



Sin, Redemption and the Meaning of Life



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Do we have a purpose or meaning? Do we have a final end?

- Yes. God's original intent was for us to live in paradise with God as our father and creator; in full communion with Him. Our purpose and final end is to spend all eternity with God in heaven in the joyful bliss of eternal life with no suffering or death.
- **The meaning of life** is to love as God loves. We were created to love and to be loved. (See *Mt 5:44, Jn 3:16*). It is a "dying to self." (wearing black as symbolic of dying to self)
- In the end, nothing else really matters . . . love of God and love of neighbor is the ultimate goal of human existence. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord, you God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." *Lk 10:27, Mt 27:37*

- There exists at the very core of our being a desire and a longing to heal the wounds and to re-establish an essential **unity** and **peace**. At times, it seems hopeless; an impossible dream.
- This reconciliation begins with a merciful gift of God to humanity. God the Father, through the shedding of the blood of his Son, made man, reconciles the world to himself and establishes a new **family** of God. He redeemed us with his life (1 Cor 6:19-20)
 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."¹

- In order for reconciliation to be complete, we must be liberated from sin. This liberation requires **conversion** and **reconciliation**. Thus the need for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

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Interior Penance

- The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart. Conversion is first of all a **work of God's grace** who makes our hearts return to him.
- Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return to God with all our heart, an end of sin and a turning away from evil. It includes the desire and

¹ Catholic Biblical Association (Great Britain). (1994). [*The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic edition*](#) (1 Co 6:19–20). New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.

resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his **grace**.²

How do we obtain the necessary grace to achieve our purpose for existence and meaning?

- By God's own design, we obtain sanctifying grace through the **sacraments**. Additional graces can be had through **prayer, fasting, acts of charity** and by **avoiding sin**.
- Sin is the only thing that can keep us from getting to heaven. "Neither sword nor famine nor persecution nor anguish can separated us from the love of God." **Rom 3:35**
- To overcome sin, we need God's grace. Without His grace, we cannot even begin to have faith, much less, salvation.

The Dignity of the Human Person

1. All Human Life is Sacred and has God as its Origin
 - a. Gen 1:27 – "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."
 - b. We are ordered towards life not death
2. Why did he make us male and female?
 - a. Because it is through our bodies and it alone that is capable of making visible the invisible mystery of God. The body is a sign that points to the mystery of God.
 - b. Everything we know and experience comes through our senses (the body).

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3. Our bodies are signs that point to a greater reality.
 - a. How does the body (us being male and female) point to the mystery of God?
 - b. First we must answer, "What is the mystery of God?"
 - i. The mystery of God is that he is an eternal exchange of love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and **he destined us to share in that exchange of love in the Trinity**. This is what we were made for . . . **this is the meaning of human existence!**
 - ii. Christ fully reveals Man to himself (GS22)³. No one can find the true meaning of life except through Christ. Life makes no sense without Christ.

² CCC 1431-1432

³ Gaudium et Spes (Vatican II Pastoral Constitution)

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4. "Why is there evil?" (Evil is the absence of a good that ought to be there)
 - a. Because of our rejection of the love of God that he inscribed in our bodies . . . the rejection of a proper sexual relationship between man and woman. This relationship of man and woman is the **foundation of human life**. It is the fabric of existence.
 - b. Think about it . . . none of us would be here if there were no sexual relations between the spouses.

5. The Family as the Foundational Cell of society?
 - a. The family comes from and is created from the sexual union of husband and wife.
 - b. When this physical union of husband and wife is oriented to life and love it builds strong and happy marriages that live the truth of life and love. These strong marriages build the culture of love and life.

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6. Who are we? How are we to live?
 - a. By understanding the meaning of the body, sexuality and marital love we come to understand the very meaning of life . . . what it means to be human.

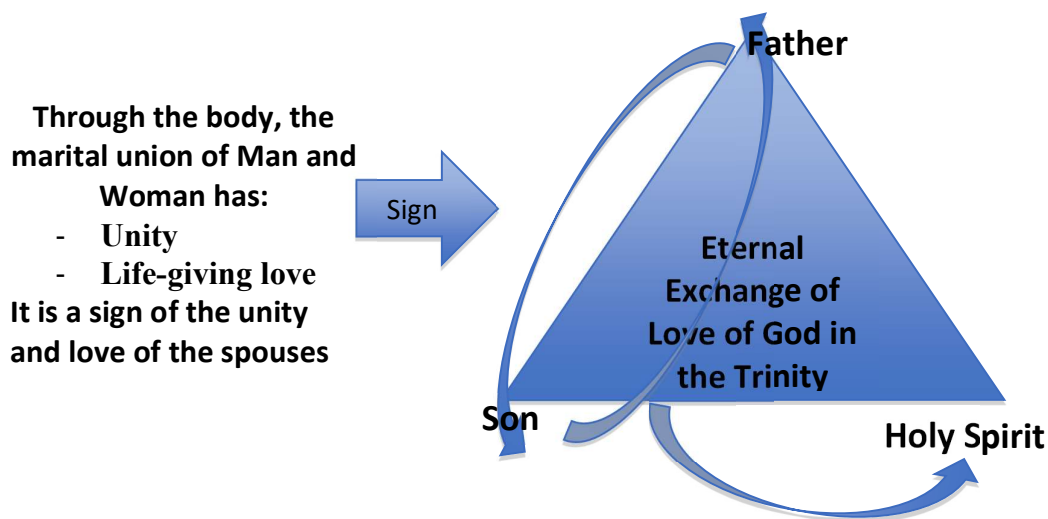
7. "How does the body (us being male and female) point to the mystery of God?"
 - a. Because we are male and female, we participate in the creative union of man and woman. We are co-creators with God. We are doing what God does . . . bring into existence something that did not exist before – a new life, a new soul.

8. Humans are sexual beings
 - a. God made us this way for a purpose. Human marriage (sexual intimacy) is a sign that points to a reality . . . God want us to understand that his love for us can be understood through the sign of the marital act – through the sexual intimacy of husband and wife.

(Note: God is not a sexual being. He is pure spirit. This is an analogy only)

9. If the body and it alone is capable of making visible the invisible mystery of God and *if there is an enemy of God*, where do you think that the enemy (the devil) will attack?
 - a. The body. The sexuality of man & woman since it is the **foundation of human life**.

- b. Satan hates us! He takes what is good, true and beautiful and he twists it. He makes us think that we have the reality, but instead he has convinced us that the counterfeit is the reality.
 - c. He does not want us to participate in that eternal exchange of love (the Trinity) with God.
10. Who are you?
- a. You are sons and daughters of The King of Kings! He is rich in mercy and grace and we are poor.
 - b. We are persons with a value and dignity that has no equal in the universe. We are priceless. We need to understand that we are not “things” to be used by others. We are not objects to be used for someone else’s pleasure. We possess human dignity.

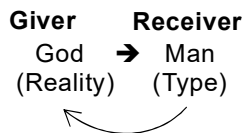


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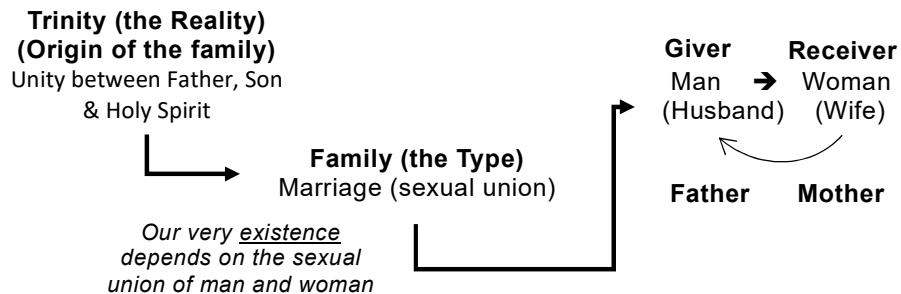
- The basis for understanding the deepest and most profound questions of the heart all point to the fundamental principle of **RELATIONSHIP** . . . it embodies intercommunication and **communion** between persons.
Why did God create me? Who am I? Does my life have purpose or meaning? Why do I suffer?
- The world tries to answer these questions with modern science and psychology alone. Science can only answer the fundamental questions of **HOW** things are created. Religion and philosophy are needed to answer **WHY** things were created.
- To understand the Catholic faith, we must approach it with the fundamental basis, namely, one of relationship.
 - e.g. *Father, mother church, brothers/sisters, inheritance . . .*



*(Remember the concept of **typology** – the “type” points to the reality. God is the reality we are a type (made in His image and likeness)*

- The story of Salvation History is one of relationship (I will place my spirit in you – Ez 37:14)
- If you are Satan and want to destroy God’s creation, what is it that you attack? Answer: Relationships.
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*God’s plan of communion –
 Create an image of the **Trinity***



- Why did Satan go after the woman? Because she is weaker than the man? *No.*
- The woman represent the whole human race as the “receiver” and she is the vessel of all life. She will be the one that nurtures the life inside her for 9 months and nourishes the infant in his first months of existence.

In the beginning . . .

1. We were created by God . . .
 - a. To be in relationship (Gen 2:18 – Not good for man to be alone . . .)
 - b. In His image and likeness (Gen 1:26, 27 – male and female)
 - c. With his “breath” or spirit (Gen 2:7)
 - d. We are **persons** not objects or mere animals. We are different.
 - i. We were created on the 6th day with the rest of the animals (Gen 1:24, 26) but we are different. Human beings have **reason** and **intellect**.
 1. Reason and intellect allows us to think as rational beings and to make moral decisions
 - ii. Animals have no sense of justice or fairness
 - iii. Animals can’t laugh at a joke or admire a work of art or nature’s beauty
2. Man’s nature runs contrary to most of the world’s nature
 - a. All of Nature is bound to the law of “survival of the fittest.” The strongest dominates and rules over the rest until a stronger rival takes over.
 - b. Human beings, on the other hand, nurture the weakest of their offspring and give it more attention than the others. In other words, we have compassion when the beasts do not.
 - c. Humans also love . . . they (especially mothers) put the needs of the other before theirs.
 - d. Science can explain HOW things came to exist, but not WHY they exist.
3. Why did God make us?
 - a. God made us for himself, not that he needs us, but because He loves us.
 - b. We are made for communion. God speaks to Adam and Eve. (Gen 1:28, 2:16, 3:8ff) This is why family is important, it is a reflection of our communion with God.
 - c. We are created to love (“die to self”) and be loved (Gen 2:21-24 “one flesh”)
 - d. The Eucharist is our ultimate expression of this union in this life (Jn 6:56)

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4. Why were we cast out from Paradise?
 - a. We are not in Paradise because **sin** entered the world for fear of death (Heb 2:14-15). The devil convinced Adam and Eve that God was not trustworthy.
 - b. Man brought about this world of pain and suffering, disease and death. God did not want this for us. Since we are now in it, He must find a way to redeem us and work with what we have chosen - to live in sin.
 - c. As a result of our expulsion from Paradise, our nature was corrupted. This is what we call Original Sin.

5. Why do we struggle to find the meaning of life?
 - a. One of God's greatest gifts to mankind was **free will**. Without a free will, authentic love cannot exist.
 - b. When we lack the grace necessary to achieve authentic love, we are not fulfilling what we were created to be; lovers of God and neighbor.
 - c. Many times we depend on our own strength and intellect to get us through each day. We think that if we try harder and work harder, things will get better.
 - d. In reality, nothing is possible without God's grace. St. Therese of Lisieux said, "Everything is Grace".

6. The Problem of Evil
 - a. In Catholic theology, evil is defined as "an absence of a good that should be there." Evil is what causes suffering.
 - b. God either permits or commands all things to happen. He permits "evil" in this world such that good can come from it. If no good can come of some "evil," God does not permit it.
 - c. Evil acts permitted by God can be used as a means of increasing our holiness and trust in Him. He can also turn them into blessings (e.g. Joseph in Egypt)

Sin, Redemption and the Meaning of Life (Part 2)

1. The Problem of Evil
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2. Understanding God's Plan for Our Suffering
 - a. God did not intend for his creation to suffer. Suffering is a result of our choosing morally evil acts (sin) and avoiding the ultimate good (God himself).
 - b. Our fallen (disgraced nature) has to be redeemed with a new nature
 - c. God provides the solution to the problem of suffering – Jesus Christ
 - d. Through Jesus, suffering still remains, but it is no longer "wasted"
 - e. Our suffering now has meaning and purpose. In Christ, we become co-redeemers with him.

- i. **Col 1:24** – I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's sufferings for the sake of his body, the Church.
 - ii. **1Cor 9:22**: To the weak I have become weak . . . I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some of them.

- 3. God's Options to redeem the human race
 - a. Do nothing – What a terrible father he would be if he left us to ourselves. Fortunately for us, God loves us with an everlasting love (**Ps 103:17**).
 - b. **Hegemony** – “You do it because I said so, no questions asked.”
 - c. **Autonomy** – “Do what you will . . . Do what feels good.”
 - d. **Participatory Theonomy** – we are co-redeemers with Christ
 - i. **1Cor 3:9ff** – “For we are God's fellow workers (Gk. *synergoi*); you are God's field, God's house . . . I laid a foundation and another man is building upon it.

- 4. Redemption
 - a. Redemption is the payment of a ransom price to liberate someone held in captivity.
 - i. The liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt was a preeminent act of redemption in the OT. It was a type of the true liberation to come.
 - ii. The salvation of world from sin and death by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the ultimate act of redemption.
 - b. Note: Our sins were not forgiven by the act of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. He redeemed us on the cross and reconciled us with God (**Col 1:20, 2:14**). Forgiveness comes from accepting that we are sinners and repenting of our sins.
 - i. **Lk 24:47** – “. . . repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his (Jesus') name to all nations . . .”
 - ii. **Acts 2:38** – “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - iii. **2Cor 7:10** – “for godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation”

- 5. We are children of God through Jesus Christ. We are incorporated into Christ.
 - a. **Gal 3:26** "for in Christ Jesus **you are all sons of God**, through faith. For as many of you as were **baptized** into Christ have put on Christ."
 - b. **1 Cor 12:13** "For by one Spirit we were all **baptized into one body** -- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free -- and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

- 6. We participate in Christ's mission as . . .
 - a. **Priest** - **1Pet. 2:9** But you are “a chosen race, a royal **priesthood**, a holy nation . . . who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
 - b. **Prophet** - **Joel 3:1** I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall **prophesy**, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;
 - c. **King** - **Rev. 1:6** who has made us into a **kingdom**, (royal) **priests** for his God and Father . . .

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7. With the reception of the Holy Spirit, we are . . .
 - a. **Partakers of the Divine Nature** –
 - i. **2 Pet. 1:4** he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to **share in the divine nature**, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.
 - b. **Temples of the Holy Spirit** –
 - i. **1Cor. 6:19** Do you not know that your body is a **temple of the Holy Spirit** . . . and that you are not your own?
 - ii. **2Cor. 6:16** we are the **temple of the living God**; as God said: “I will live with them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people.”
 - c. **Children of God** –
 - i. **1John 3:1** See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God, and so we are. **Jn 1:12,13** “all who . . . believed in his name, he gave power to **become children of God**; who were **born**, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but **of God**.”

8. God revealed to us as Trinity
 - a. The Father gives all to Son and Son returns all his love for the Father.
 - b. The union of the Father and the Son “brings forth” the Holy Spirit (Nicene Creed – “. . . who proceeds from the Father and the Son”
 - c. God is a communion of persons. We are called into the communion, which is the Trinity (**2 Pet 1:4**).

9. The mystery of God is that he is an eternal exchange of love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and **he destined us to share in that exchange of love in the Trinity**. This is what we were made for . . . **this is the meaning of human existence!**

10. We imitate the Trinity
 - a. Love God and love neighbor (Lk 10:25-37)
 - b. Through the sacrament of Marriage (Mt 19:3-6)
 - c. As members of the Body of Christ, the Church is united to Christ and one another (1 Cor 12:12-13, Col 1:24)

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