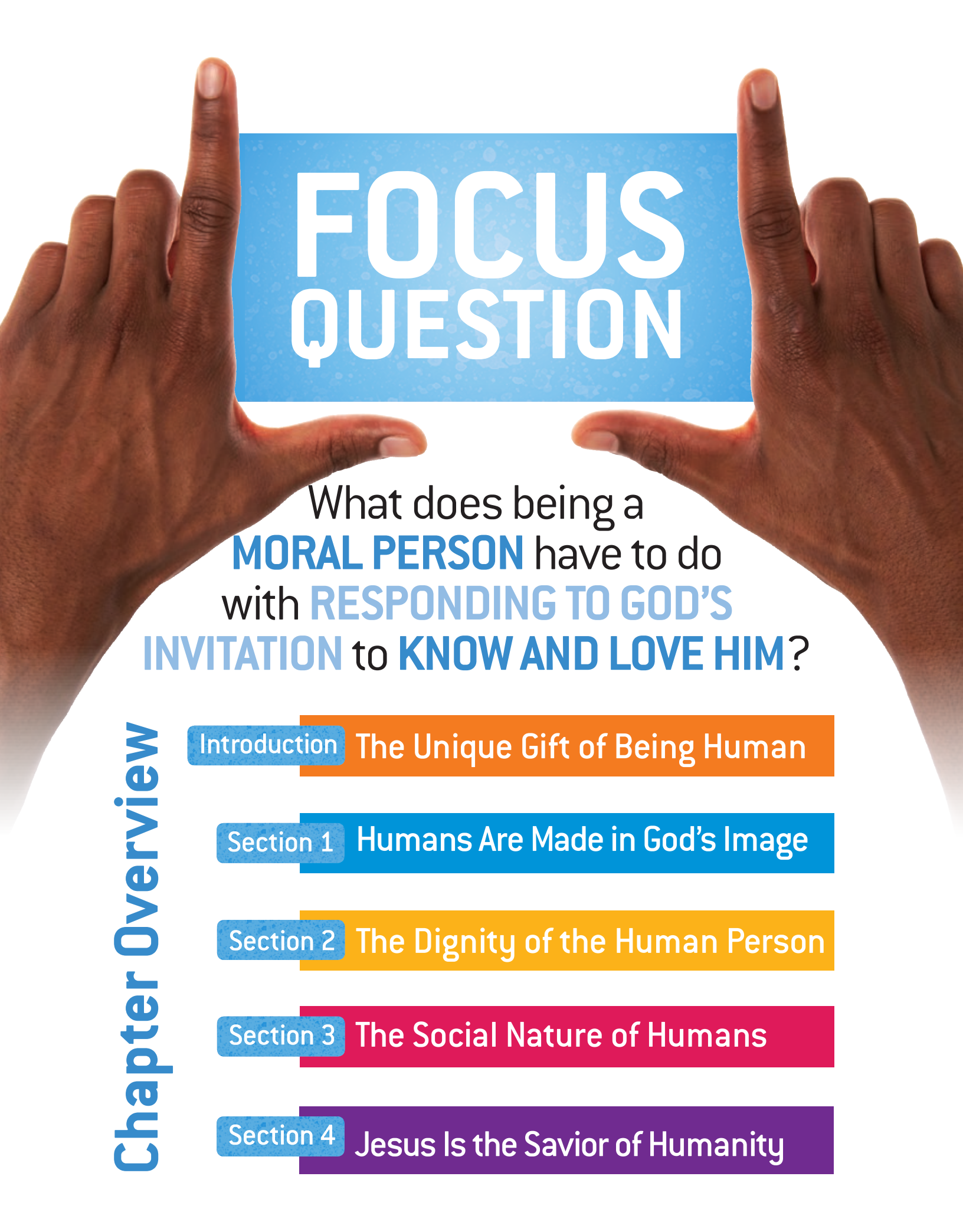
Alex was born in Colombia missing both arms and part of his right leg. When he was four years old, his parents sent him to San Diego, California, to live with his aunt and uncle so that he could be near the Shriners Hospital.

Alex’s life has been filled with challenges. He has met them, one right after another. He said, “The simple reality was my family never took the attitude of pitying me. They even told me, ‘You’re going to have to meet higher standards.’”

Alex learned English by watching baseball games on television. He was one of the first disabled students in San Diego to be mainstreamed into a classroom with the rest of the student body. In high school, he was voted prom king. He was accepted to the University of Notre Dame after he wrote that he “composed this essay by typing with my toes” on his application. He played intramural soccer at Notre Dame and carried a torch in an event leading up to the 1996 Olympic Games.

After college, Alex worked for the San Diego Padres baseball team as manager of Latino affairs. Today, he gives inspirational speeches, and he has written books.

“I know God knows how he made me,” Alex said. “He’s not suddenly going to say, ‘Oh, you poor baby.’ No matter what it is, there’s no adversity too great that God can’t handle and I can’t handle. I truly believe life is not just about surviving but thriving.”



FOCUS QUESTION

What does being a **MORAL PERSON** have to do with **RESPONDING TO GOD'S INVITATION** to **KNOW AND LOVE HIM**?

Chapter Overview

Introduction The Unique Gift of Being Human

Section 1 Humans Are Made in God's Image

Section 2 The Dignity of the Human Person

Section 3 The Social Nature of Humans

Section 4 Jesus Is the Savior of Humanity

INTRODUCTION

The Unique Gift of Being Human

MAIN IDEA

Humans are uniquely made with characteristics and qualities that allow for a covenant relationship with God.



God makes humans different from any other creature: they are made in God's own image. This doesn't mean that you yourself are God or will ever become God. In no way is God made in *your* image! God is Creator; you are a creature. You are different from God in many ways. For example, God is pure spirit, without physical or material qualities; you have a body. God is the Supreme Being, without equal, who possesses infinite knowledge and truth; you have limitations, and not just the ones you can see.

However, by creating you in his image, God endowed you with Godlike qualities. For example, you have the following abilities:

- to think,
- to choose,
- to love, and
- to relate to others in community.

God created you in his image and likeness because he wanted to share his love freely with you and because he wanted you to have the capacity to freely receive his love, share in it, and choose to return your love to him. God is the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, united in a free and eternal exchange of love. God created you with the ability to love and relate to others in community so that you can share in his eternal communion of love and reflect that communion in the way you relate to others in community. The Church, as a communion of love, is filled with the life of the Trinity.

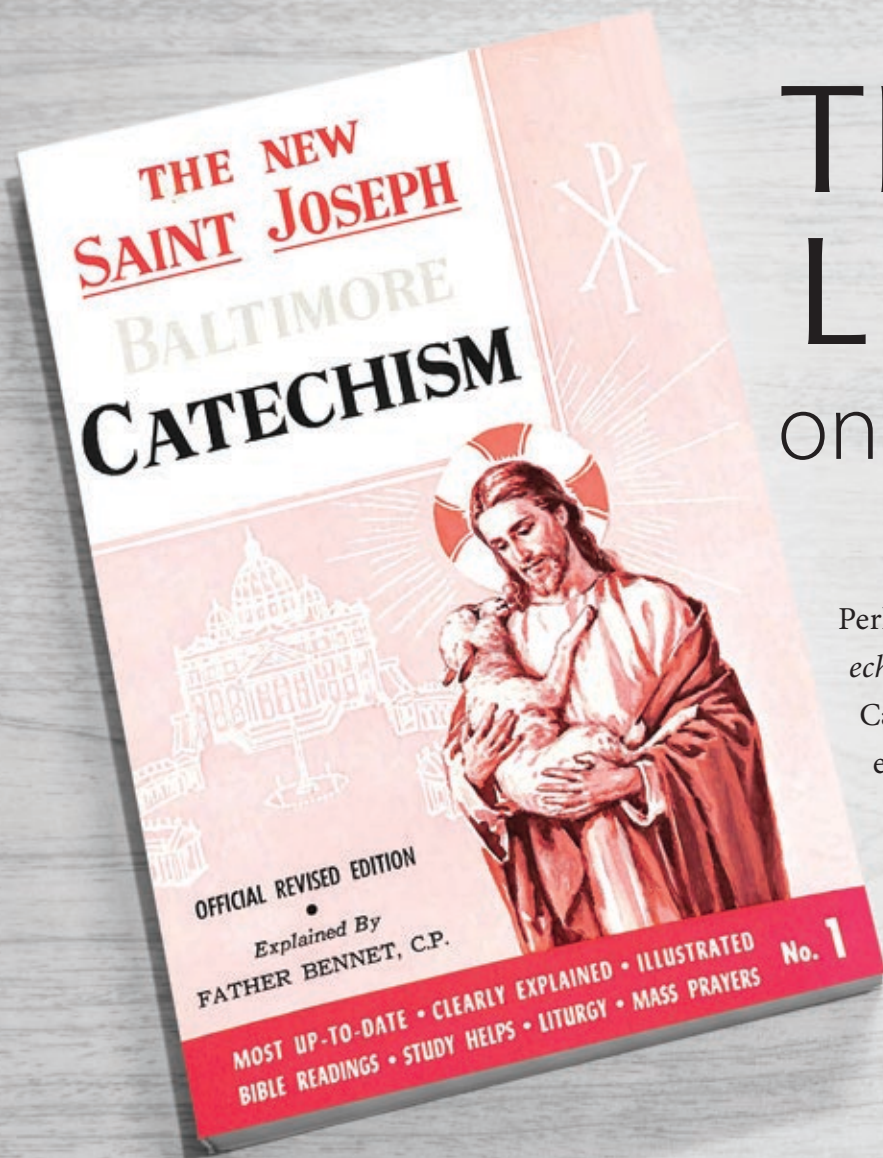
You can reflect God's own Trinitarian life of love by forming a communion of love with others in community. You share the very love that is shared by and



NOTE TAKING

Recognizing Qualities. Make a chart like the one below, and list an example from your own life of how you have been endowed with each of the following Godlike qualities.

Godlike quality	How it is present in my own life
To think	
To choose	
To love	
To relate to others in community	



TIMELESS LESSONS

on God, Creation, and Faith

Perhaps you have heard of the *Baltimore Catechism*. It was the standard textbook used in Catholic schools in the United States for generations following its preparation at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884, so roughly from 1885 to the late 1960s. It listed questions and answers that students, mainly in elementary schools, were expected to memorize.

that unites Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are able to do this because God created you as a spiritual person and animated your body by the gift of a **soul**. Together, your body and soul form you as a single, unique human person with a God-given opportunity to relate in a loving way.

Through your creation as a human being, you are endowed with the capacity to enter into a covenant relationship with God. For you to actually enter into such a relationship, God must offer that covenant and you must be healed and elevated sufficiently to accept his offer. These two conditions are met in the extraordinary gifts of Revelation and salvation. Other than **angels**, humans are the only creatures of God who can know and love him.

soul The name for the innermost spiritual principle of human beings. The soul and body together form one unique human nature. The soul is created immediately by God. It is immortal.

angels Spiritual creatures, created by God with intelligence and will, who surpass humans in perfection. They are personal and immortal creatures.

Read and memorize the following questions and answers from the *Baltimore Catechism* concerning God and the creation of humans. Then write one additional question you have about God, creation, or faith. Research the answer to your question from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and write your own succinct response.

1. **Q. Who made the world?** A. God made the world.
2. **Q. Who is God?** A. God is the Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things.
3. **Q. What is man?** A. Man is a creature composed of body and soul, and made to the image and likeness of God.
4. **Q. Is this likeness in the body or in the soul?** A. This likeness is chiefly in the soul.
5. **Q. How is the soul like God?** A. The soul is like God because it is a spirit that will never die, and it has understanding and free will.
6. **Q. Why did God make you?** A. God made me to know him, to love him, and to serve him in this world, and to be happy with him forever in the next.
7. **Q. Of which must we take more care, our souls or our bodies?** A. We must take more care of our souls than of our bodies.
8. **Q. Why must we take more care of our souls than of our bodies?** A. We must take more care of our souls than of our bodies, because in losing the soul we lose God and everlasting happiness.
9. **Q. What must we do to save our souls?** A. To save our souls we must worship God by faith, hope, and charity; that is, we must believe in him, hope in him, and love him with all our hearts.
10. **Q. How shall we know the things which we are to believe?** A. We shall know the things which we are to believe from the Catholic Church, through which God speaks to us.

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use the chart you made to help you answer the following question.

1. Which Godlike quality is most important to you? Explain why.



COMPREHENSION

2. What are two ways that humans are different from God?
3. As a spiritual person, how can you relate to God and other people?



APPLICATION

4. Explain why humans are the only creatures on earth expected to live a moral life.

SECTION 1

Humans Are Made in God's Image

MAIN IDEA

God made human beings—male and female—in his own image and gave them stewardship over themselves, creation, and all other creatures.



NOTE TAKING

Identifying Main Ideas. As you read this section, complete an outline like the one below of its contents.

God is the Creator.

I. Humans are creatures.

A.

1.

II. Humans steward God's creation.

The first creation account in the Book of Genesis (see Genesis 1:26–31) teaches clearly that humans are made in God's image. Genesis also expresses these further Christian beliefs about God and creation:

- God is the Creator. He freely created humans out of love.
- God has put humans in charge of the rest of creation.
- God created humans male and female.
- God saw all that he made and found it very good.

Creation is God's first Revelation of who he is and who humans are. Although all of creation reveals God in different ways, the Bible does not say that anything in creation is made in God's image except humans. This is a wonderful truth. In one of his Wednesday audiences from 1979 to 1984, collectively known as the **Theology of the Body** (TOB), Pope John Paul II described the human body in terms of sacrament. His use of *sacrament* refers to the word's origin from the Greek word *mysterion*, or mystery. While the body is not a sacrament of the Church, as the divine mysteries of the Seven Sacraments are, Pope John Paul II explained that the human body makes an invisible reality visible, just as a sacrament does: "The [human] body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine" (TOB, 19:4).

Everything in God's creation comes from God, reveals God, and is meant to lead you back to God—a definition of the sacred, or holy. "Together with man, holiness entered the visible world, created for him," Pope John Paul II said in the same address (TOB, 19:5).

Theology of the Body Pope John Paul II's integrated vision of the human person—body, soul, and spirit—which he expressed in a series of 129 Wednesday audiences from 1979 to 1984. Drawing mostly from Scripture, Pope John Paul II taught that the body is a true gift from God. The talks highlight how sexuality is a beautiful gift from God intended to be a means for self-giving love.

Pope Francis echoed this sentiment in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*: “The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home” (*Laudato Si'*, 155). You are to treat all of creation—including your body—with reverence because creation is sacred; it belongs to God. You are sacred; you belong to God. You come from God, reveal God, and are going back to God.

Understanding your place in God’s creation is perhaps one of the most important foundations for living a moral life. The next subsections explore these truths in more detail.

God Is the Creator

God created you out of his goodness and love. Whether you think about God or not, he remains your Creator. He keeps you in existence. A starting point for understanding morality is to admit that you are a creature. You are not God. You have been made by someone greater than you are. You have been made



in the Creator’s image and likeness, and he has invited you into a covenant relationship with him. As part of this covenant, your Creator has the right, ability, and power to ask certain behaviors of you. Though some of these behaviors are difficult, he makes your good choices and actions possible by giving you the gift of his grace. You should know where you fit in the scheme of life and acknowledge God’s lordship over all his creation.

Psalm 100 directs you to offer praise to God for his goodness:

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
serve the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful song.

Know that the LORD is God,
he made us, we belong to him,
we are his people, the flock he shepherds.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name;
good indeed is the LORD,

His mercy endures forever,
his faithfulness lasts through every generation.
(Ps 100:1–5)

Similarly, it is written in the Book of Exodus that you are to worship God alone:

Therefore, you shall not bow down to their gods and serve them, nor shall you act as they do. . . . You shall serve the LORD, your God.
(Ex 23:24, 25)

Acknowledging God, praising his goodness, and worshipping him alone are behaviors of a moral person.



Praise to the Lord

Read Psalm 135. Find a key phrase or theme in this psalm, and copy it into your notebook or journal. Compose your own poem or prayer of praise using this theme.

Humans Steward God's Creation

God created everything for humans. He put people in charge of the rest of creation. People show respect to God the Creator by being good stewards of the earth. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation" (*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*).

Because all of creation comes from God's goodness, it shares in that goodness. This is one reason why people must care for the environment—air, water, land—responsibly. Another reason is that the earth proclaims its maker. God's glory shines through his creation. Creation reveals God. To damage creation is to prevent creation from proclaiming God's glory and goodness. It is to stop the divine light from radiating through creation to reveal its loving and good Creator.

God Created Humans Male and Female

The Genesis accounts of creation reveal that God created humans as complementary beings, male and female. *Complementary* refers to things that combine to bring out the best in one another. Neither man nor woman is superior to the other. Each needs and completes the other. As Pope Benedict XVI taught:

The idea is certainly present [in Scripture] that man is somehow incomplete, driven by nature to seek in another the part that can make him whole, the idea that only in communication with the opposite sex can he become "complete." The biblical account thus concludes with a prophecy about Adam: "Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his



wife and they become one flesh” (Gn 2:24).
(*Deus Caritas Est*, 11)

The union of male and female is intrinsic to God’s plan for creation. Marriage between a man and a woman is rooted in the natural law (see pages 99–100). “The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator” (CCC, 1603). Only through the committed union of a husband and wife in marriage can the natural procreation and education of children take place in a setting that is secure, nurturing, and consistent with what God intends.

Marriage is a sacrament precisely because the unity between Christ and the Church becomes present in the union between man and woman. God created marriage with a view to the mystery of Christ and the Church. Within the sacrament of marriage, the man makes Christ present and the woman makes the Church present. The man gives himself to his wife as Christ gave himself to the Church; the wife receives the man as the Church receives Christ and gives herself back to him in return. God designed this mystery of marriage so that in every marriage the couple may come to know and experience the depths of his love for them in a unique and intimate way.

Humans who try to rewrite the definition of marriage do not realize that changing the meaning of marriage would entail changing the meaning of Christ’s relationship to the Church. In recent times, the complementary and sacramental relationship between man and woman has been confused by the attempt to define and normalize same-sex relationships as marriage. The question here is not primarily about a person’s right to love whomever

he or she wishes but about God’s institution of marriage since the creation of the world as a sign and sacrament of the love that he wishes to share with humankind. Because marriage is a sign and sacrament of God’s love, rooted in natural law, its definition can never be changed. “The natural law is *immutable* and permanent throughout . . . history” (CCC, 1958).

The Genesis creation stories highlight that males and females are composite and sexual beings with both a body and a soul. Unique among God’s creatures because you are made with a spiritual soul, you have the ability to think, to make choices, to love, and to relate to others in community. You exist in the world as a spiritual-material being.

In summary:

1. Through their bodies, humans participate in God’s material universe, gaining knowledge through five senses and expressing themselves through emotions, feelings, passions and drives, preferences and dislikes.
2. Humans need each other. God builds interdependence into the very nature of human beings, creating man and woman to be helpmates, a communion of persons (see CCC, 372).

Your uniqueness includes your genetic makeup, but it is not limited to that makeup. To be a person is to be truly unique. Personhood is based on God’s call; to be called is to be a person. God calls every person in creation to himself; that call is amplified through the universal call to holiness and finally fulfilled in the call to discipleship, the call to follow Christ through death to eternal life. In Baptism, you receive a name, signifying that you were called and given a new name before God—a name that will not fade when your body is but dust and ashes.





Your Ecological Footprint

Locate an online ecological footprint quiz to discover how much productive land and water is needed to support what you use and what you discard. Then research and compare this result to what land and water is available on the planet.

Use other environmental websites to determine some ways you can effectively help to protect creation. Write a report that details your plan.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES THE CHURCH'S DEFENSE OF **Marriage**

You may have noticed that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has spoken out in defense of marriage, opposing attempts by the government to redefine marriage as anything other than the unique, lifelong, fruitful union between a man and woman.

Creation Is Good

The simple statement “Creation is good” is not universally accepted. For example, a philosophy called **nihilism** claims that there is no meaning to existence; it rejects all positive values and believes in nothing.

Contrast this negative and pessimistic view of the human condition with the Genesis accounts. Both the first and second stories of creation in Genesis affirm that creation and human existence are good. In the first creation account (see Genesis 1:1–2:4a), after he created and instructed humans, “God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.” The second creation account (see Genesis 2:4–25) notes that not only are humans created in God’s image but the first humans—called Adam and Eve—were in harmony with God, each other, and the rest of creation.

Adam and Eve were created in a state of **original holiness and original justice**, sharing in the divine life and harmony. God placed Adam and Eve in the garden “to cultivate and care for it” (Gn 2:15). Work was not to be toil for them but a collaborative effort with God in perfecting his all-good creation.

nihilism A philosophy that denies there is any meaning in existence or religious beliefs. A nihilist maintains that the only thing that comes after life is nothingness, annihilation.

original holiness and original justice The original state of human beings in their relationship with God before sin entered the world. Original holiness was the state of Adam and Eve in which they shared in the divine life. Original justice was their state of inner harmony, harmony between man and woman, and harmony between the first couple and all creation.

The USCCB has published answers to questions about the Church’s stance on marriage on its website under “Frequently Asked Questions about the Defense of Marriage.” Here is the answer to “Why does the Catholic Church care so much about marriage?”:

The Catholic Church cares about marriage because marriage is a fundamental good in itself and foundational to human existence and flourishing. Following the example of Jesus, the Church cares about the whole person, and all people. Marriage (or the lack thereof) affects everyone. Today, people all over the world are suffering because of the breakdown of the family—divorce, out-of-wedlock childbearing, and so on. Marriage is never just a “private” issue; it has public significance and public consequences. One only has to think of the connection between fatherless families and young men in jail to know that this is true.

In addition, the proposal to “redefine” marriage to include two men or two women is really a proposal to “redefine” the human person, causing a forgetfulness of what it means to be a man or a woman. This is a basic injustice to men and women, children, and fathers and mothers. Marriage is truly one of the most important social justice issues of our time.

Read the answers to the other Frequently Asked Questions about marriage on the USCCB website. Then respond in your own words to the following questions:

1. Why can a true marriage exist only between a male and a female?
2. How can you respond to those who feel it is unkind not to support defining same-sex relationships as marriages?

The second creation account both asserts the fundamental goodness of human beings and notes that humans were created to be in friendship with God. However, due to the **Original Sin** of Adam and Eve, original holiness and original justice were lost. Humans became subject to ignorance, suffering, and death, and became inclined to sin—a condition called **concupiscence**. But Original Sin did not totally corrupt human nature.

The Sacrament of Baptism imparts the life of Christ, erases Original Sin, and turns a person back toward God. Those who receive the grace of Christ in Baptism receive a holiness that is a greater blessing than original holiness. But the gift of original justice is not restored to them. The concupiscence that you experience due to the weakening of human nature persists. This means that you have to engage in spiritual battle to do right and rely on the help of God's grace to grow in holiness, truth, and life.

The life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ are God's gift to humans that bestows upon them the infinite value of God's own life. God loves humans so much that "he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

Original Sin The personal sin of Adam and Eve, the first human beings, by which they disobeyed God's commandment and chose their own will over God's will. As a result, they lost the grace of original holiness and original justice, they became subject to death, and sin entered the world. Original Sin also describes the fallen state of human nature, which affects every person and from which Christ came to redeem the world.

concupiscence Disordered human desires resulting from Original Sin that produce an inclination to sin, also expressed as "the rebellion of the 'flesh' against the 'spirit'" [CCC, 2515]. Concupiscence remains after Baptism.

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use the outline you made to help you answer the following questions.

1. What request does Psalm 100 make of people?
2. How do people show respect to God as Creator?
3. What is the meaning of the term *complementary* in relation to God's creation of humans as male and female?
4. From where does the nature and purpose of marriage arise?
5. Why did God make humans as two sexes, male and female?



VOCABULARY

6. How do the *nihilist* and Christian views about the meaning of creation differ?
7. True or False: Even though stained by *Original Sin*, human nature has not been totally corrupted. Explain your answer.



REFLECTION

8. What does it mean to say that people are created in God's image?

SECTION 2

The Dignity of the Human Person

MAIN IDEA

All people have inherent dignity and value because each has been made in the image of God.



Because you have been created in the divine image—endowed with a body and soul, able to share in God’s very life—and called by God for a life of eternal happiness, you possess the gift of human dignity. *Dignity* is the quality of being worthy of esteem and respect. Your having dignity means that you have worth and value.

Your dignity and the dignity of all other people living on this planet did not have to be earned. Human dignity is inherent, inviolable, and inalienable. Here’s how:

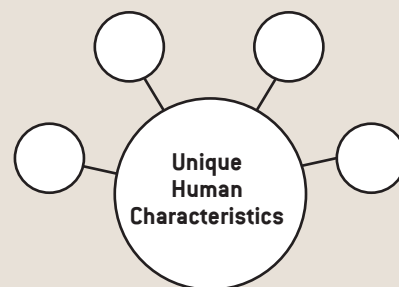
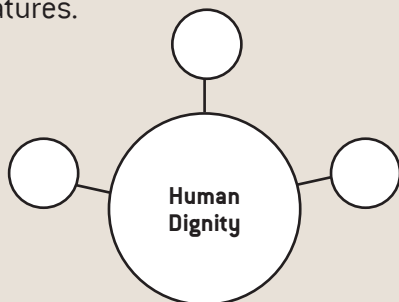
- Dignity is *inherent* or inborn because it is an essential characteristic of being human.
- Dignity is *inviolable* because no one has the right to violate or profane it.
- Dignity is *inalienable* because it cannot be taken away by anyone. Even a person’s own sinfulness cannot cause his or her human dignity to be lost.

Your dignity is not dependent on status, possessions, personal qualities, or accomplishments. You have dignity no matter what—rich or poor, very smart or less so, athletic or not, born with limbs or without. Your dignity comes from God, who created you with infinite value and worth and who loves you. He loves you so much that he was willing to sacrifice his Son for you.



NOTE TAKING

Concept Webs. As you read, make two concept webs like the ones below. In one, list characteristics of human dignity. In the other, list and define characteristics that make humans unique as compared to other creatures.





Every person merits respect. The beginning of moral living is to respect everyone.

Human dignity means, simply, that everyone is a *someone*, not a *something*. Because of this fact, every person merits respect, regardless of social status, accomplishments, education, skin color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, ethnic background, or contributions to society. Acknowledging and respecting human dignity is the cornerstone of Christian morality and ethics.

In fact, the beginning of moral living is to respect every human being. Respecting others means refraining from using people as a means to an end, as objects rather than people. It forbids manipulating, humiliating, exploiting, or being violent toward them.

Stated more positively, you respect the dignity of others when you do things such as the following:

- You acknowledge their existence by greeting them and listening to them.
- You act with consideration and courtesy.

- You accept others as individuals, despite their differences from you.
- You refrain from prejudice.
- You work hard at developing a mindset that all people are truly your brothers and sisters, and you relate to them as such.

When you treat others and yourself with respect, you recognize the dignity of human beings. The prayer that Jesus taught his disciples begins with the words “Our Father.” Truly, God stands in relationship to all people as loving Father. God the Father sent Jesus to become a human being, so he sees in the face of every human person the face of his beloved Son. Every single human is touched by the work of Jesus Christ; he died for every single person—past, present, and future—and that gives each person a value and dignity that exceeds anything in the world: the value of Jesus’ own self-sacrifice.

Your Unique Spiritual Soul

God created you with both a body and a spiritual and immortal soul. You are not just a body and you are not just a soul; body and soul together make you a single, unique person. “It is in Christ, ‘the image of the invisible God,’ that man has been created ‘in the image and likeness’ of the Creator” (CCC, 1701). Your human soul, restored to its original beauty and magnified by God’s grace through Christ, is the innermost aspect of your person. It gives you incomparable dignity.

Your soul gives you a share in God’s life. It identifies you as “most especially in God’s image” (CCC, 363). It causes you to be unsatisfied with living a merely physical existence in the here and now. It leads you to imagine a life beyond earth. It prompts you to ask ultimate questions such as these:

- What am I here for?
- Why do I exist?
- What happens to me after I die?
- What is the meaning of life?

In the depths of his or her soul, every person thirsts for an eternal happiness that only God can provide. St. Augustine described this holy longing when he wrote, “You have made us for yourself, O God, and so our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

By creating you in his image and likeness and giving you a soul, God endowed you with capacities that separate you from every other earthly creature. Being in the image and likeness of God, you have received from God your intellect, free will, ability to love, and capacity to respond morally.

Intellect

Humans are rational beings. Humans have intellects. Humans are the only earthly creatures who “know that they know.” You have been made with the ability to

think and reason in many ways. You can figure out complex math problems, investigate how the universe works, and ponder the meaning of life and death. You can also reflect on what you have learned, master your environment, and pass on your knowledge to subsequent generations.

Most importantly, because you have an intellect, you can discover truth. Seeking and finding truth will lead you to recognize the voice of God urging you “to do what is good and avoid what is evil” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 16, quoted in CCC, 1706). God’s voice manifests in divine law—his eternal, objective, and universal law. You are responsible for following this law, which you know through your conscience and fulfill through your love of God and neighbor. (Chapter 5 provides more detail about conscience.) Doing good and avoiding evil makes you a moral person and a witness to the dignity of others.

Free Will

With the gift of **free will**, you have the capacity to make choices among alternatives. More importantly, you have the ability to direct yourself to true goodness and to define yourself in terms of that choice. Your freedom is always exercised in relationship with others; therefore, choices carry with them responsibility. Through your ability to make free choices, you can make yourself good or bad. Contrast this to the instinct that binds animals: a dog, cat, or monkey cannot be morally good or evil.

The gift of free will helps you determine the direction of your own life. For example:

free will “The power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one’s own responsibility” (CCC, 1731).



PREJUDICED

If you were born into a family that is prejudiced against certain people, your **FREE WILL** gives you the power to choose not to be prejudiced.



BULLIED

If you personally bullied or made fun of people when you were young, **FREE WILL** allows you the opportunity to change.

Your free will lasts a lifetime and can be put to use at any time to make good choices. Once you understand—today, tomorrow, or sometime in the future—that all humans have dignity and are worthy of respect, you can make the free choice to treat them accordingly.

Your free will is a sign of God’s presence in your life. The Church teaches that “authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 17). Your free will enables you to rise above any negative elements of your heredity or environment. Your free will enables you to exercise some control over your life by using your God-given talents and cooperating with the many graces he provides to you.

Ability to Love

Choosing to do good for other people, even to the point of personal sacrifice, defines love. Love of God above everything else and love of your neighbor as yourself are the highest choices humans can make.

St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) exemplified love when she freely chose to take a dying leper into her arms to comfort him. An onlooker recoiled in horror and said, “I wouldn’t touch that person for a million dollars.”

Mother Teresa responded, “Neither would I.”

When you choose to act out of love, you are being Godlike in imitation of the Triune God, who is a perfect community of love—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Capacity to Respond Morally

What you do, or fail to do, matters. The gift of free will correlates with the capacity to respond morally and to be accountable for your actions. When you exercise your freedom and make choices in accord with God’s eternal law, you are being moral; when you don’t, you are being immoral. Your free choice to ignore God’s law is itself sin. Choices have consequences. Good choices build up and bad choices tear down a person’s moral character.

Growing in Virtue

All of your God-given faculties—intellect, free will, the ability to love, and the capacity to respond morally—can help you to be more virtuous. The **theological virtues** are the foundation for Christian moral activity. These infused virtues of faith, hope, and charity bring life to your moral actions and give them their special character. Moral, or human, virtues, rooted in the theological virtues, are “firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will” (CCC, 1804) that regulate your actions and help you to make good choices. Through your own human effort, you can grow in the moral virtues of honesty, integrity, self-control, and consideration for others, for example. The theological virtues further the moral actions of your growth. For example, the ability to love is generally a human virtue, but the ability to love in a Christian sense is a theological virtue, the infused virtue of charity. Section 3 of Chapter 4 reviews the virtues in detail.

Because a virtue is a “habitual and firm disposition to do the good” (CCC, 1803), the more you train yourself to practice the virtues, the better and more moral you will become. Habits are often called “second nature”; when habits become character, they become ingrained into who you are.

Consider how you may already have matured to become a better person. Maybe when you were younger, you were rude and hurtful to your parents. Witnessing the negative impact on yourself and them, you may now have adjusted your behavior to act in a more caring and loving way. Or perhaps you have grown more sensitive and responsive to a lonely classmate after putting yourself in his or her position.

Think about how humanity collectively—including many Christians—has learned and improved following mistakes and sins. For example, for centuries slavery was tolerated as acceptable. However, the Gospel message and its implication of the dignity of all people



The theological virtues are bestowed on believers in the Sacrament of Baptism.

began to take root. This helped to change the thinking of individuals and entire societies to conclude that slavery is an intolerable evil that destroys human dignity. Today, all civilized societies ban slavery.

With the help of God’s grace, individuals are able to grow in virtue, and societies can work to embody the principles of justice. Both can avoid sin—and, if they do sin, seek out God’s mercy and forgiveness and start over again. This growth leads to the perfection of love and the recognition of the dignity of all people.

theological virtues Three important virtues bestowed on a person at Baptism that help the person relate to God; they are *faith* (belief in and personal knowledge of God), *hope* (trust in God’s salvation and in his gift of the graces needed to attain it), and *charity* (love of God and love of neighbor).

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

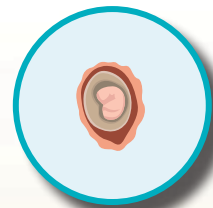
in the **WOMB** before

BIRTH

The union of a woman's egg cell and a man's sperm cell begins human life. Over the course of nine months, the fertilized egg cell develops and grows into a fully formed human being.

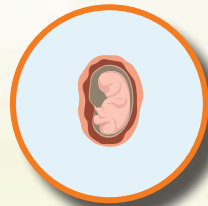
END OF THE FIRST MONTH

The heart, brain, and lungs are forming. The heart starts beating on about the twenty-fifth day. The child is 0.25 of an inch long. The child's gender, hair color, and eye color have been determined.



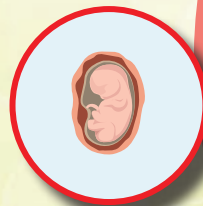
END OF THE SECOND MONTH

The child is now 1.5 inches in length. In scientific terms, the child is now considered a fetus. Every vital organ is developing. Arms, hands, and fingers are forming. Muscles and skin are developing as well. The child's sex organs begin to be visible.



END OF THE THIRD MONTH

The baby's heartbeat can be detected by Doppler monitor. The baby can open and close his or her mouth and swallow. The child is about 2 inches long and weighs about 1 ounce.



END OF THE FOURTH MONTH

The baby's hair and teeth begin to form. The digestive system is developing. The mother may feel her baby's movements. The baby is 8 to 10 inches long and weighs about 6 ounces.





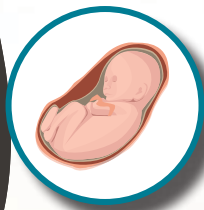
END OF THE FIFTH MONTH

The baby's fingerprints and footprints are developed. A fine hair called lanugo covers the body. A heartbeat can be heard. The baby is now about 12 inches in length and weighs 1 pound.



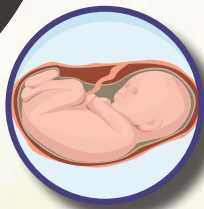
END OF THE SIXTH MONTH

The baby can hear sounds. He or she can now kick and cry and might even hiccup. The baby's lungs are developing. The baby is creating antibodies. The baby now weighs about 1.5 pounds.



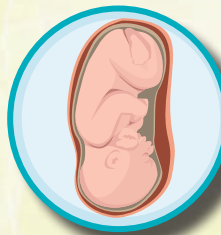
END OF THE SEVENTH MONTH

The baby can move arms and legs freely. Eyes are open. He or she may cry. The baby now weighs about 2 to 2.5 pounds.



END OF THE EIGHTH MONTH

There is not a lot of new development. The baby is growing, maturing, and sleeping quite a bit more. The skin is smoother as a layer of fat develops under it. Hair gets longer. The baby is approximately 16.5 inches long and weighs about 4 pounds.



END OF THE NINTH MONTH

A baby's average height and weight vary at the time of birth (which is actually beyond nine calendar months) from 6 to 10 pounds and 19 to 21 inches. The baby's organs have developed enough to function on their own.

ASSIGNMENT

- Research and review other facts about embryonic and fetal development. Report your findings to the class.

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use the concept webs you made to help you answer the following questions.

1. What is human dignity?
2. What does it mean to say that human dignity is inalienable?



VOCABULARY

3. Define *theological virtues*.
4. What is *free will*?



COMPREHENSION

5. How do the moral virtues contribute to your own human dignity and the dignity of others?



ANALYSIS

6. Explain the meaning of St. Augustine's famous words: "You have made us for yourself, O God, and so our hearts are restless until they rest in you."
7. Explain why true freedom is not doing whatever you want to do.



APPLICATION

8. Write two or three sentences explaining why and how you are worthy of respect.

SECTION 3

The Social Nature of Humans

MAIN IDEA

Like God, who is a communion of Persons in the Blessed Trinity, human beings are social and are meant to live with one another.



NOTE TAKING

Making Connections. In this section, you will read an analogy that compares humanity to an enormous spiderweb that is impacted by the slightest touch. As you read the section, create two of your own models or symbols to represent the social nature and interconnection of humans. Add a caption below each model to explain its meaning. (See also the related Chapter Assignment 3 on page 32.)

Created in the divine image, humans are social beings. It is part of human nature for humans to live in various societies or communities (groups bound by a principle of unity that goes beyond each individual). In these communities—for example, families, neighborhoods, schools, nations—you relate to others by loving them and by sharing with them your own personal gifts.

God has created you as a social being in order for you to reflect his life and come to know him more deeply so that you can relate to others. Recall that God is a perfect communion of love—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the Blessed Trinity, God is Three Divine Persons who relate perfectly to each other in giving, receiving, and loving. Your vocation is to express the love of the communion of Divine Persons in your own relationships. This means treating all people as brothers and sisters under a common heavenly Father. It means creating families and other communities that model the loving relationship among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The writer and preacher Frederick Buechner compared humanity to an enormous spiderweb. If you touch a web anywhere, the whole thing trembles. This image suggests that when you behave kindly and lovingly, you support the whole human web of relationships. And whenever you act with indifference or hostility, your actions can cause damage. You have likely been around someone whose negative attitudes and behaviors cast a shadow on everyone and, on the other hand, someone who “lights up the room” when present. Buechner wrote, “The life that I touch for good or ill will touch another life, and that in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place and time my touch will be felt. Our lives are linked together. No man is an island” (*The Hungering Dark*).

Because humans are relational and social by nature, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* underscores several truths about people and society. These are expressed in the following subsections.

Solidarity and the Morality of Authority

The *Catechism* teaches that the human person is and should be “the principle, the subject, and the object” of every society (*Gaudium et Spes*, 25, quoted in CCC, 1892). Your participation in society should be a positive aspect of living. **Solidarity** gives you the spirit of generosity to share both your material and your spiritual gifts with others, especially with those most in need. Solidarity helps you recognize that all people are members of the same human family and are called to help one another.

How is solidarity accomplished? God provides many gifts—health, education, financial wealth, and so forth. The Church teaches that the most fortunate are obliged to share their good fortune with others, especially with those who are most in need. Catholics must work to eradicate sinful inequalities of wealth and social status that destroy justice, peace, equity, and human dignity.

According to their gifts and talents, their positions and roles, all people have the right and duty to participate in the life of the various societies to which they belong. For example, citizens have the right and duty to take an active role in public life. The Church also teaches that citizens are to follow legitimate human authority, that authentic authority comes from God, and that political authority must be used morally



Voting in national, state, and local elections is a basic way to participate in public life.

and must guarantee the conditions that promote true human freedom.

The Common Good and Subsidiarity

In all cases, societies should promote virtue and challenge individuals to turn from sin, serve others justly, and contribute their gifts and talents to the **common good**.

The common good requires that both individuals and societies

1 respect the basic, inalienable rights of each human being; and

2 promote the social well-being and development of various social groups.

Authority figures must serve the common good and exercise power in morally acceptable ways. They must promote peace, which results in stability and security, so that justice can take place.

The Church also teaches that larger societies should support the participation of individuals and

solidarity The Christian virtue of social charity and friendship.

common good The “sum total of social conditions that allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 26, quoted in CCC, 1906).