

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



Office for Human Dignity & Solidarity—Immigration Ministry

SESSION THREE

Human Dignity

The Image and Likeness of God



This project was realized with the collaboration of:

Original Spanish Language (2012)

Rev. Michael Boehm, Blessed Sacrament Church
Marilu Gonzalez

Rev. Daniel Groody, University of Notre Dame

Rev. Guillermo Campuzano, DePaul University

Dr. Alicia C. Marill, Barry University

Dr. Timothy Matovina, University of Notre Dame

Rev. Anthony Pizzo, St. Rita of Cascia

Rev. Carl Quebedeaux, C.M.F., Our Lady of
Guadalupe Church

Sr. Barbara E. Reid, O.P., Catholic Theological Union

Elena Segura, Archdiocese of Chicago's Office
of Human Dignity & Solidarity

English Translation (2107)

Meredith Walsh-Beteta, English translation,
editing, & proofing

Mark Goebel, Archdiocese of Chicago's Office
of Human Dignity & Solidarity

Kathy Osberger, Consultant

Yazmin Saldivar-Perez, Archdiocese of Chicago's
Office of Human Dignity & Solidarity

Pastoral Migratoria lay leaders in the Archdiocese
of Chicago

Michael Warrell, Design Solutions

Special acknowledgement to the Pastoral Migratoria lay leaders throughout the Archdiocese of Chicago

Printer: Excel Graphics & Forms, Des Plaines, IL

© 2012, Original Spanish language, Archdiocese of Chicago's Office of Human Dignity & Solidarity—Immigration Ministry (formerly Office of Immigrant Affairs and Immigrant Education)

© 2017 English translation, Archdiocese of Chicago's Office of Human Dignity & Solidarity—Immigration Ministry
All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.

This publication may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in whole or in part, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

The scanning, uploading, or distribution of this book via the Internet or any other means without the express permission of the copyright holder is illegal and punishable by law.

Printing number

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



PART ONE

Introduction

Introduction and Greetings

Initial Prayer

Lord of Greatness and Wonder, you created us in an amazing manner, after your own image and likeness. You came to live with us and by so doing, you dignified our human condition through your incarnation. That is to say, you created us for love and relationships. Do not allow us to blur your image in us by falling into selfishness, lack of communication or demeaning our own dignity and that of others. We give thanks for the extraordinary calling you have given us. Amen.

Readings from the Word of God

Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.

God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.—**GENESIS 1:26–27**

They sent some Pharisees and Herodians to him to ensnare him in his speech.

They came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you are not concerned with anyone’s opinion. You do not regard a person’s status but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or should we not pay?”

Knowing their hypocrisy he said to them, “Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at.”

They brought one to him and he said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They replied to him, “Caesar’s.”

So Jesus said to them, “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” They were utterly amazed at him.—**MARK 12:13–17**

Commentary

Human dignity has its origin in God's creation. If God made the human being after his own image and likeness, everything human should be a reflection of God. Later we will return to this passage and its relation to the deep sense of dignity which is our foundation.

PART TWO

Listening

From Everyday Life: Things that Happen

Manuela arrived in the United States with her husband a number of years ago. In Mexico, she had been surrounded by family, friends, and her church community. Here she felt like a stranger, different and isolated. Since she could not drive and did not know the language and the customs of the place, she spent many hours shut-in at home. She depended on her husband for everything, even to drop her off or pick her up. She felt useless and very small. She thought she was worthless, she could not do anything and, in truth, she felt she was a nobody. But one day she awakened to the truth and realized she was the “daughter of a great King!” Now she has completed a program of leadership in the Church and works with great enthusiasm in her parish. She feels capable and fulfilled. Not out of her own merit, she says, but because of the enormous dignity she has as a daughter of God.

FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

What do I think about myself? How do I respond to the attitudes of rejection or indifference of others? What do I believe other people think of me? Could I list at least five of my best qualities?

From Everyday Life: Things that Happen

Human dignity is not always fully recognized in our world. There are differences, discriminations and slights, simply due to ethnic origin or skin color. For instance:

- During a debate, a state senator, Lori Klein, read a racist letter, supposedly written by a teacher, in which it was said that Hispanic youth do not want to be educated, but simply wanted to be members of a gang.
- Despite the evidence that shows that laws such as the ones in Arizona do not solve the problem of immigration, some state legislators still try to pass laws copying HB 1070. But the states that try to pass similar laws hurt themselves because they start being known as hostile to certain human groups. Some of the most brilliant students in the fields of Math and Engineering at Arizona State University are undocumented immigrants.

- Despite the constant media portrayal of undocumented Hispanic immigrants as criminals, the truth is that the great majority of immigrants are decent people who only wish to work in order to support their families. A report from the Migration Policy Institute documents that border communities in the Southwest are precisely the ones with the lowest criminality rates. El Paso, for instance, has the designation as the safest city in the country, despite being directly across from Ciudad Juárez. The crime rates in the border area are the lowest in the United States.



- That same report identified fears and concerns about the integration of many immigrants and their children. It says:

“While the admissions of immigrants and the policies of implementation of laws have gained the attention of legislators, interest groups and media, the topics related to the integration of immigrants have received far less attention. And yet it is precisely these topics where the majority of Americans experience the impact of immigration policies in their daily lives. They see the impact on the faces of new residents and different people in their communities; they hear it in the foreign languages spoken at stores, places of work, government offices and mass media; and they feel it viscerally in the taxes that they feel they need to pay in order to support local schools, health programs and education. It is not hard to argue, therefore, that, despite the time, energy, and capital invested on the immigration debate in the past few years, this has been a debate concerned about political reform that generally ignores a series of concerns about the immigration policies that are rooted in the daily experiences of Americans and on the impact of immigration in their lives.”

FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

What encounters have we had with people of other cultures? At what times have we felt attacked? What is our experience of racism or prejudice? In which moments have I felt mistrust and fear about people of other racial or cultural groups? In which moments have I felt supported and appreciated? What helps and encourages us along the way?

PART THREE

Learning

Now let us see how Scripture, the Church, and the theological reflection of our times speak about these issues, in order to be able to reflect on our own attitudes and actions.

Enlightened by the Word

Let us read the initial Bible passages Genesis 1:26-27; Mark 12:13-17 again.

FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

What images or words leap out to me? What is our image of ourselves? What could it mean for us not to blur the image of God in ourselves? According to Mark's reading, to whom do we belong? Do we give ourselves to God in a total and radical manner?

Understanding the Passages

GENESIS 1:26-27 The image of God imprinted in every person is a theological novelty and a revolutionary affirmation of the author of Genesis. Except on rare occasions, the image of God in the ancient Middle East was an exclusive quality of the monarch and could not be invoked by anyone else. In this scripture passage, it is named as constitutive of the human being and not as something that is acquired or received in a fleeting manner. The text affirms that every human being carries the image of God in himself or herself. In this sense, we are also told about the human capacity of creating and recreating matter. What must always be present in human action is that it be subject to the service of the plan of God, that it responds and does justice to the divine image present in each person.

MARK 12:13-17 The question of the Pharisees is hypocritical and it sounds deceitful. If Jesus answers yes, he will be judged by the Jews and if he says no, the Romans will accuse him of being a revolutionary. Jesus knows their intentions and asks for a coin, the common currency in the Roman Empire. The coin had an image of the emperor and an inscription affirming his divinity. Jesus asks them to return to Caesar what belongs to him, denying Caesar divinization. Jesus says that which belongs to God should be returned to God, indicating that God does not identify with any political project in particular, but with all those that identify with the needs of the people. There is an implicit recognition that a person belongs to God, and *only* to God.

FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

How do our actions and attitudes reflect the image of God in us? How is the image of God blurred in us, in our families and communities, or in our society? What attitudes against human dignity do you think is gravest?

Enlightened by the Doctrine of the Church

The central principle of the Social Teaching of the Church is the dignity of the person. The affirmation of this dignity is reflected in all the documents of Catholic Social Teaching, starting with *Rerum Novarum*, of Leo XIII, and continuing by the writings of Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, as well as all the documents of the Conferences of Catholic Bishops in the Americas (CELAM; USCCB). All persons are a reflection of the image of God and, therefore, all human life at all its stages, from conception to natural death, is sacred. The basic dignity of each person comes from God and, therefore, all discrimination is a sin. The human person always has priority over structures and material things.

The mystery of the Trinity includes the relationship of full love among the three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in a single God. As persons made in the image and likeness of God, we have the obligation to be models of his love in total self-giving. Therefore, the human person is fundamentally *sacred* and *social*. It is in community that we reach the fullness of our dignity and rights in relation to others and with others (*Series Faith and Development: Biblical Guide*, USCCB, Washington DC 1998).

Our responsibility in the restoration of the world and in the creation of a new society cannot be replaced. It is there in the restoration that science, industry, technology and the collaboration of all, even the most insignificant, come together. All of us believe that the true progress of humanity depends on a change of social, economic, and political structures tending to forms of life that are more just for all. And that transformation must be fostered by a deep renewal of the mind and heart of the human person. This desire is disturbed and interrupted by excessive social differences, unjust wages and internal and external dependence, the alienation by mass media, the hindrances to education, the accumulation of goods...(*Towards fullness in Christ: Sola*, Fernando OP, Ediciones Paulinas, Bogotá, Colombia, 1992).

The true dignity and excellence of the human person is rooted in morality, that is, in virtue; virtue is the common patrimony of all mortals, equally accessible to high and low, rich and poor... Moreover, the very will of God seems more inclined toward the afflicted, since Jesus calls the poor blessed, invites them most lovingly to draw near...knowing all these things, the inflated spirit of the rich can be easily deflated and the depressed sense of the afflicted is raised...they will see and understand that all human beings have been created by the same God, the common Father; that all have the same goal, that it is the same God, the only one who can grant perfect and absolute happiness...that all have been equally redeemed and elevated to the dignity of children of God so that they will feel united by fraternal relationships, both among themselves as with Christ, the first son among many brothers. In the same manner as natural goods, the gifts of grace belong in common and generally to the whole human race and no one will be disinherited. If children, also heirs, certainly heirs of God and coheirs with Christ (*Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII, n. 17-18).

FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

Which of these expressions have resonated in me? How do they affirm what I already believe? What is necessary in our world to respect these principles?

In the Light of Contemporary Theological Reflection

by Monsignor Arturo Bañuelas

I come from the border and I see many painful things there. There are also many lies about immigrants and immigration. Despite everything, I feel optimistic, because I know this is our moment, the Latino moment. We are coming of age and we want to help to shape a new nation: more just, equalitarian and free for all citizens, and particularly for the poor.

But we will have to do it in our own Latino style, rooted in a new vision we inherited from our indigenous ancestors who said: You are my other self. This is a profoundly spiritual vision of life, an economic program for justice, a cultural solution for peace and an authentic reform for human dignity. You are my other self. We are linked to each other. Either we remain standing together, or we all fall. We belong to each other and we need to help each other. Our ancestors teach us: if I reject you, I reject myself. And if I foster the good in you, I foster it in myself and in everyone else.

Our fathers, mothers, and grandparents have always taught what Christ teaches us—that we were created good and for good. When we see life from this decidedly Latino perspective, we discover that there are more good people than bad people in the world, and that the world actually is moving forward to unity. This is the Latino good news. I believe that our greatest significance in life comes from our solidarity with others, particularly the poor who struggle among us. Insofar as they don't eat, don't have health care, a good education, good housing, not treated with respect and dignity, all of us will remain incomplete as persons and as a nation.

At a time of propaganda, lies, violence, racism, and war; at a time when human life seems to be so cheap, we must proclaim that we are concerned about each and every person, because “you are my other self.” As a Latino from the border, I have reasons to feel optimistic about life and about our future because we have in ourselves that profound desire to live our unity granted by God: at the end of all our struggles, we will see that it is our unity that will triumph over lies, divisions, hatred and racism. At the end, the glory will belong to those who know how to embody the “you are my other self.”

The immoral wall on our border, and in the heart of our nation, is causing a moral harm to the soul of our country. It says we have stopped dreaming of the possibility of helping each other as human beings in the land of the free.

This is a historical moment for us. We have never been so close to an immigration reform and we will not quit now. I have seen in the faces of many people throughout

the country that we are ready to show our decision, our conviction, and our dedication to immigrants and to the reform. We want to do whatever is necessary because we deeply believe that justice will triumph over hatred, that love will conquer racism and that a common compassion will win over the lies. I still believe in the dream of a better and more just America for all. The hope runs in our veins and the cause of a reform lives in our hearts. We are a proud people and we are filled with great faith and hope and we want to share it with all.

FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION:

Have you ever reflected on of this saying of the ancestors, “You are my other self”? How does this saying challenge you in your daily life? How would you describe the Latino people? In which moments have you felt prejudice or discrimination? Had you ever thought about this being a sin? As we live now, can we feel totally satisfied? Why? Is it possible to change? Is hoping for better times for humanity a passion or a useless illusion? On what do you base your own sense of dignity and value?

PART FOUR

Proclaiming

Leadership

In the face of attitudes that blur the image of God denying the dignity of a specific group, or of specific persons, we can adopt certain attitudes that will help us individually as well as collectively. The role of Christian leadership is to adopt these attitudes and positions in order to defend the community and thus give glory to God.

The role of Christian leadership is to discern the attitudes and behaviors that go against the Gospel because they do not defend the people. Resisting such attitudes and behaviors is not easy, but it places us in a position to defend our communities and thus give glory to God.

There are different types of attitudes that a leader in society could take toward the dominant culture. These are not necessarily good and we need to examine and evaluate what would be our course of action as Christian leaders.

These could be considered detrimental attitudes:

- A leader who buys into the dominant culture:
 - Seeks the acceptance of dominant groups
 - Ignores the signs of discrimination
 - Avoids activities and tasks that highlight the discrimination suffered by minorities
 - Adopts all the external signs (dress, food, language) of the dominant culture

- Seeks interaction with the dominant group
- What is passive resistance?
 - Ignores discrimination in public places
 - Keeps the feeling of having been discriminated against to themselves
 - Challenges discrimination only when it does not threaten personal success
 - Is proud of the successes of his or her group only in private, without the dominant group noticing

These attitudes are beneficial and more positive:

What is active resistance?

- Confronts discrimination and prejudice at the personal, interpersonal, and organizational levels
- Seeks activities celebrating their own culture
- Seeks activities or tasks centered on eliminating discrimination
- Avoids interaction with minorities that have totally assimilated to the dominant culture and values
- Redefinition of the minority culture
 - Is confident and sure of their own culture
 - Seeks the company and support of their own group
 - Shows signs of their own culture
 - Limits interaction with the dominant group
- Internalization of the minority culture
 - Relates to people of any origin
 - Participates in projects and activities that value diversity and that confront any type of prejudice or discrimination
 - Expresses themselves freely at work and in the wider community

List the challenges to leadership we find in the process of enculturation into the culture of the United States and the implications for leadership within the Church. What could we do as leaders to foster a healthy self-image in our communities?

FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

What is my image of myself? How does it contrast with the message of the readings? In which ways could I affirm my own dignity and that of others? What does dignity mean to me? What have we learned from the readings of Scripture and of the readings of Catholic Social Teaching? What could we begin to do differently? What should we support and sustain? What image of themselves do the immigrants we work with have? How have they been affected by their experiences of immigration, uprootedness and discrimination? What image of themselves do our children have? What image of our culture and our Church do they have?

PART FIVE

Final Prayer

Oh God, you are so great! You have made us your children and brothers and sisters of Christ and among ourselves. You have given us the enormous dignity of walking on this earth as your children and heirs. Open the hearts of everyone to recognize your sacred image in each person and in ourselves. Give us courage to respect our own dignity, not allowing threats, rejection and flattery to blur that dignity in ourselves or in others. May the dignity we feel in ourselves and recognize in others lead us to defend and advocate for respect for every human life, created by God in his own image and likeness. May we know how to defend our own life, and in our homes and communities. May we defend them, above all, in the lives of immigrants, our other “selves”. Amen.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



Office of Human Dignity & Solidarity—Immigration Ministry
Cardinal Meyer Center
3525 South Lake Park Avenue
Chicago, IL 60653