The Human Person, Made in the Image and Likeness of God

UNIT 1, LESSON 2

Learning Goals

› Every human being possesses intrinsic dignity because he or she is made in God's image and likeness.
› Being created in the image and likeness of a Trinitarian God means that we are made for communion with others. This should manifest itself in a sense of fraternity toward all persons.

Prayer for the Lesson

Lead your students in praying the Glory Be each day of the lesson:

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Explain, that, though this is a simple prayer, it is a great way for us to glorify God, who made all good things, including each one of us, whom He made in His image and likeness.

Connection to the Catechism of the Catholic Church

› CCC 355-360
› CCC 1691
› CCC 1701-1709
› CCC 1878-1885
› CCC 2777-2785

Vocabulary

› Dignity
› Self-Knowledge
› Self-Possession
› Self-Gift

BIBLICAL TOUCHSTONES

God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

GENESIS 1:27

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are.

1 JOHN 3:1
Lesson Plan

Materials

- The Dignity of the Human Person
- Made for Communion
- Connection to a local organization that serves a neglected or marginalized group (e.g., a nursing home, homeless shelter, children’s hospital)
- Construction paper and markers/and or colored pencils

DAY ONE

Warm-Up

A. Read the story of creation from Genesis 1 aloud to your students, or, if Bibles are available, have all students follow along or take turns reading aloud. After reading, acknowledge that this is a familiar story with a familiar pattern. Then ask your students the following questions.

- What happens at the end of each of the first five days of creation? God looks at what He made and calls it good.
- What’s different about the sixth day of creation? God calls it very good.
- The sixth day is the day God created man and woman. Something about that creation is different, right? What is it? God makes man and woman in His image and likeness.

B. Explain to your students that this teaching—being made in the image and likeness of God—is foundational for our understanding of who we are. If we really believe that every single person is made in God’s image, we must live our lives accordingly.

Activity

A. Explain to your students that before we look at how we are to live our lives we need to understand what it means to be made like God. Ask your students to turn to The Dignity of the Human Person (page 18). Have students, read the text and answer the focus questions, or read and discuss the activity together as a class.

B. When they have finished, review and discuss the correct answers.
Formative Assessment

A. Read aloud the following statements and have your students assess whether the persons being spoken of are being viewed with dignity. Have students raise their hands if the answer is yes. Call on a student who “voted” for the correct answer to explain his or her reasoning.

- Gus says such stupid things all the time. Yeah, I make fun of him, but he brings it on himself. No – Gus is seen as less valuable because of his comments.
- I like to volunteer at the food pantry. The people who come through don’t have much, but they should still be treated with respect. Yes – the persons are valued despite their income level.
- Jenny sits alone at lunch every day. No one makes fun of her, but no one goes and sits with her either or invites her to sit with them. No – Jenny is seen as not valuable enough to include at the lunch table.
- Melissa discovers that she is pregnant. She is unmarried and works two jobs to pay her bills. She is considering getting an abortion. No – Melissa is not valuing the life of her unborn child, which is worth more than any hardships she might experience.

B. Project the following prayer on the board and pray together:

Dear God, thank You for creating us out of love. Thank You for making us in Your image and likeness. Thank You for creating each of us as someone, not something. Help us to know that we are loved by You. We pray for those who do not see themselves as valuable or worthy of love. Help them to know that You love them, and help us to treat each person according to his or her dignity. Help us to show each person we meet today the love he or she deserves. Amen.

DAY TWO

Warm-Up

A. Show students the one-minute video “Our Deepest Identity” found at SophiaOnline.org/DeepestIdentity.

B. After the video is over, ask students what they thought the main idea was. Possible answers: we need other people, we can help each other, we’re not alone, etc.

Activity

A. Begin with a review of the previous day’s lesson and a review of many years of past religious classes by asking the following questions:

- Yesterday we talked about how we are made as human beings. What do you remember? Possible answers: our dignity, image and likeness of God, our value doesn’t depend on anything besides God’s love. Draw out the “image and likeness of God” idea specifically.
- What do we do before every prayer? Make the Sign of the Cross.
LESSON PLAN

What does the Sign of the Cross symbolize? Students might mention the Cross of Jesus, but draw out the idea of the Trinity.

What is the Trinity? Three Persons in one God.

If we are made in the image and likeness of God and God is a Trinity of persons, what does that mean for us? We are not made to be alone.

B. Explain to your students that as human beings we are made for community. Alone, we are just one person, but together, we make a community of persons. Have your students turn to Made for Communion (page 20) and work on it silently, or read and discuss the activity together as a class. Circulate around the room to ensure understanding and to help with their lists if needed.

Formative Assessment
When students have finished, review and discuss Made for Communion together. After finishing the discussion on the passage from 1 John, recall your students’ attention to the five things they listed. Direct students to choose one thing from the list and consider: “If my focus was on loving the person who helped me, what would my interaction with him or her look like?” With a partner, have students take turns sharing responses to this question for each person on their list.

DAY THREE

Warm-Up
A. Quiet the class and explain that you are going to begin class with a prayer and that part of the prayer is a song.
B. Play the song “Sing Over Your Children” by Matt Maher found at SophiaOnline.org/SingOver.
C. When the song is finished, pray aloud the following:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are (from 1 John 3:1).

God, You have invited us to call You our Father. That makes us brothers and sisters. We pray together: Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our
trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Activity

A. Remind your students how you have been talking a lot about human dignity over the past few days, and how every person is made in the image and likeness of God. If we are all God’s children, that makes us a spiritual family. Draw students into conversation with the following questions.

› Do you think everybody feels as if he or she is a part of this family? No.
› Who might feel excluded or alone? Possible answers: people without a family, people alone at nursing homes, homeless people, and so forth. If they struggle to come up with responses, suggest some of those possible answers yourself.
› Think about your own family. Are you allowed to go into your room and ignore everybody, or do you have responsibilities? Draw out the idea that their immediate family does some things together; they have some responsibilities to one another.

B. Explain that a family means we are responsible for each other. Bring up the idea of solidarity from yesterday’s lesson. Not only do we recognize that we are one family, but we work toward the good of others.

C. Tell your students that for this lesson, you wanted to give them an opportunity to show solidarity with people who might feel excluded from God’s family. Each student will make a “thinking of you” card for someone at a local organization. If possible, pull up the website for the organization, such as a nursing home, a hospital, or a homeless shelter that you have previously selected. Explain the basics of the mission of the organization and show students some photos.

D. Distribute to each student a piece of construction or drawing paper and make markers and/or colored pencils available. After you have distributed the supplies, circulate around the room. As students work, ask questions to determine their exposure to people in need (“Have you ever volunteered at a place like this?” “Do you know anyone who is lonely?”). Encourage students to put care and effort into the cards. If students aren’t sure what to write, have a list of encouraging quotes on hand to get them started.

Formative Assessment

In the last few minutes of class before cleaning up, have students pause. Ask them why they think you did this activity as a class today. If students don’t generate the vocabulary words themselves, ask them directly: “What does this activity have to do with dignity?” or “How does this activity show solidarity with those in need?”
The Dignity of the Human Person

Directions: Read the following and respond to the questions that follow.

We read in Genesis 1:27 that “God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” The human person has a unique place in creation. We were specifically created by God in his image and likeness. This is a gift no other creature possesses. The Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 357 explains this idea more:

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone.

What does it mean to have dignity? Dignity is the unique worth and value that we possess simply for being human, for being created like God. In being created like God, we are capable of certain things that God is capable of. First of all, we can know ourselves. We can reflect on our memories, our personality, and our behavior. Secondly, we have the gift of free will, meaning we can choose our actions. Sometimes it might feel as if we are acting on instinct, such as when we are surprised or when we are intensely focused on something. But ultimately, we have control over what we do. Finally, we are able to give of our time and our energies to other people out of love. We call these three things self-knowledge, self-possession, and self-gift.

This dignity is something we all have, no matter what. We are valuable simply because we exist. God created us out of love, and He sustains us by His love. That alone gives us our dignity. Our dignity does not depend on how popular we are or what we look like. It does not depend on how much money we have or what country we were born in. A human life has dignity from the moment of conception. Our dignity does not depend on how old we are, or how sick or close to death we might be.

Our dignity does not depend on any of those things. It does not even increase because of the good we do or decrease because of the mistakes we make. We have dignity simply because we are created in the image and likeness of God. Every single person is valuable because he or she is loved by God.

1. How are human beings created in relation to God?

___________________________________________________________

2. What do you think it means to be someone rather than something?

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Answer Key

1. Created in His image and likeness.

2. We are a person, not an object.
Answer Key

3. Not only self-awareness, but the ability to reflect on who we are (our memories, our personality, and our behavior, and so forth).

4. Free will, the ability to choose our actions.

5. The ability to give of ourselves (our time, energy, and so forth) to other people out of love.

6. God/God’s love/being created in God’s image and likeness.

7. Any other factor (e.g., wealth, appearance, popularity, good decisions/poor decisions).
Made for Communion

Directions:  Read the information below, then create a list as directed.

Genesis 2 describes the creation of man and woman in detail. Interestingly, after God created Adam, He says, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18a). God did not mean we should never be alone, of course. Sometimes being alone is helpful so we can rest and gather our thoughts. In the next line it is made clearer what God meant: “I will make a helper suited to him” (Genesis 2:18b). God knew that Adam could not live by himself on the earth forever. It would be too lonely.

The same truth applies to us today.

1. Think about your week. In the space below, write five things you could not have done this week if it were not for other people.

___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________

It’s not enough simply to be around people. The Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 1878 describes the need for unity like this: “There is a certain resemblance between the unity of the divine persons and the fraternity that men are to establish among themselves in truth and love.”

You may have heard the word fraternity to describe men’s groups in college. That’s not what the Catechism is talking about here. The word fraternity comes from the Latin word frater, which means “brother.” If we want to imitate God as a communion of persons, we need to have a communion with the people around us, like a family. Another word for this is solidarity. This is the principle of unity among the human race. We recognize that we are united in one human family, and we commit ourselves to working toward the good of others. The Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 1878 goes on to say this: “Love of neighbor is inseparable from love for God.”

St. John the Evangelist wrote a letter to an early Church community and said something similar: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:20–21). These words aren’t meant to scare us. Rather, John is making a different point entirely.

2. What point do you think John is emphasizing?

___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________

Answer Key

1. Possible answers for the list include: driving to school, getting food from the grocery store, having a house to live in, playing a video game, and so forth. Essentially this is to drive home the point that nearly everything we do depends on other people in some capacity.

2. Possible answers for John’s point include: that we love God by loving other people; that if we don’t love other people, we’re not really loving God or acting like God.
The Dignity of the Human Person

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3. What is self-knowledge?  
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____________________________________________________________________________

4. What is self-possession?  
_______________________________________________________________________
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5. What is self-gift?  
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6. Where does our dignity come from?  
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7. Where doesn't our dignity come from?  
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