Catholic Identity: Celebrate the Difference
Session 1
A Catholic Understanding of the Human Person: Eight Truths

Pres-Session Assignment

Read Chapter 1 of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.* An online version is available here: https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/uscca/files/assets/basic-html/page-1.html#

LECTURE 1: WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

Discussion Question:

What are you looking for in life? What are your goals and ideals?

LECTURE 2: TRUTH #1 – THE HUMAN PERSON IS CREATED IN THE IMAGE & LIKENESS OF GOD

- ***Catholic belief:*** To be created in the image of God means three things for the Catholic – we are the only species to possess and intellect, free will and self-determination.
- ***Catholic belief:*** To be created in God's likeness implies that we are destined to be people of love.

Discussion Questions:

The Catholic faith teaches that our lives must be directed towards our ultimate destination which is heaven. If heaven is my true home and ultimate destination, then in my daily choices, where do I see myself moving closer to Jesus—and where do I drift toward things that cannot lead me to heaven?

How might Jesus be asking me to use my time differently—more prayerfully, more generously, more purposefully—so that my life is more directed towards heaven?

LECTURE 3: TRUTHS TWO, THREE & FOUR

- **TRUTH #2: *The Human Person has a Body that is to be Respected.***
  - ***Catholic belief:*** Our body is good which conflicts with popular culture's cult of the body, the glorification of one body over another, and the objectification of the body. The body is not an enemy to the soul.
- **TRUTH #3: *The Human Person has a Soul, which is of God and eternal.***
  - ***Catholic belief:*** Pre-Christian understanding believed that the soul left the body at death and went to eternal punishment or eternal reward (i.e., the teachings of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates).
- **TRUTH #4: *The Human Person is Called to Community.***
  - ***Catholic belief:*** The human person needs others, depends on others, and finds fulfillment in others.
  - ***Catholic belief:*** Individualism and selfishness violate the nature and dignity of the human person.

Discussion Question:

How does recognizing every person as a unity of body and soul—intentionally *conceived by God*—challenge the way I interact with others in honoring their dignity, limitations, gifts and sacred worth? What are the implications for how we live in communion with one another?

LECTURE 4: TRUTHS 5 – 8

- **TRUTH #5:** ***The Human Person is Called to be a Moral Being.***
  - ***Catholic belief:*** Our human nature inherently "knows" right and wrong. God's Law is written on our hearts. This is Natural Law. Moral relativism rejects Natural Law.
  - ***Catholic belief:*** Things are not right or wrong because the Church declares them to be. The Church declares them to be right or wrong because they are in fact objectively right or wrong.
  - ***Catholic belief:*** As human beings we are capable of conversion and change – change of heart mind and heart.
- **TRUTH #6:** ***Faith is Reasonable and the Human Person has the capacity for reason and knowledge.***
  - ***Catholic belief:*** Contemporary Culture defines faith as unreasonable, unprovable, and superstitious and promotes emotivism – acting purely out of emotion.
  - ***Catholic belief:*** Catholic faith is reasonable. It is filled with mystery, yes, but mystery is something understandable over time, which includes eternity.
- **TRUTH #7***: The Human Person is a Steward of Creation.*
  - ***Catholic belief:*** Animals and pets are good, but they are not people nor equal in dignity to the human person. Animals have an irrational soul. They do not possess an intellect, free will or self-determination.
  - ***Catholic belief:*** God declared human beings as the highpoint of creation and made them stewards of creation responsible for the care and concern for earth and all creatures.
- **TRUTH #8:** ***Our Destiny in Glory/We are Meant for Glory.***

Discussion Question:

- *If things are not right or wrong simply because the Church says so, but because they have been divinely revealed by God as truly right or wrong, how does this truth challenge me to see Jesus as the living source of moral truth—and how might that change the way I listen to the Church and live my faith each day?*

REMINDERS:

Prayer:

- Take additional time to contemplate and pray more fully on the reflection questions from the Lectio Divina handout for Session 1.
- Complete the *Living Word* activity during the week.

Action:

- Write a brief paragraph or two on what touched your heart the most from this week's presentation and why it affected you as it did? Come prepared to share your thoughts next week.

Prepare:

- Bring the handout and Lectio Divina for Session 2, and the *Catholic Catechism for Adults* to class next week. Complete the pre-session assignment on the Week 2 handout. https://phillyocf.org/scf-course-materials/

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God,
You fashioned each human person in Your image and likeness, body and soul,
wonderfully made and eternally loved.
We thank You for the gift of this time together and for the truth You have revealed to us—
that every person we encounter is sacred, desired by You, and worthy of honor.

Open our eyes to see Your presence in every face.
Soften our hearts to respond with compassion, patience, and mercy.
Strengthen our voices to defend the vulnerable, uplift the forgotten,
and speak boldly for the dignity You have given to all.

As we leave this session, fill us with the grace to live what we have learned:
to treat others not as obstacles or strangers, but as brothers and sisters entrusted to our care. Make our communities places of welcome, justice, and love,
where every person can flourish according to Your plan.
Guide our steps, Lord, and shape our hearts to reflect Your own.
May our lives proclaim the truth that every human person is a gift.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.