EX LATERE CHRISTI
# Table of Contents

A Word of Introduction from the Executive Editor  
Rev. John P. Cush, STD  

In Your Bitterness, Remember Love!  
Rev. Simeon Leiva-Merikakis, OCSO  

Christ the Measure of Man: The *Imago Dei* in Man  
Rev. Mr. Christopher Trummer  

St. Paul: Believer, Proclaimer of Christ, Pastoral Theologian  
Msgr. James McNamara, M.Div., MS, PA  

In the Shadow of Heidegger  
Rev. Mr. Nicholas Case  

Homily for the First Sunday of Lent Year A  
Rev. Simeon Leiva-Merikakis, OCSO  

Pontifical North American College Chair of Homiletics  
Rev. Randy DeJesus Soto, STD  

Contributors  

7  
11  
33  
71  
81  
103  
109  
137
It is my pleasure to welcome you, in my role as Academic Dean of this College, to the second issue of *Ex Latere Christi*, the academic journal of the Pontifical North American College. As we are aware, we are living in extraordinary times. Due to the global pandemic, COVID-19, we were not able to publish the second issue of our first volume last June. I am pleased to offer you, albeit slightly late, this edition which intends to highlight the intellectual life of the faculty, seminarians, and friends of the Pontifical North American College.

For this issue, it was decided to permit students who have completed their Bachelor’s in Sacred Theology (STB) at the various pontifical universities in the city of Rome to offer for our reflection some of their writings, in addition to the work of those who possess terminal doctoral degrees and masters or licentiate degrees. I am very proud of the work produced by these men and I believe that it offers the Church in the United States of America a great deal of hope in terms of their future priests possessing the ability to integrate all four dimensions of priestly formation of which we are called to attend: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.

As always, I am tremendously grateful to the volunteer student and faculty staff of our journal: the tremendously wise and energetic Fr. Randall Soto (Diocese of San Jose), our Editor; Mr. Aaron Kelly of the Diocese of Rochester (Third Theology); Mr. Thomas O’Donnell of the
Archdiocese of Baltimore (Second Theology); and Mr. Alexander Wyvill of the Archdiocese of Washington (Third Theology). In addition, this edition could not be published without the efforts of those seminarians who assisted in editing individual articles: Rev. Mr. Madison Hayes of the Archdiocese of Anchorage–Juneau (Fourth Theology); Rev. Mr. Lucas LaRoche of the Diocese of Worcester (Fourth Theology); Rev. Mr. Michael Ledesma of the Diocese of Tyler (Fourth Theology); Rev. Mr. Seth Lemaire of the Diocese of Lafayette (Fourth Theology); Rev. Mr. Christopher Trummer of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois (Fourth Theology); Mr. John Bilenki of the Archdiocese of Baltimore (Third Theology); and Mr. Jacob Daniel Sessions of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama (Second Theology). They do their Alma Mater proud!

As the centerpiece of this issue, we are honored to offer biblical reflections from Fr. Simeon, OSCO (Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis), who presented these thoughts to the College community at the annual Lenten Weekend of Recollection in March 2020. Fr. Simeon is the translator of some major works published by Ignatius Press from such theologians as Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar. He is the author of a well-received series of meditations on the Gospel according to St. Matthew, so far published in three volumes, entitled *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word*.

Rev. Mr. Christopher Trummer, ’21, of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, has written a paper which started as a thesis for completion of the STB at the Pontifical Gregorian University, directed by Fr. Cush. It is a truly original work, based on the theological anthropology of Cardinal Luis Ferrer Ladaria, SJ, the current prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith.

Msgr. James McNamara, a spiritual director at the College, presents to us an article adapted from his presentation to the seminarians on the great Apostle to the Gentiles, Saint Paul of Tarsus, and declares Paul to be a supreme “pastoral theologian.”

Rev. Mr. Nicholas Case, ’21, of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, a licentiate student in fundamental theology at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum), has written a fascinating
piece for our reflection in his work, “In the Shadow of Heidegger: The Possibilities and Limitations of Jean-Luc Marion’s Phenomenology of Revelation.”

Fr. Randy Soto, STD, C’96, C’02 unpacks the method and purpose of the Carl J. Peter Chair of Homiletics Program which we at the Pontifical North American College have been blessed to offer since 1999. Fr. Soto, in addition to his work as a spiritual director at the College and as a professor of Theology and Biblical Languages at both the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, currently serves as the Carl J. Peter Chair of Homiletics at the College.

As a priest charged with the intellectual formation of our seminarians, I am very pleased to offer you this small sample of just some of the academic work of our students. I am very proud of them and so too should you be. Certainly, I am grateful to His Excellency, the Most Reverend Robert Deeley, JCD, ’73, C’86, the chair of the Board of Governors of the College, and all the Bishops who serve in this role, and especially to the Very Reverend Peter C. Harman, STD, ’99, the Rector of the College for their encouragement to this endeavor.

It is our hope to have for your edification the first issue of the 2020–2021 academic year to you very soon. Please know of my prayers for you and, in your kindness, please pray for me and all at the College.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


*Academic Dean*

*Executive Editor, Ex Latere Christi*
Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a maid came up to him, and said, ‘You also were with Jesus the Galilean’ (Mt 26:69).

It is surprising that Matthew would choose to devote so much space in his Passion narrative to this episode of Peter’s denial. While the narrative of the trial before the Sanhedrin takes up 11 verses, the story of Peter’s denial occupies as many as 8 verses. Such attention to Peter’s personal drama in the context of Jesus’ Passion surely emphasizes the permanent importance of the theme of the struggle for fidelity in the concrete life of the Christian believer, in the face of dangerous opposition and mockery, as well as internal weakness and fear.

At v. 69 Matthew suddenly shifts his focus from the scene of the trial to the courtyard of Caiaphas’ house. This technique freezes in our mind the face of the battered Jesus, all smeared with spit and covered with bruises: this is the background image looking down over the action that will now play out in the courtyard. Matthew leaves the trial’s conclusion suspended for the moment, and so he makes Jesus’ humiliation fill our consciousness vividly. The disgrace inflicted on the Son of God by

---

1 This conference was originally given to the seminarians of the Pontifical North American College as part of the annual Lenten Weekend of Recollection on Saturday, February 29, 2020 and Sunday, March 1, 2020. As such, Ex Latare Christi has largely retained the oratorical style of the text.
his creatures is not a pretend performance. Incomprehensibly, legions of angels have, in fact, not swept down from the heavens to avenge their Lord. The evangelist Matthew portrays the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin as nothing less than the unspeakable impeachment, by mortal human beings, of the one God’s eternal Word.

The rhythm of Matthew’s narrative now begins to move in widening circles, outward from the person of the suffering Messiah at the center of attention during the trial. Matthew first takes us just outside, to Caiaphas’ courtyard, and there we find Peter sitting as invisibly as he can in the crowd of guards and servants. His real love for Jesus drives him to be as close to his friend as possible in this dark time, but his equally real fear dictates supreme caution. Trying to pass incognito, present but not recognized, is his compromise between the two conflicting emotions of love and fear battling in his heart.

But God loves Peter too much to allow him to get away with this halfhearted arrangement; and so divine Grace comes, in the form of two servant girls and some bystanders, to ferret Peter out of his mole-hole. Peter is us; and if both love and fear coexist in our hearts, too, the fear must somehow be exorcised so that we may come to love with the full energy of our whole heart. For this were we created, and therefore toward this full exorcism of fear Grace is always nudging us.

Out of nowhere the first maid approaches Peter and says to him for all to hear: You also were with Jesus the Galilean! The girl’s challenge to Peter is an echo of the taunt to Jesus just made by members of the Sanhedrin: Prophesy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you? Both accusations concern true identity. Both jabs imply, “We don’t really believe you truly are who you’re pretending to be!” The accusers somehow feel that their world cannot go on being what they want it to be if Jesus is who he says he is and if Peter turns out being his faithful disciple in disguise. The believer who tries to witness to God’s truth will always be subject to taunts because of the clash in his person of two radically opposing visions of reality. The servant girl must help her masters rid the world of the contagion Jesus has brought into the world and of which Peter
is a carrier. By this procedure she seeks to rise higher in her masters’ estimation for work well done. Her servility, too, is often ours as well.

The precise wording of the girl’s accusation is significant. “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” In Mark’s Gospel we read that the primary end for which Jesus chose his apostles was that they might be with him: “And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach” (Mt 3:14). Apostolic “mission” comes only after, and as a result of, an intimately shared existence. The maid’s charge does not, at first, seem to amount to much: Peter is guilty, she hints, simply of keeping company with Jesus. However, when we give such association the full weight it deserves in light of Jesus’ deepest intentions, then we grasp the seriousness of the accusation. “Abide in me, and I in you,” says Jesus to the disciples in John. “As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me” (Jn 15:4). This is what the simple statement to be with Jesus truly means. Jesus’ explicit desire that the disciple should be with him, in fact, reveals a vocation to such an intensity of friendship, loyalty, and internalized imitation that it practically amounts to a call to self-identification between Master and disciple. Can we find anywhere a better motivation to cultivate an intense life of prayer? Remember the Curé of Ars’s description of his prayer: “I look at him and he looks at me.” This is how the silent osmosis occurs! In all their thoughts, words and deeds, true disciples ought to be as guilty or as innocent as their Master. For the true disciple is simply another Christ.

But he denied it before them all, saying, ‘I do not know what you are saying’ (Mt 26:70).

The second purpose, according to Mark, for which Jesus had chosen his apostles, was that they might “be sent out to preach.” Peter’s presence in Caiaphas’ courtyard already witnesses to the fact that Peter knew that his place was with Jesus. Peter is willing to enter enemy territory, but only up to a certain point; he does not really want to risk his wellbeing for the sake of Jesus, and so he does everything he can to
avoid being discovered and exposed as a follower of Jesus. The girl’s aggressive question, however, now presses the matter to the extreme. Feeling cornered and threatened with exposure, Peter utterly fails to be faithful to the second imperative of his calling: bearing public witness to the wonder that is Jesus Christ.

We know that, in the Gospels, “being sent to preach” is code language for proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth to the world as Messiah and Redeemer, and as the priceless treasure and Beloved of one’s own soul. The verbal accusation by a mere serving girl instantly knocks Peter to the ground of shameful denial. Not only does he not acknowledge Jesus openly for who Jesus is, but Peter actually rejects any association whatsoever with Jesus. The fear of sharing the disgraced Jesus’ fate overpowers his senses, his reason, and his will, and he distances himself from his Lord absolutely. So Peter pretends to be offended and snaps back: “I do not know what you are saying.”

The text affirms that Peter performed this action of denial not discreetly and quietly but openly and loudly, before them all. The Gospel is supposed to be proclaimed openly, before the whole world, as the good news of salvation; but, ironically, what Peter proclaims openly and loudly instead is his denial of Jesus, for all to hear, thus hoping to avoid further interrogation. Matthew wants to stress the sad fact that Peter is putting all the energy and intelligence of his soul, at this moment, at the service of the rejection rather than the proclamation of Jesus. Thus, Peter embodies tragically the precise negation of his identity as apostle. His overreaction reveals his guilt.

No doubt atrocious fear has made Peter forget Jesus’ explicit warning: “Whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 10:33). Fear of man for the moment has far greater sway in Peter’s heart than fear of God. But which of us is enough of a hypocrite not to sympathize with him? Nevertheless, Peter is doing a terrible thing: through his action of denial he is attempting to save his own skin, yes, but at the very high cost of taking on the wicked role of antichrist, according to Saint John’s definition: “Who is the liar but he
who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son” (1 Jn 2:22). In the Christian vocation our faith in Christ and our own intimate identity are so inextricably linked that, that in denying his human friendship and relationship with Jesus, Peter is also denying the reality of the Christ as Savior and his mission from the Father. We clearly see here what a risk a person assumes by entering into an intimate relationship with Jesus and affirming the Christian faith. After that, there is no going back to any “neutral” position of innocent non-involvement.

The office of apostle is not a merely external function, irrelevant to the intimate, subjective core of one’s personality. In denying Jesus so blatantly and viscerally, Peter is denying his very own reason-for-being, his own precious and unique identity as a human being now living the life of God through association with Jesus, since we believe that intimate association with Jesus implies the full blossoming of human existence and potential through union with the creating Word.


Peter now goes out from the courtyard, where he has been twice accused to the “gateway” of Caiaphas’ house. He is a man on the run, trying frantically to make a quick escape. The heat has been turned up on him in that courtyard, and his fear is rising to the boiling point. But there is for him no getting away from this danger zone, where the great determining crisis of his life is now taking place.

We believe that the grace of priestly ordination effects a permanent change in the priest’s person, an irreversible transformation which cannot be undone even by any amount of sinning or blaspheming on the priest’s part. Peter’s case here is identical. The power of his unchangeable identity as an apostle is still very much active within his person at a level deeper than his fear and blatant infidelity. To put it differently, the
divine grace Peter has received through intimate association with Jesus is not going to allow him to hide his true identity forever. And so, this Grace now acts through various human instruments which happen to be present in Caiaphas’ courtyard, in order to expose Peter’s abject lie and betrayal. Only along this painful path of denunciation and exposure as liar and coward can Peter be healed. We should all remember this when undergoing great trials.

This second denial by Peter introduces several new elements that make it distinct from the first. It appears that this second serving girl is not merely echoing the revelation of the first but is acting on her own. The effect is stereophonic: even as he is trying his best to escape, Peter is accosted from all sides by the truth of his identity, as if a conspiracy against him were underway. Now the accusation that unmasks him lies not only behind him but before him as well, resounding loudly all about the place.

This man was with Jesus of Nazareth, the girl accuses: Jesus is now identified as “the Nazorean,” a tag that makes the earlier label of “Galilean” even more precise. The connection has now been made between Peter and this condemned rabbi from a specific region and city. Even as the consequences of Jesus’ inmost identity are releasing an ocean of suffering upon the Lord, Peter’s own intimate identity and history are also being brought out into the open. This servant girl, too, like the first one, words her accusation in the same pregnant expression of unitive coexistence between Master and disciple: “This man was with Jesus,” is the charge. The very same declaration that, under happier circumstances, would have been heard by Peter with rejoicing ears and a grateful heart as his highest claim to glory, instead on this occasion becomes a shameful accusation.

Even after we have openheartedly accepted the love of another, even after we have pledged our love in return to that person, how great a part of our being remains in its former darkness, still unable to shake its instinctual selfishness, still untouched at the core by the transforming fire of love! We can understand why, in our contemporary society,
many of us choose, more or less consciously, *never to love or be loved*, precisely because the admission of love into our soul lays us wide-open to all manner of unforeseen difficulties. The incapacity to love or allow oneself to be loved, the fear of intimacy, is one of the great psychological afflictions of our time. And one of the chief difficulties brought on by loving is exemplified by Peter’s plight: he is being exposed before the whole world in all his inglorious cowardice and disgraceful incoherence of life. Quite bluntly stated, Peter’s reptilian instinct for survival-at-all-cost is for the moment strangling his deepest desire to proclaim the defeated Jesus as being nonetheless his heart’s singular Beloved.

The intensification of the accusation and the accumulation of specifying details make us actually feel Peter’s growing distress at seeing himself ever more tightly cornered. This second time, his denial of Jesus becomes angrier and more categorical. The first time he pretended not even to understand the charge, as he replied to his accuser quite coolly: “I do not know what you mean.” This is still not so much a denial as a dismissal of the whole subject. But now naïve dismissal escalates to angry swearing. Reacting like one insulted, Peter shouts back with an oath: “I do not know the man!”

We are not told the precise nature of the oath, but clearly he is perjuring himself before God and man. And his denial of Jesus is not generic, as before. Not only does he deny having any association at all with Jesus; he actually affirms in the most absolute way that *he doesn’t even know The Man*. This formulation of his denial is not only a personal insult to Jesus and a betrayal of their relationship as Master and disciple. At an even graver level, Peter’s reference to Jesus as “The Man” (with the definite article) also repudiates “the Son of Man,” the messianic title Jesus himself had used to the disciples at his arrest in Gethsemane (Mt 26:45) and also now at the trial. To disown Jesus as Messiah is to reject salvation itself.
AFTER A LITTLE WHILE THE BYSTANDERS CAME UP AND SAID TO PETER, ‘TRULY YOU ARE ALSO ONE OF THEM, FOR YOUR ACCENT BETRAYS YOU’ (MT 26:73).

The strategy of Grace, the strategy of Love’s repossession of what belongs to it, closes in around Peter. On this third occasion, it is no longer a single individual who levels the damaging charge of discipleship at Peter but an unspecified number of bystanders who point the accusing finger. The fire of malicious human denunciation can become an instrument of the divine Fire of Mercy which is now spreading, and Peter has nowhere to escape from it. His guilt deepens apace with his fear, for in a moment he will have denied his friend and Lord not once but three times. Not only does the repetition of the denial compound his responsibility, but so too does the passage of time. Matthew stresses this aspect of the drama when he says that these latest accusers came up to Peter after a little while, that is, after he had had additional time to reconsider his options.

This “little while” was giving Peter the equal opportunity either to reject Jesus yet again or to retract his previous two denials and finally confess his Lord. Tragically, Peter goes the way of all flesh and continues sliding down the slippery slope of instinctual self-protection which, according to the Gospel’s paradoxical logic, means the slope of self-destruction: “For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 16:25). Peter has still to embrace the saving truth of this Paschal paradox. Genuine disciple though he might be, for the moment his emotions and his will are still ruled by the self-serving logic of the world. In his panic, he is quite prepared to throw Jesus under the proverbial bus.

These latest accusers are hurling new evidence at Peter: “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you,” they say. This remark adds substance to the previous references to Jesus as “Galilean” and “Nazorean.” The charge also reminds us of how truly and thoroughly incarnate the eternal Word became in Jesus of Nazareth, so that Galilee and Nazareth, the scenes of his childhood and much of his ministry, are topographical and cultural extensions of the sacrament of his human
flesh. Both Jesus’ identity as Messiah and Peter’s denial of that identity are inseparable from the history and topography of Revelation. The efficacy of the divine Word will not at any time or in any place ever be disembodied or abstract: the Incarnate Word is not a fleeting ghost but a true human being of flesh and blood, deeply and inextricably rooted in the human family of all times and places. On this truth depend both Jesus’ capacity to suffer and, therefore, the redemption of the world.

Peter’s denial of Jesus—of their association, of their shared history, of their common human root as Galileans—is not merely a notional and verbal act whereby Peter distances himself publicly from a condemned prisoner. At the ontological level, the rejection is nothing less than an act of attempted dis-incarnation of his person from the living “habitat” that is Jesus the Word Incarnate. Consequently, it is an act that denies the Incarnation as such and that strives to “undo” God’s act of redemption. Peter’s threefold denial of Jesus is a case of obstinate blasphemy against God and God’s plan of salvation, a sacrilege incalculably compounded by the degree of intimacy to which Jesus had invited Peter, not only in the generic sense of the grace bestowed on all the apostles, but also specifically in the uniquely privileged sense that applies to Peter alone as head of the apostolic college. The more the grace and the intimacy that God grants each one of us, the greater our individual responsibility for the treasure we hold. This is obviously one of the great dangers of our Christian—and especially priestly—vocation and commitment.

“Truly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” The use of the verb to betray in this context brings out a powerful irony in the situation. No matter how many efforts Peter makes to disown Jesus, no matter how frantic his flight might be from his real persona into the concealment of an invented abstraction, Peter can no more undo his vital association with Jesus than he can get rid of his native Galilean accent. Both things—the existential closeness to Jesus and the Galilean accent—are now essential aspects of Peter’s very being, as truly defining his human and spiritual identity as the ingredients of his DNA. Our Christian vocation to intimacy with Christ is not something superadded to our
human nature as a kind of lovely frosting on the cake. Our Christian identity is the most important element of the fiber of our being as humans. Though distinct from one another, Grace and Nature enter into nuptial union in the Christian experience and identity.

Therefore, in the very same speech-act in which Peter is *betraying Jesus by denial*, the intonation of Peter’s voice is *betraying Peter by affirmation!* The truth will out. Peter might be able mentally to control what comes out of his mouth as far as the *content* of his lying words is concerned, but he cannot alter the peculiarities of his speech, slowly ingrained in his memory and language organs from the day he was born. Our speech patterns are an intrinsic part of who we are. Despite Peter’s efforts at artificially abstracting himself from the reality of his experience of Jesus, the very texture of the sounds that come out of his mouth—contradicting the false objective meaning of the words—betray both his origins and his intimacy with the infamous rabbi from Galilee. Peter’s speech habits prove themselves here wiser and more reliable as indicators of his deeper faith than the fear that has driven him to betrayal. *Despite himself, Peter belongs to Jesus, and this is why divine grace cannot stop its pursuit of him.* Let us thank God often, then, that our abstract reason, will, and emotions never quite succeed in controlling the whole of our person! And let us seek to release into creation the deeper innocence and fidelity to love that often languish within us, concealed and stifled by our ego.

**Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, ‘I do not know the man.’ And immediately the cock crowed (Mt 26:74).**

We have seen how each of Peter’s three denials increases his culpability, not only because he obstinately repeats his rejection of Jesus but also because each occasion adds new evidence to his association with Jesus as friend and disciple so that he is given ever more sacred substance to disown. And Peter’s reaction escalates in frantic intensity precisely as the evidence against him mounts. He becomes more verbally violent and outrageous. This process reaches its climax in the present verse,
which conveys Peter’s entrapped state of mind with an unusual Greek verb: “He began to invoke-a-curse-on-himself,” only one word in Greek, *katathematízein*, related to *anathema*. Already in v. 72 we saw Peter backing up his denial “with an oath.” The depth both of Peter’s guilt and of his despair can be measured by his repeated recourse to swearing and oathtaking, particularly when no one is demanding it of him. It is bad enough simply to lie on a matter of this gravity; but spontaneously to spout off oaths not once by twice, using the strongest language possible, is a persistent act of very grave perjury in connection with the most sacred realities. This verb implies that its subject is calling down great evils on himself, cursing himself vehemently, if what he is asserting to be true is, in fact, false. Peter is, in fact, *anathematizing* himself.

Who can measure at this point the extent of Peter’s actual freedom of will and clarity of understanding when invoking such a curse upon himself, given the enormous pressure generated in him by visceral fear? The fact remains, however, that he did not have to allow himself to escalate his denial to such terrible heights of cursing and swearing. Peter could at least have stuck to simple, stubborn denial. Instead he is recklessly appealing to the divine tribunal as witness to the truth of his unconditional declaration that he does not “know the man” Jesus. We are well acquainted with Peter’s impulsive extremism. Such passion, which could be the greatest asset in the practice of love, is at the moment proving to be Peter’s greatest scourge.

During this whole time of Peter’s struggle on the battlefield of his own soul Jesus has been right next door, still before the Sanhedrin where we left him, suffering in silence, no doubt painfully aware of his beloved Peter’s betrayal of his person. How could Jesus at this moment not call to mind Peter’s brave words to him earlier that very evening, uttered in the same impassioned tone with which Peter is now disowning him? “Even if I must die with you,” he had blurted out, “I will not deny you!” (Mt 26:35). And, though these courageous words of Peter were no doubt tinged with bravado, how could Jesus forget Peter’s vibrant confession of faith in him at Caesarea Philippi, when the first pope proclaimed for
all to hear the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth? “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16). And Jesus’ immediate reply to Peter in reply had been the promise: “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona! … I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (Mt 16:17–18).

Now, Jesus never goes back on his promises to any of us, because “if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim 2:13). While Peter can deny his discipleship with Jesus, Jesus himself cannot, by his very nature, deny his identity as Love Incarnate and as Lord and friend of Peter. Fortunately for Peter and the rest of us, it is boundless divine love rather than strict human justice that sets the pace of Jesus’ Heart. Grace’s unremitting pursuit of Peter intends not only the salvation of Peter as individual but also looks to the Lord’s commitment to fulfil his promise to Peter, and through Peter to the Church and humanity. It will forever be a central element of Peter’s eventual humility and sanctity that his glorious confession of Jesus’ divine messianic identity came before his denial of Jesus. We should marvel at realizing that Jesus clearly foresaw Peter’s coming denial and yet proceeded to make him the foundation of the Church anyway, so that Peter would never be able to lose sight of the extreme fragility of his faith when left to his own resources.

Even Peter’s crucial confession of faith had been, as Jesus stresses, not a product of Peter’s own mystical insight or intelligence (“flesh and blood”) but rather a gracious revelation of “my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 16:17), for the sake of the Church. When left to ourselves—that is, when either an ill intention or the force of adverse circumstances barricades us self-defensively within our ego—then we will know and enact only disgrace, no matter how admirably we might have behaved earlier on. Grace—that is, sheer, unmerited, and overwhelming goodness inexplicably pouring down upon us from God—necessarily has the last word. We must slowly learn how to allow Grace, like a cherished lover, to have her way with us. We must eventually come to experience what it means for our sinful selves to drown in God’s love. There is no other path
to sanctity. Our destiny and deepest desire is, after all, the *divine life*—something we have no share in either creating or acquiring.

None of us is saved on the basis of entitlement or merit. All our good deeds and all our protestations of true faith, real as they may be, are always laced with all the murkiness and ambiguities of our concrete lives. Even our best acts are not unrelated to our weakness and fickleness as at times treacherous creatures. In this gospel episode the evangelist surely intends Peter to be an exemplary stand-in for each one of us ardent, but terribly flawed, disciples of Christ that we are.

The Lord, whose most beautiful name is Faithful Mercy, condemns no one, abandons no one, is ever on the watch for the slightest flicker of repentance on our part to come rejoicing to our aid, yet without ever violating our freedom. Only we curse ourselves; God only blesses, not our sins, but our sinful, contrite hearts. We can be our own worst enemies by yielding to our lethal impulses. It is only we who condemn ourselves, only we who are capable of taking the dreadful leap into the abyss of selfdestruction.

But at that fatal moment, precisely as Peter teeters on the edge of perdition, *immediately* after he has invoked a terrible curse upon himself, *the cock crowed*. That very earthy and piercing sound, the *cockcrow*, which out of the darkness dutifully announces the beginning of a new day in Jerusalem, signals the turning-point of Peter’s whole life. It signals that the abyss of perdition *can* perhaps become after all an abyss of hope. The horror of free-fall despair is revealed *not* to be something created by God. Rather, the bottomless abyss can now be seen as the creature of human fear and guilt, projected onto the world of God’s creation. Despair is a human creation, rooted in human limitation, blindness, pride, and our penchant for nothingness: our perverse attraction to the gaping void.

Our text insists that, at the very moment when Peter had uttered the last syllable of his third *I do not know the man*, “*immediately* the cock crowed.” This adverb *immediately* plays an important theological role here. Surely its first purpose is to confirm as quickly as possible the truth of Jesus’
prophecy recalled in the next verse (“Before the cock crows you will deny me three times,” v. 75). But the word’s more important function is to reveal the fact that God does not allow us to suffer one instant longer than strictly necessary. The moment Peter has hit the utmost bound of his treachery and shown us all what we, too, become when abandoned to our own worst fears and phantoms, a faithful little signal mercifully invades the horizon of our sealed consciousness. And its message is: beyond this despairing horror you have created, there still exists the possibility of a renewed life, of a new dawn of Grace.

A biblical dynamic of love is at work in this scene. It embodies in Peter’s drama the experience of Israel with God at the time of her infidelity and promiscuous dalliance with the gods of the pagans. In a first movement of wrath against Israel, God declares through the prophet Hoseah: “Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.” These words describe with precision the threefold exposure of Peter’s infidelity as fear makes him fawn on the powerful of this world. But just four verses later God reveals what his ultimate purpose had been all along. Driven by a jilted lover’s anger, the Lord turned his gaze to his disgraced but still beloved Israel: “Therefore, behold,” he declares, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.” Indeed, every move on God’s part, no matter how apparently violent or irate, is revealed in retrospect to have been nothing but a strategy of love seeking to work reconciliation. In the end, addressing Israel/Peter/us directly, God the Bridegroom promises: “And I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy” (Hos 2:10, 14, 19). All of love’s merit has clearly been on God’s part, and all the rejoicing in love’s utter gratuity, in love’s eagerness to forgive, belongs to the one whom God has embraced and made his own despite her or his most glaring infidelities.
AND Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, ‘Before the cock crows you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly (Mt 26:75).

The fulfilment of Jesus’ prophecy in the sudden crowing of the cock marks two realities. First, it confirms the deep gravity of Peter’s offense. Earlier this same evening, we recall, Jesus had in fact said to Peter with great serenity: “Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times” (Mt 26:34). But this foreknowledge on Jesus’ part is not due merely to his omniscience as Incarnate Word. Above all we must appreciate in this heavy-hearted revelation of Jesus the clairvoyance that intimate friendship bestows. Jesus knows Peter and all his wayward heart thoroughly, simply because he already loves Peter beyond all regret.

Consequently, in the second place, Jesus’ prophecy to Peter also bears, enfolded within the wounded friend’s sorrow, the glad tidings that Jesus has foreseen it all and yet has not disowned Peter in return. The unconditional lover can calmly allow himself the awareness of his beloved’s flaws and probable future failings. Our gravest sins, our most savage onslaught against the innocent trust of this true Friend, reveal themselves as already drowned in a tide of Mercy the very instant we recognize them as sins and allow sorrow for them to pervade our hearts. “For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all” (Rom 11:32), as St Paul says.

The astonishing truth bears repeating: not only does Jesus not reveal any slightest trace of recrimination, anger, or disappointment in his words of warning to Peter concerning this apostle’s impending betrayal; on the contrary, on sustained reflection we are more and more dazzled by Jesus’ deepest motivation in making his revelation to Peter as the Passion begins. This motivation, it seems to me, is, amazingly, to comfort Peter, to infuse a reserve of hope into Peter, to protect Peter from his own approaching mischief so as to keep him from despairing.

The moment the cock crowed from within the deep darkness of that
fateful dawn “Peter remembered the saying of Jesus.” As a direct and immediate result of this remembering, Peter “went out and wept bitterly.” Memory clearly plays an essential role in the repentance and salvation of Peter, as it did in the terrible confession that the beautiful Estella makes to her pining young suitor Pip at the end of Dickens’ *Great Expectations*: “You know, Pip, I have no heart. Perhaps that’s why I have no memory” (ch. 29). Estella here manifests a growing self-awareness that is the first crack in her fortifications against Pip’s love for her, and at the same time she also points out the necessary link between an active memory and the loving heart.

Peter’s instantaneous reaction to the crowing of the cock is that he remembers the Lord’s words to him earlier that night. Such a spontaneous act of memory reveals that Peter does have a heart, that his love for Jesus ran much deeper than the fear that pushed him into his betrayal. If this were not so, Jesus’ quiet admonition to him would have already been drowned by the night’s tide of cruel events. In the absence of love, a triumphant fear would have imposed forgetfulness. But the loving heart remembers because, like a lifeline, it is memory that connects the heart, caught in the midst of overwhelming circumstances, to the heart’s resources of hope and strength, grounded in previous experience. One of memory’s primordial functions is to rescue us from the shipwreck of the present moment, when all seems lost and we are drowning: a sudden and acute flash of vital memory can transport our mind and heart miraculously to a vision of our total lives, to the undying reality of Love’s experienced fidelity and power.

At this moment, as the rooster repeats by instinct his daily cockadoodledo merely to announce the rising of the physical sun, the bird’s wholly natural action, by God’s grace, has a supernatural effect on Peter, triggering in him the remembrance of the foundation of his being, of the true meaning of his life. Peter now remembers Jesus’ words to him concerning the animal’s activity. If he remembers them despite his present distraught and shameful state, it is only because Peter at bottom loves Jesus beyond return, with a love that ultimately proves mightier
than all fear; and this love of Peter’s for Jesus, in turn, is consciously nourished by the memory of everything Jesus has been to him and has done for him.

Peter can now remember and repent because his remembering is no mere mechanical recalling of a past fact. His remembering plunges him again, with love’s unique violence, into a still ongoing and all-determining relationship that nothing can abolish or even confine to a tragically shutoff past. This is an intense friendship that cannot be unilaterally destroyed by Peter’s sin alone but that can be unilaterally upheld by Jesus, grounded as it is on who Jesus is and on Peter’s knowledge that Jesus’ love for him is everlasting and never to be banished. Peter’s memory of his association with Jesus over the past three years—from the moment of his mysterious election as disciple to this very night of betrayal—is all of a piece: its substance is quite simply the unshakeable knowledge that he, Peter, could never be so unfaithful, so weak, so cowardly and even treacherous toward Jesus that the combined power of his most heinous transgressions could ever chase away Jesus’ pursuit of him.

This is why I have titled this meditation “In Your Bitterness, Remember Love!” In the shipwreck of our lives, to which all of us will come sooner or later, the saving plank that will keep us from drowning could never be our own perfectionism, efforts, and self-assurance. Our salvation will then depend solely on whether our heart is sufficiently alive to remember Jesus’ unchanging and ever-faithful love for us. That and that alone will be our sturdy lifeline. I believe that this active remembering of Jesus’ love is the primary work of Christian faith. In your bitterness, my brothers, do not despair, but remember Jesus’ love for you, which does not depend on your fidelity in order to remain faithful! Here is the whole difference between Peter’s bitter sorrow, which led him to new life, and Judas’ bitter despair, which led him to suicide. No Christian can go through life without experiencing the depths of bitterness. Léon Bloy says that natural despair is the essential condition for supernatural hope. The only important question in the end is not whether we can avoid sin and its bitterness, because that is not going to happen, but whether our
bitterness will make us remember Jesus’ abiding presence and promises, or will, instead, keep us toxically fixated on our own miserable failure.

Remembering the power of Jesus’ unconditional love for him, Peter now knows in his bones that even the full mass of collective evil fabricated by man, no matter how criminal, can never overwhelm, defeat, or even sidetrack Uncreated Divine Love. Peter owes the dawning of this rocklike conviction in his consciousness to the sudden crowing of this particular neighborhood rooster somewhere behind Caiaphas’ house, which awakens him out of the nightmare of sin, fear, and betrayal. A daily recurring event of irrational nature sparks in a human heart a momentous turning toward the Light, with the memory of Jesus’ words catalyzing the event. And, as a consequence of this unexpected high-C piercing his ears from outside the mental prison of his shameful little drama, Peter is in the end capable of entertaining only one thought, which now throbs within him like newborn life: Jesus knows all about me, and Jesus has known it all along, and still Jesus will never reject me. Only Jesus encompasses all and accounts for all!

Our memory can save us almost despite ourselves by performing, just when it is most desperately needed, a great moral miracle. When our conscience oppresses and condemns us, our memory acts like an infiltrating guerrilla warrior, blessedly sent by God to detonate within our barricaded heart the bomb of God’s ever-greater Mercy, which shatters all our self-hating resistance to Grace.

And he went out and wept bitterly. However, betrayal cannot simply be transmuted into joy without going through the intervening phases of shame, repentance, and contrition. The sturdiest promises planted within us can only grow when watered by the bitterest tears. We have to learn once again how to love faithfully, and such learning takes time. God never wishes to humiliate us merely to watch us squirm. A tender Father, God takes no pleasure in shaming us, but he will allow the salutary shame oozing spontaneously from our conscience to perform its medicinal function. God does want us to learn humility so that we can once again live in the truth, in a relationship of generous reciprocity.
both with him and with others. And nothing can teach us humility like experiencing the shame of clearly seeing how abysmally we can at times fall beneath our dignity as creatures called to practice a love that is as faithful as God’s own.

Therefore, before Peter can rejoin Jesus, he must undergo the bitter experience of dwelling in a stark solitude in which he can lucidly ponder what he has done and allow that sorrow to pierce his heart thoroughly. Only such piercing will finally provide the permanently open entryway by which Jesus’ love for him can access his deepest being. There is no way around it: God enters by the wound. Until we are perforated by the golden arrow of repentant sorrow we shall remain hermetically sealed off, interiorly, from the eager approach of the Bridegroom, no matter how “religious” and “apostolic” our more external habits, language and intentions may appear.

Exelthon exo eklausen pikros. And he went out and wept bitterly. The insistent gutturals and stresses of the Greek text here sound to me like hard hammer blows upon an anvil, or like strangled sobs. This final sentence of our Matthew narrative contains a whole Lenten program for us! The stabbing memory of Jesus’ faithful love for him impels Peter, first, to go out, that is, to forsake his shameful association of convenience with the power-holders of the establishment, before whom he has groveled, in order to go apart by himself and set his heart in order anew in a wrenching solitude. He must leave behind the courtyard of Caiaphas’ house, which symbolizes the security and sham identity offered him by mingling with the crowd of profiteers who gravitate around this center of Jewish religious and political power. He must purge his soul of the fear that has made him prefer the secure anonymity of a mob to the risky solidarity with Jesus, this condemned man. And in that solitude apart, Peter must now dedicate himself to weeping bitterly: he must allow the fire of Jesus’ love overtaking his heart to melt down the ice of a frozen will, and allow the torrents of new life being infused into him to irrigate his whole person. The poisonous sweetness of betrayal must slowly yield to the medicinal bitterness of healing contrition.
This outpouring of endless tears is but the visible sign of the subterranean upheaval reshaping his deepest soul into a treasure-house of enduring fidelity. Legend has it that Peter wept so long and so intensely that for the rest of his life deep furrows ran down his cheeks beneath his eyes. And yet we should never forget that, as in all great conversion stories, the power driving the drama is not the nobility of the human heart but rather God’s undefeatable love, specifically Jesus’ desire not to be separated from his friend Peter. God’s desire to be with us is expressed boldly in a little-known saying from the Letter of James: God yearns jealously for the Spirit that he has made to dwell in us (Jas 4:5 alt, NABRE). This jealous yearning of God for each of us is the secret force that determines the shape of our lives, and the outcome of the story will depend on whether or not we reciprocate this divine yearning with similar passion.

I have been hard on Peter in this meditation, but only because I hoped to arrive at a more realistic understanding of my own spiritual path by looking in the mirror of Peter’s experience. To make it up to Peter to some extent, I invite you in conclusion not to forget something you may have overlooked in his character and behavior due to the severity of my interpretation. When I was a boy and the family was seated at table eating, every once in a while the cook in the nearby kitchen would drop a dish and shatter it. My Cuban grandmother would at once get angry and complain audibly. With great patience but also penetrating wisdom, my grandfather would say to his wife: “Nena, you will never break a dish because you never wash them!” Perhaps you see my point: If Peter had at all been in a position of denying Jesus to begin with, it was only because he chose to follow Jesus right into the lion’s mouth despite all his fear! He did not safely remain distant, uninvolved.

Contrast the other apostles, who, except for Judas, did not deny Jesus formally and explicitly simply because they fled into hiding and thus were not engaged enough in Jesus’ fate for them to be exposed to questioning and accusation by anyone as Peter was. Even in his denial of Jesus, Peter is in an altogether separate category from the others. His relationship
to Jesus shows the unique aspects of his role as apostle. Peter may have been a coward, but his conscience is neither dead nor even dormant. The very moment he hears the cock crow, he remembers Jesus’ prophecy, and that memory immediately transfixes his heart into contrition. Here we, for our part, should remember Jesus’ enormously consoling words concerning the sinful woman who anointed his head and kissed his feet at the house of Simon the Pharisee: “He who is forgiven little, loves little” (Lk 7:47). Yes, we may say that, in a real sense, Peter denied Jesus because his love for Jesus put him in a highly vulnerable position. Therefore, in our own sorrowful contrition, let us never forget also to treat ourselves with compassion and gentleness, which alone lead to fullness of life.

Peter exhibits for all to see the very complex character of the human heart, by displaying the whole range of the heart’s capacities: initial enthusiasm and positive response; then, for a while, loyalty and tenacity, and always passion above all; then, in the time of crisis, fearfulness, cowardice, and betrayal; but, in the end, sorrowful repentance and regeneration. The multi-faceted portrayal of Peter in the gospels may well make him the richest and most complex personality in the New Testament, second only to Jesus himself.

Saint Peter of Galilee, our exemplar in the life of faith, our brother, our leader, teacher, and intercessor: Pray for us and help us never to forget the forgiving power of the Lord Jesus’ love!
INTRODUCTION

VATICAN II AND THE CALL FOR A CHRISTOCENTRIC ANTHROPOLOGY

“The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.” – Gaudium et Spes 22

The above words are among the most quoted of the Second Vatican Council in general, and certainly of Gaudium et Spes in particular. If the Conciliar documents as a whole bear a decisively christocentric stamp, Gaudium et Spes is unsurpassed in this regard. In paragraph 22 and elsewhere, the document makes it abundantly clear that the Council’s anthropology is not only theological but specifically christological. Of course, being the ‘Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World’, it was not the scope or intent of the document to provide a comprehensive anthropology, nor even to enter debates or respond in detail to particular questions. Nevertheless, the Council clearly indicated a way forward, providing a foundation and outline for how theological anthropology ought to be developed in response to the questions and needs of modern man. In the last half-century, numerous theologians have undertaken this very task. However, how theologians have gone about doing this has obviously varied greatly, and responses to the Council have ranged from approving and enthusiastic incorporation of its principles to critical minimizing or even dismissal of it. This wide variance, according to Pope Benedict XVI, depends on the ‘hermeneutic’
Christopher Trummer

with which one interprets the Council.¹

In an article titled, “The Theological Anthropology of Gaudium et Spes,” Walter Kasper explained how the Council essentially embraced the anthropological turn of the modern period while correcting its reductive tendencies by giving it a christocentric orientation.² He also observed that, up to the time he was writing (1996), the systematic development of a christologically grounded and defined anthropology remained “in many respects an urgent desideratum,” and, more generally, that the theological reception of Vatican II was “still before us.”³ In this essay, I will propose that Cardinal Luis F. Ladaria offers a model response to this “urgent desideratum” in his elaboration and presentation of theological anthropology. Given the modest scope of this essay, I will introduce Ladaria as a theologian and then summarize his contributions to theological anthropology by focusing primarily on one theme that is central to his thought: the incarnate Christ as the image of God in man. In many ways, this theme constitutes the heart of Ladaria’s theological anthropology and characterizes his theological style. In the same article just quoted, Kasper himself called the concept of the image of God “the systematic clasp holding together anthropology and Christology.”⁴ In

¹ Pope Benedict XVI spoke frequently about two basic approaches taken toward the Council, arguing that a “hermeneutic of reform” was needed. For example, in an address during the first year of his pontificate he said, “The problems in [the Second Vatican Council’s] implementation arose from the fact that two contrary hermeneutics came face to face and quarreled with each other. One caused confusion, the other, silently but more and more visibly, bore and is bearing fruit. On the one hand, there is an interpretation that I would call “a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture”; it has frequently availed itself of the sympathies of the mass media, and also one trend of modern theology. On the other, there is the ‘hermeneutic of reform’, of renewal in the continuity of the one subjectChurch which the Lord has given to us. She is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God.” “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia offering them his Christmas Greetings,” 22 December 2005.


³ Ibid., 140.

⁴ Kasper, “The Theological Anthropology,” 137.
the following pages, we will see just how true this is for Ladaria and how fruitful his approach is as a result. In order to draw out more fully the implications of his thought on the *imago Dei*, I will first summarize other prevailing conceptions of this in Christian theology, both traditional and contemporary. I will then evaluate these in comparison to Ladaria’s view, considering some important advantages and disadvantages of each.

**CHAPTER I**

1. **LADARIA: FORMATION, SERVICE, AND THEOLOGICAL APPROACH**

1.1. **EDUCATION AND TEACHING ROLES**

Despite his manifold achievements and accolades as a theologian and professor, and even his recent nomination as prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Ladaria remains relatively unknown to many in the world of Catholic theology, especially in the anglophone sphere.5 Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer was born in 1944 in Manacor, Spain, part of the Balearic Islands off the east coast of the Iberian Peninsula. After completing a law degree at the University of Madrid, he joined the Society of Jesus in 1966.6 He was sent to study theology at the prestigious Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology in Frankfurt, Germany. It was there that Ladaria studied under several eminent theologians, including then Fr. Aloys Grillmeier S.J. († 1998), a renowned scholar of dogma who was later made a cardinal; Fr. Otto Semmelroth S.J. († 1979), the influential peritus at Vatican II whose idea of the Church as Sacrament (the *Ursakrament*) was taken up by the Council in *Lumen Gentium*; and Fr. Hermann Josef Sieben S.J., now Professor Emeritus, who became one of the foremost scholars on

---

5 This is undoubtedly due in large part to the fact that most of his works have not been translated into English; the only titles currently available are *The Living and True God: The Mystery of the Trinity* and *Jesus Christ: Salvation of All* (both from Crossroad Publishing Company).

the history of ecumenical councils.\textsuperscript{7}

After his time in Germany, Ladaria was then sent to Rome for doctoral studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Of note among his professors at the Gregorian were Fr. Juan Alfaro († 1993), Fr. Zoltan Alszeghy († 1991), and the great patrologist Fr. Antonio Orbe S.J. († 2003). Ladaria was ordained a priest in 1973 and completed his doctorate in 1975, writing his dissertation under the direction of Fr. Orbe on “The Holy Spirit in St. Hilary of Poitiers.” That same year, Ladaria began teaching dogmatic theology at the Pontifical University of Comillas in Spain, a position he held until being transferred to his alma mater, the Gregorian, in 1984. He served as the university’s vice-rector from 1986 to 1992.

\textbf{1.2. Ecclesiastical Appointments as a Theologian}

In 1992, Ladaria was appointed to the International Theological Commission (ITC), the main advisory body to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), where he served until 1997; he became a consultor for the congregation in 1995. In 2004, Pope St. John Paul II appointed Ladaria to be the general secretary of the ITC. Then in 2008, Pope Benedict XVI named him the secretary of the CDF and ordained him a bishop.\textsuperscript{8} Finally, in July 2017 Pope Francis appointed Ladaria prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, at which point he also assumed the offices held \textit{ex officio} by the prefect, namely, president of the Pontifical Commission “Ecclesia Dei,” the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and the International Theological Commission. He was made a cardinal in June 2018.\textsuperscript{9}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\end{thebibliography}
Cardinal Ladaria has published over 20 books and over 80 academic articles. Even a cursory look at Ladaria’s academic career and published work shows that his theological formation instilled in him a deep commitment to the *ressourcement* (‘return to the sources’) of Scripture and the Fathers, a central concern of twentieth-century Catholic theology in general and the Second Vatican Council in particular. His work is thoroughly christocentric and scriptural; in a word, one could say that it is Ignatian. He has contributed significantly to current theological debates, writing extensively on a variety of topics, including the Church Fathers, Trinitarian theology, Christology, and theological anthropology.

Ladaria’s expertise in the areas of theological anthropology and Christology, combined with his extensive professional experience and leadership in the academic theological world, especially with the ITC, made him an ideal candidate to serve in the CDF, eventually as its prefect. It is a strong affirmation of Ladaria’s work as a theologian that Pope Benedict XVI, after heading up the congregation himself for so many years under Pope St. John Paul II, appointed Ladaria to

---

10 John Allen Jr., “‘Kind’ and ‘reliable’ …”
11 In particular, Ladaria is a leading scholar on St. Hilary of Poitiers. For example, *El Espíritu Santo en San Hilario de Poitiers* (Universidad Pontificia Comillas Publicaciones, 1979) and *Diccionario de San Hilario de Poitiers* (Monte Carmelo 2006); he also edited two major works of St. Hilary: *La Trinidad* and *Comentario al evangelio de san Mateo* (Biblioteca Autores Cristianos, 1986 and 2010, respectively). Ladaria also has a work on St. Clement of Alexandria, *El Espíritu en Clemente Alejandrino: Estudio teológico antropológico* (Publicaciones de la Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 1980).
12 *La Trinidad, misterio de communion* (Secretariado Trinitario, 2002); *The Living and True God: The Mystery of the Trinity* (Convivium Press, 2010).
13 *Jesus Christ: Salvation of All* (Convivium Press, 2009); *Jesús y el Espíritu: la unción* (Monte Carmelo, 2013).
be its secretary (succeeding now Cardinal Angelo Amato). It is well
known from their own words that a central concern for both John
Paul II and Benedict XVI was to communicate and implement the
authentic teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Given this concern,
the personnel choices of these popes—especially for positions directly
involved in the development and teaching of doctrine—necessarily
reveal which theological interpretations of the Council they approved
of and wished to promote. In this sense, Cardinal Ladaria should be
considered an approved interpreter of the Council’s theology and a
trustworthy guide for navigating post-conciliar theological debates.
Of course, while nomination to an ecclesial teaching office does not
equate to formal and absolute approval of everything a theologian has
ever written and said, it surely implies a strong (if implicit) approval
of the nominee’s work, that it is free of any serious errors. This seems
to be Ladaria’s own interpretation of his nomination, evidenced by the
following exchange in an interview on the occasion of his nomination
as secretary of the CDF:

Interviewer: Your appointment did not please the traditionalist world. In
Spain the theologian Don José María Iraburu accused your Teología del pecado
original y de la gracia of not conforming to the doctrine of the Church, while
the periodical Si si No no even wrote that your book Theological Anthropology
is “completely outside the Catholic dogmatic tradition.” Are you concerned
about these judgments?

Ladaria: Everyone is free to criticize and make the judgments they want. If you
ask me if I’m concerned I have to say that these opinions don’t concern me too
much. Besides, if I was appointed to this office, I must presume that my works
do not deserve these judgments.\(^\text{15}\)

In reality, the criticisms of Ladaria’s thought are not uniquely aimed at
him; rather, they come from theologians and others who are more broadly
opposed to the developments of twentieth-century Catholic theology. In
particular, much of this opposition is a reaction to the nouvelle théologie
movement and the debates about the relationship between nature and

\(^{15}\) Gianni Cardinale, “A Jesuit…”
grace. It is not within the scope of this paper to enter into the details of these debates. For our purposes, it will suffice to say that, for Ladaria (and many other theologians), continued opposition to these theological developments implies a failure to accept the extent to which they were assimilated into the official teaching of the Second Vatican Council and confirmed by numerous post-conciliar statements of the Magisterium.

With this brief introduction to Cardinal Ladaria’s training and work as a theologian, let us now consider the substance of his contribution to theological anthropology.

2. **Ladaria’s Approach to Theological Anthropology**

2.1. **The Definition and Dimensions of Theological Anthropology**

Ladaria calls theological anthropology “that part or sector of dogmatic theology that teaches us what we are in light of Jesus Christ, the revealer of God.” He notes that the very possibility of theological anthropology depends on the claim that Christianity offers an original vision of man, something which in turn implies that man is not only the recipient of divine revelation, but also an object of the same revelation. Christian reflection can and should draw from the sources of human sciences and philosophy, and in doing this it does not lose its theological specificity. In other words, all the legitimate data of philosophical or natural anthropology should be incorporated into theological anthropology. With this qualification, Ladaria outlines three dimensions of man that are proper to theological anthropology per se:

The first dimension, which he calls “most proper and specific to theological anthropology,” is the “relationship of love and ‘grace’” that God wants to establish with each one of us and with humanity as a

---

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 11.
whole.” For Ladaria, the call to union with God through divine filiation is the most important and constitutive element of the human person. The second dimension is man’s existence as a creature, what Ladaria calls the “creaturely dimension.” This dimension indicates that man, while possessing his own consistency and autonomy, never loses his immediate reference to God, his creator. Man does not possess in himself the reason for his existence; rather, his existence only makes sense as the presupposition for receiving the grace and love of God. Nature exists for the sake of grace. The third dimension is original sin, which is contingent in the sense that it does not belong to God’s original design or intention for man. It is not strictly speaking a constitutive element of man and does not pertain to his essence. However, it is nevertheless a real dimension of man, something historically added that now pertains essentially to his concrete condition in the world.

2.2. **Historical Man: Object of Revelation and Theological Anthropology**

In summarizing Ladaria’s approach to theological anthropology, we must also note that he repeatedly emphasizes the need for Christian reflection on man to begin from man as he actually exists. Ladaria is extremely critical of approaches to Christian anthropology that attempt to begin from—or argue on the basis of—a ‘hypothetical man’ that does not exist and never existed. For Ladaria, examples of such a hypothetical man would include man existing in a so-called state of ‘pure nature’ or man called to a merely natural beatitude and lacking an explicitly supernatural orientation. Regarding this point of departure for anthropology, he writes:

> Man in the state of ‘pure nature’ does not exist and never existed. … If we are dealing with man as a creature of God, we must speak about the man who was actually created, the only one we know. The man to whom revelation refers and who is the object of our theological study is called to a single end, that of

---

20 Ibid.
communion with God in divine filiation, and this end is strictly ‘supernatural.’ To begin from a ‘natural’ state would not make sense for theological anthropology, which seeks to illuminate man’s being in light of the revelation that culminates in Christ. … Man’s nature, in the most radical sense of the word, is constituted by what man in fact is. By his condition as a creature, man is already a pure gift of God. It makes little sense to speak about what man is or has in opposition to what is given to him. In the concrete, actual nature of man, the call to communion with God enters as a constituent of his being. We therefore have no reason to concern ourselves greatly—simply because we lack the elements for this—with the abstraction of what his ‘nature’ would have been in a purely natural or creaturely condition. Man is what God has done and does with him, the gift of the being he receives as and how he receives it.21

2.3. God’s Unified Plan in Creation and Salvation

Another foundational idea and operative principle for Ladaria’s theological method is the unity of creation and salvation in the eternal plan of God. As we will see more clearly in our section dedicated to the imago Dei, Ladaria takes very seriously what the New Testament says about Christ’s mediation, not only in the work of redemption and salvation, but already in creation. All of world history can be fully understood only in light of salvation history, thanks to the entrance into history of Jesus Christ, who gives history its unified meaning by fully transcending it as God yet fully belonging to it as man.22 Whatever knowledge we might have acquired by the light of natural reason alone—whether about man in particular or the created world in general—all of

21 Ladaria, Antropologia Teologica, 143. The translations from the Italian text are my own.

22 Ibid., 49–54. For example, on 52: “In the history of Jesus, all of history is given a unified meaning because a trans-historical principle entered into it that allows us to contemplate this world in its unity and to interpret it globally. But, in turn, this meaning belongs to history itself. Therefore, to interpret history beginning from Christ is not to judge it according to a foreign criterion. On the one hand, this point of reference is God Himself, and therefore transcends the contingency and limitation of every intra-mundane event; on the other hand, it is human freedom itself fully realized.” Cf. also GS 10: “[The Church] likewise holds that in her most benign Lord and Master can be found the key, the focal point and the goal of man, as well as of all human history.”
this knowledge must now be subordinated to the revelation of Christ’s coming in the flesh. In other words, if, prior to the revelation of Christ, it was reasonable enough to assume the validity of Protagoras’ maxim that “man is the measure of all things,” as Christians, we cannot accept this. Instead, we must believe that Christ, who “reveals man to himself” (GS 22), is indeed the measure of all things, including and especially man. The wisdom of God revealed in Christ supersedes and relativizes all worldly wisdom. In the words of St. Paul, “Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe” (1 Cor 1:20–21).

Before considering Ladaria’s understanding of the *imago Dei* in man more deeply as well as the implications of this, we must first understand the foundation for his broader understanding of the relationship between Christology and anthropology: the universal mediation of Christ in both salvation and creation.

3. **CHRIST’S SALVIFIC AND CREATIVE MEDIATION**

Like other treatises of theology, Ladaria begins his treatment of theological anthropology by reflecting on creation. However, he does not follow a philosophical and strictly chronological path in this reflection, but rather a biblical one. For, neither the Old Testament nor the New considers the act or order of creation in itself, that is, as distinct from the order of salvation. Rather, both Testaments begin from the God who acts in history on man’s behalf; the God who intervenes, who saves; the God of the Covenant. The more abstract or strictly theo-logical implications flow from this prior experiential fact. Thus Ladaria writes:

Perhaps the correct way to contemplate the reciprocal relationship between creation and the Covenant is to see in them two distinct yet related manifestations of God’s action, which consists of pouring His benefits out upon men. These two moments can be juxtaposed without establishing a solution of continuity between them. … The most important thing is the singular design of God and
Christ the Measure of Man

not the moments in which it is manifested. ... The God who in the beginning created everything that exists in the world can bring all peoples to fulfillment.23

Directly related to this, Ladaria writes in a later essay: “The uniqueness of the divine design is perfectly compatible with a progression of its revelation. That which God had always planned in Christ was only revealed with the appearance of the latter.”24 For Ladaria, the specificity of Christian faith in creation centers on the novelty of Jesus Christ, whose Incarnation reveals the full meaning of creation and shows “the profound unity of God’s design, which has its only center in Christ and moves from creation to final consummation.”25 A constant concern for Ladaria is to maintain the unity of creation and salvation in the unified, eternal design of God: God creates in order to save; creation is the presupposition of salvation; the former is not autonomous in the sense that it is fully intelligible without the latter. Where the unity of creation and salvation is not maintained, Ladaria argues, grace and salvation appear extrinsic and even arbitrary, something imposed by God ‘from without’, instead of the intrinsic fulfillment of creation that corresponds to God’s loving and eternal plan ‘from the beginning’. Ladaria maintains that, within the eternal plan of God, which is one from the beginning, creation and salvation can be distinguished but are finally inseparable. This is crucial, since the alternative would imply that God first creates ‘deistically’ in a sense—that is, in an uninvolved and uncommitted way—and then only in a second ‘moment’, as it were, chooses to involve Himself for man’s salvation.

In the Old Testament, Israel’s faith in God and His omnipotence was a consequence of their experience of His saving intervention on their behalf; they reasoned that the God who could save them from Egypt and the other nations must be in fact the God of all nations, indeed the God of the whole world. In a similar way, the early Christians reflected on the universal scope of Christ’s ministry and above all his sacrifice,

23  Ladaria, Antropologia Teologica, 26.
24  Ladaria, Gesù Cristo Salvezza di Tutti, 21.
25  Ibid., 43.
and from this universal salvific mediation they intuited (with the Holy Spirit’s inspiration) his universal creative mediation. In Paul, this idea is often expressed in the pithy formula, ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ). Through careful exegesis of key passages and following the best of recent biblical scholarship, Ladaria demonstrates that already in the decades immediately following Christ’s death and resurrection, Christians grasped and celebrated the universal mediation of Christ, not only in our redemption, but in creation as well. Let us now summarize and evaluate some of Ladaria’s most important conclusions and insights concerning the relevant Scripture passages, as these form the foundation of his christocentric theological anthropology.

3.1. Scriptural Foundation

Reading the New Testament through a patristic lens, Ladaria takes very seriously the passages referring to God’s creating everything that exists—including man—‘in’ (ἐν), ‘through’ (διά), and even ‘for’ or ‘toward’ (εἰς) Jesus Christ. Ladaria seeks to understand the meaning of the New Testament affirmations about Christ’s mediating role in creation without anticipating its meaning with Hellenistic impositions. He analyzes several key texts, such as 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:1–3; John 1:3, 10; Col 1:15, 20; and Eph 1:3, 14.²⁶

In 1 Corinthians, for example, we read that there is “one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor 8:26). In Ephesians, we are told that “[God the Father] chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world” and “destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:4–5); God had already set forth his purpose “in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:9–10).

We find equally astonishing affirmations about Christ in the first chapter of Colossians, and again, these refer to the man Jesus Christ and not only to the eternal Son:

²⁶ For Ladaria’s full treatment of these texts, see Antropologia Teologica, 31–40.
He is the image \(\varepsilonἰκὼν\) of the invisible God, the first-born \(\piρωτότοκος\) of all creation; for in him \(\varepsilonν\ \alphaυτῷ\) all things were created [...] all things were created through him \(\deltaι\ \alphaυτού\) and for him \(\varepsilonις\ \alphaυτόν\). He is before all things, and in him all things hold together \(\tauά\ \ πάντα\ \varepsilonν\ \alphaυτῷ\ \ συνέστηκεν\). He is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent \(\piρωτεύων\). For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him \(\deltaι\ \αυτού\) to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (Col 1:15–17).

In addition to creation being ‘in’ (ἐν) and ‘through’ (δἰα) Christ, Colossians is unique in describing creation as ‘for’ or ‘toward’ (εἰς) Christ. According to Ladaria, the most probable meaning of this ‘for/toward’ is that “the entire creation tends toward fullness of reconciliation brought about by means of Christ, toward the new order that begins with and is founded on the resurrection of Jesus.”\(^{27}\) This ultimately leads Ladaria to the conclusion that, “Salvation is the ultimate meaning of the world and history, and it is so because the world has always borne the seal of Jesus and has no foundation apart from him. ... Creation is for the resurrection, that is, for salvation; the beginning is for the end that already consists in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”\(^{28}\)

While the context of the Colossians’ hymn given in the verses preceding it (vv. 14 and 15) mentions the “beloved Son” of the Father, when one reads the full sentence, it is clear that this refers to Jesus Christ as revealed in the flesh, given the economic language of “redemption” [ἀπολύτωσιν] (v. 14). Even more explicit in this regard is the reference to “the blood of his cross” at the hymn’s conclusion (v. 20). The Incarnation, which links the beginning of the hymn to the end, allows Christ to be both “the εἰκὼν [image] of the invisible God” and “the πρωτότοκος [first-born] of all creation” (v. 15), the one through whom “all things were created” and the one who makes “peace by the blood of his cross.” Here we see both the distinction between creation and salvation and their inseparable bond. The earliest Christians, reflecting on Christ’s words about himself

---

\(^{27}\) Ladaria, Antropologia Teologica, 39.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 40.
and his Father, as well as the universal scope of his preaching and actions, quickly discerned that the foundation of his universal salvific significance was to be found in his eternal origin with the Father. They recognized that his proexistence demanded his preexistence, that the one who could say, “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32), is the one who “came to his own” (John 1:11), the one in whom “all things were created” (John 1:3; Col 1:16). Other New Testament passages illustrating this point include Heb 1:1–3 and 2 Tim 1:9–10.

3.2. Mediation of the Christ, the Incarnate Word

Explaining the significance of this often-overlooked mediation of Christ in creation, Ladaria employs the following quote from Hans Urs von Balthasar’s *Theo-Drama*:

> It is not only the Logos but Christ who is the mediator of creation. It means nothing less than this: all things could only be created with a view to their being perfected in the Second Adam—something that only truly comes to light in the being and consciousness of the Son as he carries out his mission of bringing everything to perfection. Again, he has not been given the role of Perfector by any other authority but the Creator; otherwise he could not carry it out from within but would have to stamp his definitive mark from without on things created by someone else.

As for von Balthasar, so too for Ladaria, the creation of all things in, through, and especially for Christ does not refer only to a purely spiritual and instrumental causality; this is already evident from the fact that

---

29 “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the ages. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.”

30 “[God] saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

most of these passages refer quite explicitly to the man Jesus Christ. For Ladaria, the Incarnation of the Son is the foundation that ensures the unity of God’s plan in both creation and salvation. Of course, the event of the Incarnation is utterly novel and in no way deducible as necessary or inevitable on the basis of prior revelation. However, once the Incarnation occurs, its centrality in God’s plan is revealed as foundational from the beginning. Regarding this, Ladaria writes: “Above all it is necessary to insist on the unity of God’s design, which embraces the creation and salvation of man realized by His Son made man. The creation in Christ, and not only in the Son, is a fundamental truth of Christianity that recent theology has enhanced anew.”

3.3. Christ the Model, End, and Fullness of Creation

It is tempting to dismiss the attribution of creative mediation to the man Jesus Christ as exaggerated language motivated perhaps by intense piety, as if the early Christians simply wanted to predicate everything of their Savior in an exalted form of praise. After all, the creative mediation of the incarnate Christ evidently cannot be understood in any literal, that is, chronological sense. For, how could the world be created in the incarnate Christ prior to his actual Incarnation, an event that occurred in time? However, in an effort to be more faithful to the biblical revelation as it stands, Ladaria and other theologians have sought to recover the insight of several Church Fathers, such as St. Irenaeus and Tertullian, according to which the incarnate Christ is the final cause, the model according to which all things—especially human beings—were created. To this end Ladaria writes:

Anthropology reaches its full form only in Christology; for this reason, from the beginning the former must assume its proper form from the latter. The first Adam receives his meaning from the Second. For us Christians, the true meaning of the human being is obtained only in light of Christ. We cannot presuppose a complete idea of man and his destiny prior to Jesus.

32 Ladaria, Gesù Cristo..., 19.
33 Ladaria, Gesù Cristo..., 20–21.
The “complete idea of man” that Ladaria mentions here is only fully revealed in the incarnate Christ, in his resurrected and glorified state. As we will see in the following chapters, for Ladaria, this revelation is likewise the most complete conception of the image of God in man, the image that not only determines his original state but also orients him towards eschatological fullness in union with God.

Chapter II
Prevailing Conceptions of the Imago Dei in Man

We have seen the foundation of Ladaria’s theological anthropology, which is the centrality of Christ, who has a mediating role in both creation and salvation. We are now in a position to understand Ladaria’s theology of Christ as the image of God in man. Before we do so, however, and in order to demonstrate more fully the uniqueness of Ladaria’s contribution in this area, we will first briefly review the other prevailing conceptions of the image of God in man. I have identified six conceptions: dominion, rationality, relationship with God, the tripartite soul (inner-Trinitarian), relational (external-Trinitarian), and christological/incarnational.34

1. Dominion, Rationality, and Relationship with God

1.1. Dominion

These first three are grouped together because they are interrelated and interdependent. It is clear enough that, in his capacity and duty to exercise dominion over all the other animals on earth, man ‘images’ or reflects

---

34 The titles of these conceptions are my own paraphrases. Of course, this list is not intended to exhaust all the possible conceptions of the image of God in man; it only indicates the main categories of how this doctrine has been understood in the history of theology. Also, as our reflection will show, the conceptions are by no means mutually exclusive; in fact, some of them presuppose others. A further conception, that of immortality, could also be added, but this only appears explicitly in Wis 2:23: “God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity.” Immortality is a strong theme in Wisdom in general.
God, the Lord over all creation. It can be argued that man’s derivative or tasked dominion is the most immediate and literal meaning of his being created in the image and likeness of God, evidenced by the fact that this dominion appears in the same sentence: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’” (Gen 1:26). Likewise, in Sirach 17, the image of God in man is placed in direct relation to man’s task of earthly dominion:

The Lord created man out of the earth and again he returned him to it. An exact number of days and time He gave to them [men], and He gave them authority over it [the earth]. Like Himself he clothed them [with] strength/power and according to His image He made them. He placed the fear of him [man] upon all flesh and [in him] dominion over beasts and birds (Sir 17:1–4, translation mine).35

1.2. RATIONALITY (INTELLECT)

Rationality is a presupposition of man’s call to exercise dominion over the other animals, for this faculty is what sets him apart on a natural level from the other animals and gives him an advantage over them despite his relatively small size and fragile body. We already see this rational advantage of man and his consequent ‘dominion’ exercised in his naming of the animals (Gen 2:19–20). In his book, Engaging the Doctrine of Creation, the theologian Matthew Levering emphasizes rationality and freedom as the image of God in man, these qualities

35 This passage from Sirach represents one of few other explicit references to the image of God in the Old Testament. Psalm 8 implicitly expresses the same idea, hailing man as “little less than a god” by virtue of his God-given rule over the rest of creation: “Yet you have made [man] little less than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet” (Ps 8:5–6). St. Augustine expresses this aspect of the imago Dei in the Confessions: “We behold … man, created after Thy image and likeness, in that very image and likeness of Thee (that is, the power of reason and understanding) on account of which he was set over all irrational creatures” (Conf. 13.24.35). See also GS 12.
connecting him to God the Son as the Reason and Logos of creation. He writes, “If the Son is the Word, and humans are the image of the Word, then why should not this human image be associated uniquely with reason/word? [...] if the human image of God is connected uniquely with the Word, then it is connected with reason and freedom, intellect and will.”

This view that the image of God in man refers primarily to his rational nature became the dominant (though not exclusive) one in Patristic and Scholastic theology; it is certainly the basis for St. Augustine’s psychological-Trinitarian image. Some contemporary theologians, including Ladaria, have criticized this view as a kind of retroactive, Hellenistic distortion of the Genesis account, an anachronistic attribution to the Hebrew author of Greek philosophical categories that he would not have had in mind. If the image of God in man refers only or even primarily to man’s natural intellectual capacity, then it is unclear why the image should require such a dramatic restoration in Christ.

---

36 Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Creation: Cosmos, Creatures, and the Wise and Good Creator* (Baker Academic, 2017), ch. 4, “The Image of God,” Kindle. Following Ladaria and others, I disagree with Levering’s statement that humans are “the image of the Word”, if by “Word” he means the “non-incarnate Word,” that is, the Second Person of the Trinity without reference to his Incarnation.

37 Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology, V: Man is Created*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), Kindle. For example: “[Philosophy teaches] that man comes out of the divine world and that his whole effort is to get back into it ... this point is corroborated by a consideration of the massive patristic and Scholastic inflation of the idea of man as the image of God, which makes only a brief appearance in the creation narrative and plays no role in the Old Testament after that. Even in the Genesis passage, moreover, the idea originally refers, not to man’s spiritual nature, but (as Sirach 17:5 reminds us) to the dominion over the birds and the beasts bestowed on him by God. By contrast, the “image” that, according to the theologians, man finds inscribed in his being and that he is supposed to develop through gradual ascent into a “likeness” with God is a clear borrowing from the Greek idea of *homoiōsis* [assimilation]” (Kindle loc. 154; emphasis added).
1.3. Man’s Unique Relationship with God

A third conception of the image of God in man, certainly compatible with the first two, is that this refers to man’s special relationship with God. Because every relationship requires freedom, intentionality, and a conceptual framework with which persons can communicate, man must necessarily possess rationality in order to respond to God and thus actualize his relationship with Him. According to this conception, man’s being created in the image and likeness of God indicates the special relationship to God and the immediate reference to God that he enjoys as the center and apex of God’s creation. The *imago Dei* in man thus implies the *capax Dei* in man, that is, his unique ability to know and love God. This special relationship is often illustrated by analogy to a man-made image, such as a portrait or representation, which is only intelligible by reference to its original. On this reading, the Genesis account is in no way attempting to offer a definition of man or complete account of his nature, but simply wants to establish man’s origin in God and his constitutive relationships: God, self, and other (the woman), especially in confrontation with other existing accounts of the world and man’s origins.

2. The Trinity Within: Augustine and the Imago Dei in Man’s Soul

Perhaps the most famous explanation of the image of God in man is St. Augustine’s Trinitarian analogy. In his treatise *De Trinitate* (and thus, in the context of primarily explaining the Trinity), Augustine asks what it is about man that Scripture must be referring to when it describes him as made in the image of God. He reasons that it must be something that man does not share with the animals, since they are not made in the

---

38 Cf. St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 14.8.11: “the mind must first be considered as it is in itself, before it becomes partaker of God; and His image must be found in it. For, as we have said, although worn out and defaced by losing the participation of God, yet the image of God still remains. For it is His image in this very point, that it is capable of Him, and can be partaker of Him; which so great good is only made possible by its being His image” (emphasis added).
image and likeness of God; indeed, it must be what is ‘highest’ in man. This search leads to his brilliant discovery of the analogy between the three faculties of man’s soul and the three Persons of the Trinity. He concludes:

Now this trinity of the mind is the image of God, not because the mind remembers, understands, and loves itself, but because it also has the power to remember, understand, and love its Maker. And in doing this it attains wisdom. If it does not do this, the memory, understanding, and love of itself is no more than an act of folly. Therefore, let the mind remember its God, to whose image it was made, let it understand and love him.39

Here Augustine is careful to distinguish the image of God in man as the power to remember, understand, and love God rather than the active exercise of these faculties. Otherwise, the image of God would be something that man does instead of something he is, a constitutive element of his being established by God as a gift. Augustine is not alone among the Fathers in attributing great importance to the literal grammar of Gen 1:26–27, carefully analyzing the plural and singular pronouns:

We should not understand this [Gen 1:26–27] as though God the Father made man to the image of God, that is, of his Son. Otherwise, how are the words, “to our image,” true, if man was made to the image of the Son alone? Since God’s words, “to our image,” are true, Scripture said, “God made man to the image of God,” as if to say, “to his image which is the very Trinity.”40

This grammatical argument, while clever and interesting, is not particularly convincing from an exegetical perspective, as Jewish scholarship on the passage had long ago found other ways of explaining the verse.41 In any case, it seems a bit forced when Augustine argues that we should not understand man being created in the image of God as man being created in image of the Son, who, Augustine admits, is the image of God. But why not read the verse this way, which seems to be

40  St. Augustine, On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book, ch.16.
41  For example, that here God is speaking to the whole “heavenly court,” which includes the angels, or speaking “with man” whom He is about to create, a kind of “inclusive creation.”
the more obvious interpretation in light of Christian revelation of the Trinity? If one is committed to rereading the Old Testament from the perspective of the New (as Augustine expressly is), why not interpret the image of God in man as the referring to the Son? It is possible that Augustine wants to avoid associating the image of God in man with any bodily or physical image, as preoccupations with physical images of God were a great obstacle for him in his own intellectual conversion.42


Aquinas follows Augustine in attributing the image of God in man to man’s intellectual nature: “secundum intellectualem naturam.”43 However, he develops Augustine’s insight by distinguishing three ways in which the image of God can be in man:

... the image of God is in man in three ways. First, inasmuch as man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. Secondly, inasmuch as man actually and habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly; and this image consists in the conformity of grace. Thirdly, inasmuch as man knows and loves God perfectly; and this image consists in the likeness of glory.44

An advantage of Aquinas’s explanation of the image of God in man is that he acknowledges a process, that the image is indeed a constituent of man’s nature and yet it also stands in need of renewal and elevation by God’s grace. Aquinas’s thought on this point can be easily harmonized

42 St. Augustine, Confessions, 6.3.4: “Indeed, when I learned that ‘for man to be made by Thee to Thy Image’ was not understood by Thy spiritual children, whom Thou hast regenerated from Mother Church through grace, as if they believed and thought in terms of a limitation by the shape of a human body, though I had not even a vague and obscure suspicion of how a spiritual substance is constituted, I was glad to blush at the fact that I had barked for so many years, not against the Catholic faith, but against the pure fictions of fleshly thoughts.”

43 St. Thomas Aquinas, ST, Ia, q. 93, a. 4, resp. “Since man is said to be to the image of God by reason of his intellectual nature, he is the most perfectly like God according to that in which he can best imitate God in his intellectual nature.”

44 Ibid.
with the idea that the incarnate Christ is the image of God in man, or at least the fullness of that image. St. Paul clearly affirms a Christ-orientated dynamism of the image of God in man in his letter to the Romans: “For those whom [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom 8:29–30).

Perhaps the lack of specific reference to Christ in Aquinas’s treatment of the image of God in man is a consequence of the overall ordering of his theological presentation. After all, he offers a more or less complete anthropology prior to introducing the grace of Christ and the Sacraments. What we explained in the introduction proves true here: following Vatican II’s call for a christocentric anthropology invariably leads one to different conclusions, or at least different emphases, than those of Aquinas and other Scholastic theologians.

4. The Imago Dei as Spousal-Relational according to St. John Paul II

In his series of catechetical audiences known collectively as the “Theology of the Body,” Pope Saint John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła) elaborated a personalistic and relational vision of the image of God in man. Through Scriptural exegesis and phenomenological analysis, especially of the creation accounts in Genesis and Ephesians 5, the pope was effectively trying to explain the relationship between the statements “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created

45 Ladaria too embraces this dynamic and process character of the image of God. When emphasizing this he draws from the work of Juan Luis Ruiz de la Peña, who writes, for example: “Man’s destiny is no longer the image of God, but the image of Christ. Or better, the only way man can become an image of God is by reproducing in himself the image of Christ ... The image of God is not, therefore, a static magnitude, given once and for all; it is rather a dynamic reality whose gradual coinage is taking place in the Christian’s interpersonal relationship with Christ” (Imagen de Dios: Antropología teológica fundamental, 79).
him” and “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). John Paul locates the link between these two realities in man’s capacity and call to form a ‘communion of persons’ in imitation of the Trinity. He writes:

*Man became the image of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons, which man and woman form from the very beginning. The function of the image is that of mirroring the one who is the model, of reproducing its own prototype. Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. He is, in fact, “from the beginning” not only an image in which the solitude of one Person, who rules the world, mirrors itself, but also and essentially the image of an inscrutable divine communion of Persons.*

In this way, the second account could also prepare for understanding the trinitarian concept of the “image of God,” even if “image” appears only in the first account.46

The late pontiff’s beautiful and penetrating analysis undoubtedly constitutes an invaluable contribution to theological anthropology and to the deepest meaning of marriage. We could say that he released the Trinitarian image of God in man from the confines of the individual person’s mind, something that Augustine’s psychological image, for all its merit and creativity, fails to do. Without equating the definition of personhood in human beings to that of the divine Persons, each of whom is a *relatio subsistens*, the pope emphasized a highly neglected aspect of the image of God in man, one that is intrinsic to his realization as a person: *communion*, that is, relationality in reciprocal self-transcendence and selfgift. In doing this, John Paul simultaneously explained why

---


47 According to Aquinas: “person in general signifies the individual substance of a rational nature. The individual in itself is undivided, but is distinct from others. Therefore person in any nature signifies what is distinct in that nature. … Now distinction in God is only by relation of origin, as stated above, while *relation in God is not as an accident in a subject, but is the divine essence itself; and so it is subsistent, for the divine essence subsists. Therefore, as the Godhead is God, so the divine paternity is God the Father, Who is a divine person. Therefore a divine person signifies a relation as subsisting*” (*ST* Ia, q. 29, a. 4, resp.; emphasis added).
the image of God in man, which is the source of human dignity, is so often overlooked or even denied—it is because the image is primarily manifested through self-gift and union between persons. To the extent that human beings remain isolated in egocentric concerns, they fail to actualize and reveal the image of God. Given the metaphysical axiom *agere sequitur esse* (action follows being), human beings who fail to act in a way that conforms to their personal nature effectively conceal the image of God that characterizes their being. Action not only follows being, it reveals it. The inability or unwillingness to go outside of myself for the other makes me blind to the value of the other *qua* other.

5. **Evaluation of the Prevailing Conceptions**

There are many positive elements of the above conceptions, and it is not without reason that these have dominated in Christian reflection on what it means for man to be created in the image and likeness of God. These conceptions are effective in capturing man’s natural constitution, the innate faculties and relational capacity that undoubtedly set him apart from the other creatures that surround him, giving him a distinguished place and purpose in the cosmos. In a particular way, the Trinitarian images—both Augustine’s ‘inner’ trinity of the soul and John Paul II’s ‘outer’ trinity of relationship and spousal love—deeply enrich the contents of the Genesis accounts through the lens of lived human experience. Each of the prevailing conceptions of the *imago Dei* in man contributes something to our overall understanding of the mystery of man; certainly, none of them is ‘wrong’ or misleading.

Having said this, there are some significant weaknesses or *lacunae* in all of these conceptions that give them a partial quality that calls for further theological development. Overall, these conceptions do not give sufficient weight to the New Testament and the revelation of Jesus Christ, the ‘perfect man’ who ‘reveals man to himself’. More specifically, the mediation of Christ already in creation is not duly accounted for, and instead, man is treated as fully constituted and comprehensible without reference to Christ and his Paschal Mystery. Likewise, little
to no reference is made of the fact that Christ himself is revealed as the image of God, the one to whom all men must be conformed in the process of their salvation.

I would like to suggest a couple of factors that may be at play in these deficiencies. First, perhaps existing theological commitments regarding the relationship between nature and grace—for example, a dramatic separation of the two in a state of ‘pure nature’—makes some theologians hesitant or unwilling to affirm the incarnate Christ as the intrinsic fulfillment of man. Admittedly, given such a starting point, in which God’s design is divided into two separate steps or stages—the first creative and second salvific—such hesitancy is quite understandable. However, as we will see in the following chapter, Ladaria’s presentation of the image of God in man as christological and even incarnational offers a compelling alternative to this kind of fragmentation of God’s design. Ladaria, along with a growing number of other theologians, embraces a christocentric view of God’s design that allows us to see continuity in God’s final plan for His creatures. When God creates us in His image and likeness ‘in the beginning’, he already has in mind the ‘fullness of time’, which includes Christ’s incarnation. Christ is the Alpha and Omega, and therefore determines both the beginning and end of the story. Sin is a detour that changes the form of the story, but not something that fundamentally changes the ‘final chapter’, the consummation.

CHAPTER III
THE CHRISTOLOGICAL-INCARNATIONAL IMAGO DEI

In the prologue for a collection of his essays, Ladaria sets the tone of the book with the following strongly worded summary:

Christ, the image of the invisible God, is the model of man. God models the first Adam with the traits that will clothe the Second [Adam] in his time […] there is no doubt that, already by the fact of creation itself, given that this is realized in Christ and for Christ, there is no man who is totally estranged from him or untouched by his light (cf. John 1:9). If salvation, which is always gratuitous
and unmerited, is not to be something extrinsic to man, Christ must be not only the last word concerning man, but also the first [...] The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus constitute the center of the divine design, and it is in light of this center that we must understand the creation of the world and man.48

1. CHRIST: SECOND ADAM AND PERFECT MAN

While GS 22 itself is, as noted in the introduction, well known and frequently quoted, there is something about the paragraph that perhaps goes unnoticed by many if not most readers. I am referring to the inconspicuous footnote in the middle of the first and most popular portion of the passage. The paragraph begins, “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord.” The second sentence, which is a direct reference to Romans 5:14, includes a footnote with a citation from Tertullian’s work, De Resurrectione Carnis, which states, “whatever was the form and expression which was then given to the clay (by the Creator) Christ was in His thoughts as one day to become man.”49 Again, most readers may not notice or make much out of this footnote, but Ladaria certainly did. Not limiting himself to Gaudium et Spes 22 or the insight of Tertullian cited therein, Ladaria takes up the Council’s idea that Christ is the homo perfectus (the perfect man): “He Who is “the image of the invisible God” [Col 1:15] is Himself the perfect man” (GS 22). Ladaria considers that there is tremendous theological significance—

48 Ladaria, Gesù Cristo..., 7–8.
49 Tertullian, De Resurrectione Carnis, 6, full quotation: “For, whatever was the form and expression which was then given to the clay (by the Creator) Christ was in His thoughts as one day to become man, because the Word, too, was to be both clay and flesh, even as the earth was then. For so did the Father previously say to the Son: “Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness” [Gen 1:26]. And God made man, that is to say, the creature which He moulded and fashioned; after the image of God (in other words, of Christ) did He make him And the Word was God also, who being in the image of God, “thought it not robbery to be equal to God.” Thus, that clay which was even then putting on the image of Christ, who was to come in the flesh, was not only the work, but also the pledge and surety, of God.”
especially for anthropology and soteriology—in the idea that Christ is not only fully man but also the perfect man. Through careful exegesis of the New Testament passages that speak about Christ’s mediation in creation, and drawing from several Church Fathers, Ladaria recovers and develops the idea that the first Adam was made in the image of the Second Adam, that is, that Adam was formed according to the image of the incarnate Jesus Christ. This interpretation of the imago Dei in man, which clearly differs from prevailing interpretations, both traditional and contemporary, allows Ladaria to draw powerful conclusions about God’s plan for man in Jesus Christ.

1.1. Soteriological Implications

In his development of the christological/incarnational image of God in man, Ladaria draws from the work of a few other contemporary theologians.50 For Ladaria, the creation of man in the image of Christ is the condition of possibility for the universal scope and significance of the Incarnation.51 When Gaudium et Spes 22 states that “by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man,” one might reasonably ask: How? That is, how is it that Christ’s becoming man can bring about a union between him and every man? Why is he not simply one more human being, another individual born into the nature of Adam? What is the basis for Christ’s universal significance as Savior and Redeemer?

50 Including Wolfhart Pannenberg († 2014), the German Lutheran theologian, and his fellow Spaniard, Juan Luis Ruiz de la Peña († 1996), who also taught at the Universidad de Comillas and co-founded the Spanish edition of the theological journal Communio.

51 Ladaria, Antropologia Teologica, 156: “All the economy of salvation is founded on Christ; there is a radical unity between creation and salvation. For this reason, it is not equivocal to think that there is an intrinsic correspondence between the initial design of God for man and its final realization. Man’s divine vocation in Christ, his call to configuration with the Second Adam, cannot fail to determine the being of the “first” Adam, and with him all of humanity. Were this not the case, salvation would be something external, independent from what we are beginning from our creation.”
1.2. Scriptural Foundation

Of course, there are various ways of responding to these questions, as the history of theology bears out. For Ladaria, though, the most convincing explanation for this lies in Christ’s creative mediation, through which every man was created in, through, and for Christ (Col 1:15–17). All men were made in the image of the incarnate Christ, chosen “in him before the foundation of the world” and predestined “in love to be [God’s] sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:4–5). Our predestination to be sons and daughters of the Father through union with the incarnate Son is the priority in God’s eternal plan that allows Christ’s coming in the flesh to constitute more than a mere extrinsic, transaction-like exchange of grace between God and sinful humanity by the intervention of a third-party, a mercenary, as it were. Instead, as we read in John’s prologue: “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not” (John 1:10–11).

Christ’s human nature can be the instrument of salvation for all men because they were originally created according to Christ as their model; he is therefore their unique goal and fullness. For Ladaria, this is the most coherent interpretation of Gaudium et Spes’ designation of Christ as homo perfectus. He writes:

If Christ is man’s perfection, salvation in him is man’s only fullness. God created us thinking about him, and in this sense the primacy must be given to him in everything. Beginning from the homo perfectus, we can come to understand what we are. When God modelled the first Adam, He had in mind the Second.”

The transition from the first Adam to the Second Adam, from the

52 Cf. St. John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, for example, par. 13: “Man as “willed” by God, as “chosen” by him from eternity and called, destined for grace and glory—this is “each” man, “the most concrete” man, “the most real”; this is man in all the fullness of the mystery in which he has become a sharer in Jesus Christ.”

53 Ladaria, Gesù Cristo..., 18-19. An operative question for Ladaria is: “What does the Son’s Incarnation mean for the very definition of man?” (ibid., 38).
creation to the “new creation” (cf. 2 Cor 5:16–21)—while it necessarily includes the redemptive suffering and death of Christ given the historical economy after the Fall—is now revealed to belong to God’s original plan for man. It is His eternal and unified design of love by which He diffuses His goodness, blessing His creation and glorifying Himself. The meaning of man as created in the imago Dei, which had remained implicit, mysterious, and even incomplete from Genesis all the way through the Old Testament, only becomes clear when the true Image appears in Christ.54

Once it is revealed, the shocking novelty of the Incarnation, which was by no means deducible as necessary or inevitable on the basis of Old Covenant revelation (much less man’s nature), now stands revealed as the foundational principle of creation itself, the model according to which everything was made and the end toward which it is moving.55 This unified aspect of God’s plan in creating man in His image—from creation, through restoration, to elevation—is clearly expressed in St. Paul’s letter to the Romans: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom 8:29–30).

---

54 As von Balthasar writes, “Biblically speaking, the idea that man is God’s image remains insignificant until Christ appears in our midst as the Archetype who recreates “our former man” (Rom 6:6) as a “new man” (Eph 2:15), “conformed to [his] image” (Rom 8:29) and “renewed in knowledge after the image of his creator” (Col 3:10)” (Explorations in Theology V: Man is Created, Kindle loc. 154)

55 St. John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, 18: “[The Word] gave power to become children of God” [John 1:12]. Man is transformed inwardly by this power as the source of a new life that does not disappear and pass away but lasts to eternal life [John 4:14]. This life, which the Father has promised and offered to each man in Jesus Christ, his eternal and only Son, who, “when the time had fully come,” became incarnate and was born of the Virgin Mary, is the final fulfilment of man’s vocation. It is in a way the fulfilment of the “destiny” that God has prepared for him from eternity” (emphasis added).
1.3. Patristic Foundation

Beyond the above-mentioned text of Tertullian cited in GS 22, the notion that the incarnate Christ reveals and fulfills the image of God in man also finds justification in the theology of St. Irenaeus. In his *magnum opus, Against Heresies*, for example, he writes:

… in times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not [actually] shown for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created. Wherefore also he did easily lose the similitude. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these: for He both showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His image; and He re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.

Already for St. Justin Martyr (2nd cent.), man’s being created in the image and likeness of God was not limited to his soul or rational nature; it specifically confers dignity on his flesh, a point that for Justin refutes those who would devalue the body by appealing to any kind of dualism:

For does not the word say, “Let Us make man in our image, and after our likeness?” What kind of man? Manifestly He means fleshly man. For the word says, “And God took dust of the earth, and made man.” It is evident, therefore, that man made in the image of God was of flesh. Is it not, then, absurd to say, that the flesh made by God in His own image is contemptible, and worth nothing?

---

56 The patrologist Fr. Antonio Orbe, S.J., the director of Ladaria’s dissertation, was a leading expert on St. Irenaeus, producing translations of his writings and writing many books and articles on his theology. Ladaria himself draws heavily from Irenaeus’ writings.

57 St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adv. Haer.* 5.16.2; emphasis added. Also, in regard to the idea that man is made specifically in the image of the incarnate Word, *ibid.*, 5.6.1: “Man, and not [merely] a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a part of the man, but certainly not the man; for the perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God” (emphasis added).

Finally, in another passage of Tertullian that is even more explicit than the one cited earlier, we read:

In the following text also He distinguishes among the Persons: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him.” Why say “image of God?” Why not “His own image” merely, if He was the only one who was the Maker, and if there was not also One in whose image He made man? But there was One in whose image God was making man, that is to say, Christ’s image, who, being one day about to become Man (more surely and more truly so), had already caused the man to be called His image, who was then going to be formed of clay—the image and similitude of the true and perfect Man.\(^\text{59}\)

### 2. Cur Deus Homo? The Famous Debate in the Background

At this point in our reflection on the image of God in man, the reader may be wondering: But how can the incarnate man Jesus Christ be the model according to which man was originally made and his only fulfillment if Christ’s incarnation occurred long after man’s creation? Even granting that Christ’s coming in the flesh took place, in the words of St. Paul, in the “fullness of time” (Eph 1:10), is not his Incarnation a consequence of the Fall and the condescension of God’s mercy in response to man’s need for redemption? In other words, does not affirming the incarnate Christ as the image of God in man necessarily mean that the Incarnation was in some sense inevitable? What about the utter gratuity and unexpected quality of the Incarnation? Are these not undermined on such a view? Here we are touching directly on the famous Medieval debate about the ‘reason’ for the Incarnation, on why God became man (Cur Deus homo?).

#### 2.1. Salvation vs. Redemption

It is not within the scope of this essay to enter into the details of the debate about the reason for the Incarnation. However, to respond to these questions, which are legitimate and quite relevant to our topic, we need to consider an important distinction that Ladaria makes between the concepts of ‘salvation’ and ‘redemption’. Often a chronologically bound

---

way of thinking fails to accept the full weight of the New Testament’s affirmations, which, on the basis of the redemptive love experienced in Jesus Christ, tell us about God’s plan of salvation for human beings from the beginning—i.e., not only as a response to man’s sin.

Let us recall that we were all created in Christ and destined for union with God, and that this intention was part of God’s original plan for us, as we saw already in the passage from Ephesians: “[God] chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...” (Eph 1:4–5). Before the foundation of the world. This clearly indicates that God’s intention to make us “holy” and “his sons through Jesus Christ” pre-existed the creation of man, and therefore, of course, the man falling into sin. Therefore, we can safely affirm that, within the unified design of God, our sanctification and divine filiation in Christ are essential elements of His will to create us (and the rest of the cosmos), and not merely a response to our sin.60

Christ’s Incarnation brings about an elevation and glorification of our human nature that goes beyond merely restoring us to our prelapsarian state. Salvation is no mere return to ‘normal’ or ‘resetting’ of creation. No, for we are to become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). Or, as Paul repeats again and again to the Romans, the promise we have in Jesus Christ is not an equal-but-opposite reaction to the trespass of Adam: it is πολλῷ μᾶλλον (“much more”). Numerous passages in the New Testament testify to this “much more.” Here is but a sampling:

---

60 For an introduction to divinization or deification as the central mystery of salvation, in view of which man was created, see David Meconi, S.J., Union with God: Living the Christ Life (Catholic Truth Society, 2017). Meconi writes, for example: “All of creation is ordered to the communion of God with those creatures who are uniquely like him, with those creatures who alone are persons made in his image. ... From the beginning of time, Christ’s perfect union of divinity and humanity has been the goal toward which all created humans hasten, and such union demanded a unique creature capable of receiving God in a special and friendly way. God’s own icons who have no more important vocation than to enter into loving union with him” (“Made in this divine image,” Kindle loc. 144).
I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him. (1 Cor 2:9)

We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another. (2 Cor 3:18)

This slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. (2 Cor 4:17)

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. (2 Cor 5:17)

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. (Gal 2:20a)

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Pet 1:3–4)

Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)61

Evidently, the Incarnation of Christ brings about far more than the simple restoration of justice upset by the transgression of our first parents, as tremendous a restoration that is. It further enables us to become children of God, to see Christ and to be “like him,” to become partakers of the divine nature in glory; in summary, to become “a new creation.” The Incarnation is the cause of the new creation.

All of this unimaginable “much more” that we receive through Christ helps us to see that salvation is a much broader category than redemption; and this is Ladaria’s point. To be saved in Christ is to be recreated, to be deified and made one with God. Given the historical and universal reality of our fallen state, redemption is necessarily an essential part

---

61 Emphases added.
of our salvation in Christ; it is the first step: “the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). We could say that redemption is part of the one, larger ‘movement’ of salvation. Redemption, understood as healing and restoration made necessary by sin, is a historically contingent addition to God’s plan of salvation and glorification, which is eternal. God is love (1 John 4:8), and when we as creatures wounded by sin receive His love, we necessarily experience it as mercy because, as the old Latin maxim says: *quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*. On this distinction and relationship between salvation and redemption, Ladaria writes:

> The salvation of Christ is the fullness of being of man in all his dimensions, not only in the liberation from sin; there was never another design of God for us besides this fullness in Christ. … ‘Salvation’ is a broader concept than that of redemption or the overcoming of sin, even with all centrality and importance that this latter aspect undoubtedly has; salvation is the gift that God makes of Himself for us in Jesus and in the Spirit, which enables us to participate in His Trinitarian life. The salvation of man consists of his conformation according to Christ, in reproducing his image, and in realizing, in the final analysis, the human ideal that finds its paradigm in the risen Christ. Therefore, the salvation of man and the christocentrism in God’s design cannot be considered as two opposed realities; on the contrary, they coincide. This is the point that we must retain above all.

2.2. THE INCARNATION: INTRINSIC FULFILLMENT OF MAN?

It is clear that, for Ladaria, the Incarnation has been revealed as the Godwilled means for accomplishing man’s elevation and glorification—not only his redemption. Therefore, on Ladaria’s reading, Christ would have become incarnate whether or not man had sinned. The Incarnation is the turning point in God’s eternal design that guarantees the unity of creation and salvation. The Incarnation is an essential step in the

---

62  “Whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver.”
63  Ladaria, *Antropologia Teologica*, 46–47; emphasis added.
64  Ibid., 47: “We must therefore affirm first of all that man and the world have always made sense beginning from Jesus, and that he is “first” in the Father’s plans from the moment God decided to create. But this Jesus in whom everything subsists is he who
fulfillment of God’s plan for man from the beginning, so that the first Adam, made in the image of God, will only be fully realized according to that image when he is conformed to the image of Christ. Christ’s Incarnation, which unites humanity and divinity in his own person, is the unique foundation and means for uniting all humanity to God (GS 22). Of course, many theologians would not agree with this view espoused by Ladaria and others. Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, is a very reputable theologian who embraces a different view. In his recent book, Christ the Heart of Creation, he writes:

It is perfectly true that humanity can be human only in relation to Christ—as all finite reality is itself only in virtue of its relation to the one who is creation’s “head” and first principle. It is not true that humanity can be human (can realize the Creator’s purpose for humanity) only if there is a guarantee of union between divine and human nature. Both the divine and the human are compromised if this is the case. We can quite properly say that creation becomes itself by way of a radical expansion of what is possible in relation to the infinite as the result of the union of finite and infinite in the one person of the Word. But this is different from the claim that the presence of the infinite as a crowning element in the created order is needful for creation to fulfil its purpose.65

2.3. THE INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

In the last few decades, the International Theological Commission has touched on the relationship between the Incarnation and the full realization of man in a couple of documents. In fact, I would contend that Ladaria’s views on the Incarnation and anthropology are largely reflected in these documents. For example, in the Commission’s 1981 text, Theology, Christology, Anthropology, it treats the theme of the image of God in man through the lens of deification or divinization:

Created in the image and likeness of God, man is called to a sharing of life with lived, died, and rose for us. In this way, the order of creation and that of salvation receive their radical unity.”

65 Rowan Williams, Christ the Heart of Creation (Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018), 144–145.
God, who alone can fulfill the deepest desires of the human heart. The idea of deification reaches its summit by virtue of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Word assumes our mortal nature so that we can be freed from death and sin and can share in the divine life. Through Jesus Christ we are partakers in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). Deification consists in the very grace that frees us from the death of sin and communicates to us the divine life itself. We are sons in the Son.66

The Commission continues,

... the divinity of Jesus Christ does not change or dissolve human nature but rather makes it more itself and perfects it in its original condition of creaturehood. Redemption does not, in a general way, simply convert human nature into something divine but renews human nature along the lines of the human nature of Jesus Christ [...] deification properly understood can make man perfectly human: deification is the truest and ultimate hominization of man.67

In a more recent document titled Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God (2004), the ITC writes that, in the biblical perspective,

... the whole of man is seen as created in the image of God. This perspective excludes interpretations which locate the imago Dei in one or another aspect of human nature (for example, his upright stature or his intellect) or in one of his qualities or functions (for example, his sexual nature or his domination of the earth). Avoiding both monism and dualism, the Bible presents a vision of the human being in which the spiritual is understood to be a dimension together with the physical, social and historical dimensions of man.68

Next, the Commission speaks even more directly about the christological and Trinitarian character of the imago Dei in man. Given this section’s close concordance with Ladaria’s view, I conclude this section quoting it at length:

The created image affirmed by the Old Testament is, according to the New Testament, to be completed in the imago Christi. In the New Testament

66  International Theological Commission, Theology, Christology, Anthropology (1981), E.3; emphasis added.
67  Ibid., 4; emphasis added.
development of this theme, two distinctive elements emerge: the christological and Trinitarian character of the *imago Dei*, and the role of sacramental mediation in the formation of the *imago Christi*. Since it is Christ himself who is the perfect image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3), man must be conformed to him (Rom 8:29) in order to become the son of the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:23). Indeed, to ‘become’ the image of God requires an active participation on man’s part in his transformation according to the pattern of the image of the Son (Col 3:10) who manifests his identity by the historical movement from his incarnation to his glory. According to the pattern first traced out by the Son, the image of God in each man is constituted by his own historical passage from creation, through conversion from sin, to salvation and consummation.\(^{69}\)

**CONCLUSION**

We began this study by listening to the concern of Walter Kasper, who in 1996 observed that the Second Vatican Council’s call for a christological anthropology remained in many ways an “urgent desideratum.” In our quest for a response to this desideratum, we narrowed our scope by following Kasper’s designation of the *imago Dei* as the “systematic clasp holding together anthropology and Christology.” As we have seen in our quick panoramic of Luis Ladaria’s theological anthropology, he offers a compelling presentation of what the *imago Dei* in man means in light of Jesus Christ and the salvation offered to us in him. In his desire to take seriously the creative mediation of Jesus Christ and the unity of the divine plan, Ladaria recovers a patristic insight that was largely forgotten in Western theology and uses it to develop an original and profound synthesis.

While other prevailing conceptions of the *imago Dei* in man contribute in important and diverse ways to our understanding of man as Christians, we saw that most of these fail to consider what it means for Christ to be the “perfect man” who “reveals man to himself” (*GS* 22). Thus, while not wanting to devalue or dismiss any of the popular conceptions as ‘wrong,’ we nevertheless desired to follow the Second

\(^{69}\) ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, 11–12.
Vatican Council’s outline for theological anthropology. To this end, we considered the contributions of Ladaria, whose formation gave him a strong appreciation and competency for patristic and scriptural ressourcement, and whose ecclesiastical appointments make him a credible and trustworthy guide for understanding the theology of the Council. Finally, we noted that, while some theologians will not agree with Ladaria on this topic, the writings of post-conciliar popes and the International Theological Commission confirm important elements of Ladaria’s thought, which suggests that his insights are contributing to substantial and lasting theological developments rather than passing trends.

I will conclude here, leaving the final word to a Joseph Ratzinger, a great theologian who evidently esteems Ladaria and values his contributions to the Church’s theological reflection:

In the New Testament Christ is referred to as the second Adam, as the definitive Adam, and as the image of God (c.f., e.g., 1 Cor 15:44–48; Col 1:15). This means that in him alone appears the complete answer to the question about what the human being is. In him alone appears the deepest meaning of what is for the present a rough draft. He is the definitive human being, and creation is, as it were, a preliminary sketch that points to him. Thus we can say that human persons are the beings who can be Jesus Christ’s brothers or sisters. Human beings are the creatures that can be one with Christ and thereby be one with God himself. Hence this relationship of creature to Christ, of the first to the second Adam, signifies that human persons are beings en route, beings characterized by transition. They are not yet themselves; they must ultimately become themselves.70

How much more?

The Baltimore Catechism begins with the question: “Who made me?” “God made me.” This is followed by the question: “And why did God make me?” “To love and serve Him in this life and to be happy with Him forever in heaven.” \(^1\) I am told there is an African Version of the Baltimore Catechism: “And why did God make me?” “Because He thought I might enjoy it.”

In the spring of 2010, I had the privilege of spending three months on sabbatical doing independent study of the writings of Saint Paul. Early on in my studies, a phrase jumped out at me that became a central insight into St. Paul as a priest and a pastor: How much more?

So, let us begin with God’s promise to us: How much more? “But God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”\(^2\) “How much more then, since we are now justified by His blood, will we be saved by Him from the wrath. Indeed if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by His life.”\(^3\)

After speaking about humanity’s sin through Adam, Paul picks up this

---

2 Rom 5:8.
3 Rom 5:9–10.
theme again: “But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by that one person’s transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the many […] For if, by the transgression of one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ.”

The power of God’s love is greater than the power of evil. Therefore, we place our trust in God. This is why our confidence is not in ourselves but in God who made us and loves us. Paul sums this up well: “Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more.”

To live a life of faith we need proper perspective: This life is not all there is. Too many people become angry with God and turn away from God when a loved one dies, even if the person is elderly. Anger is one of the stages of grieving and is understandable. But this anger can be misdirected. God is blamed for the death. However, God is not a puppeteer pulling the strings of life and determining the moment of death. People become angry because they have no sense of death as a passage to new life. They become angry because their world is disturbed. If we think this life is the only life there is, then we will indeed be disturbed when someone dies. It is the nature of this life to die and we need to accept life on its terms, not on our expectations. This life is constantly changing. We are on a journey and the journey, lived in faith, leads to life in union with God forever. “If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all.”

**Now we are ready to launch Paul’s journey.**

St. Paul: Believer, Proclaimer of Christ, Pastoral Theologian. His journey begins with a dramatic experience on the road to Damascus:

---

4 Rom 5:15–17.
5 Rom 5:20b.
6 1 Cor 15:19.
accounts of this are in three places in the Acts of the Apostles: 9:1–6; 22:6–11; 26:11–18. It is popularly called Paul’s “conversion.” Saul was: a) a persecutor of Christians; b) a Pharisee; c) a zealous follower of the law; d) present at the stoning of Stephen; e) the first martyr.

There were three schools of thought within Judaism at that time: The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. The Pharisees were not a priestly movement. Their approach to the written Law of Moses was marked by a theory of a second oral law derived from the written Law. Their interpretation of the law was less severe than that of the Essenes and more innovative than those of the Sadducees who remained conservatively restricted to the written Law. The Pharisees professed belief in the resurrection of the body and angels. The Sadducees did not. Paul was zealous about the Law and willing to enter into violence to protect it.

His “conversion” was not from Judaism to Christianity; not from being a law breaker; he claims to have always been blameless before the law. His “conversion” was rather a dramatic change in perspective. His personal experience is the basis of his change in perspective and in his call to preach Christ to the Gentiles.

We see here the profound affect Jesus Christ has upon Paul. His entire worldview and his deeply held convictions were profoundly affected by Christ in the encounter on the road. Paul did not cease to be a Jew; he did not reject his Jewish roots. Rather, he accepted Jesus Christ as the one long awaited. He went from being a Shammaite Pharisee (which meant he was a fervent follower of the precepts of the law) to being a believer who proclaimed Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

cus” in *IDB* I, 757–758.
He did not simply accept new ideas on the road to Damascus. He met a person who identified Himself as the one Paul was persecuting. He met the person of Jesus Christ, not the earthly Christ but the crucified and risen Christ.

In meeting Jesus Christ as the risen Lord, he was also moving from a perspective of thinking he was doing the right thing in persecuting the followers of Christ to accepting Jesus Christ just as those he persecuted did. This must have had a profound effect upon him. Did he regret his actions at the stoning of Stephen or his mission to search out Christians and persecute them? Was he simply overwhelmed by the love that pervaded his spirit in meeting Jesus Christ? These are not mutually exclusive. We all live with contradictions: “I do the very thing I don’t want to do.”11 In our lives we seek integrity from the freedom that comes with accepting Jesus Christ’s love.

Paul’s personal experience of Christ will shape his pastoral leadership and his theological perspective. He looks beyond his Jewish community and its religious horizon as the chosen people to the universality and the unity of God’s love. Thus, he now sees Israel not as privileged but as the means through whom God seeks to share the one plan of salvation for all nations. He will come to conclude that Israel failed in this mission and that Jesus Christ accomplished what Israel and the law failed to accomplish—namely, that Christ’s fidelity restores us to a right relationship with God.

What is at the core of this personal experience? It is the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Paul Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams of the Old Testament people:

a) The long-awaited Messiah;12 b) The fulfillment of the covenant with

---

11 Rom 7:15.
Moses;\textsuperscript{13} c) The promise made to Abraham;\textsuperscript{14} d) Jesus established as Messiah and Lord.\textsuperscript{15}

Saul becomes Paul. Saul who persecuted followers of the Way becomes a follower of the Way of Jesus Christ. The death and resurrection of Christ are intimately connected. I begin this series on Saint Paul by looking at his personal journey. Subsequent articles will examine the notions of justification by faith, Church, Eschatology, and the Virtue of Hope.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A JOURNEY

I would like to set the stage by appreciating the spiritual life as a journey that only ends with life on high in the presence of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is best expressed through the experiences of call and conversion in our lives.

The spiritual life is a journey. It is very important that we recognize that we are on a pilgrimage to the heart of God. We never arrive. We never have God figured out. But we can get stuck along the way.

1. God loves you. Yes, that is true, and it is wonderful. This needs to be accepted and integrated. You are called not simply to be a disciple who knows God loves you. That only leads to pride or complacency.

2. You realize you are not worthy. You can get stuck here and become overwhelmed with your sinfulness. This leads to introspection—to beating yourself up.

3. Conversion is a process, not simply a moment. It is a time to look at your life in relationship to God and God’s love for you – a very different perspective. When Paul asked the voice that confronted him: "Who are


“you?,” the voice said: “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” 16 At that moment Paul accepted Jesus as the Messiah in two ways: crucified and risen from the dead. Paul’s conversion and his call to preach Jesus Christ are not separate moments. They occur simultaneously in the encounter on the road to Damascus. This is a move outward: from being a disciple to being an apostle. To be a disciple is to be in the company of Jesus; to be an apostle is to be sent forth in His name.

Paul was blinded by his experience and led into the city to Ananias. 17 He spent three years before he started preaching, even though his conversion and call were at that same Damascus moment. He was not just becoming a better person; he was becoming God’s person—the person God made him to be.

The journey never ends. God is not finished with you. God’s action in Paul’s life is only beginning. Paul would visit Peter three years later, 18 and the elders in Jerusalem after fourteen years. 19 Many years later he reaches a point where he would rather die and be with the Lord but will remain here, if it could benefit others coming to Christ. 20

**Paul’s faith in Christ:**

Paul’s faith in Christ is aptly expressed in three titles he gives to Jesus: a) Son of God; b) Lord; c) Messiah. We will deal with Lord and Messiah.

Paul’s preferred title for Christ is Lord. It signals Jesus’ special status and dignity. In first Corinthians alone it occurs sixty-six times. We just saw it used in the greetings to the Romans: “Jesus Christ our Lord.” 21 It often occurs in the phrase: the Lord Jesus Christ. The title ‘lord’ 22 was

16 Acts 9:5b.
18 Gal 1:18.
19 Gal 2:1.
20 Phil 1:23.
21 Rom 1:4.
used often in the society of the time. For Paul, this title is unique in Christ because of His death and resurrection which establishes Jesus as Lord in Paul’s eyes.\textsuperscript{23}

The other significant window into Paul’s appreciation of Jesus is the title: \textit{Christ}. This is not His last name. This is a title bestowed upon Jesus to signify faith in Him as the Messiah. It means He is the anointed one. The title “Christ” appears 64 times in First Corinthians alone.\textsuperscript{24}

\section*{Paul’s Confidence in Christ}

Clearly, Paul’s confidence comes from his faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and raised from the dead. This is the basis of his conviction that he is an apostle. It is the basis of his confidence as a preacher, though he is criticized for being strong when writing but weak when present.\textsuperscript{25} We might look at this from the phenomenon of \textit{boasting} which occurs sixty-six times in the New Testament, fifty-four times in the undisputed letters.\textsuperscript{26}

Paul speaks about boasting in basically two ways: when he defends himself as an apostle in reference to the super-apostles\textsuperscript{27} and when he speaks of his confidence in Christ. For now, I would like to look at the latter use of boasting. (There is so much in Paul’s writings that one could take a detour at almost every point. I aim to avoid the detours and stay on the point, which here is Paul’s confidence in Christ that gives us another window into the person of Jesus from his perspective).

Our primary source here is the second letter to the Corinthians. Paul begins with a basic statement: “\textit{Whoever boasts should boast in the Lord.}”\textsuperscript{28} Interestingly enough, Paul says that if he must boast he will boast of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[24] “Christós” in \textit{BDAG}, 1091.
\item[25] 2 Cor 10:10.
\item[26] To boast, cf., “\textit{kauchaomai}” in \textit{BDAG}, 536–537.
\item[27] 2 Cor 11:5.
\item[28] 2 Cor 10:17.
\end{footnotes}
things that show his weakness.⁸⁹

This introduces Paul’s view of himself in relationship to Christ and what underlies his confidence in Christ. He refers to a “thorn in the flesh” that has confounded commentators for centuries: “That I might not become too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan to beat me to keep me from being too elated.”³⁰

At times Paul can seem quite humble. At other times, he seems arrogant in his own defense. However, the latter may be simply the result of his confidence in Christ as called and commissioned to preach.

Speculation has abounded on what this might have entailed, from a physical ailment to a psychological problem to a moral failing. Speculation about the meaning of this in Paul’s life is, in the end, fruitless. More relevant I suspect is our identification of this in our own lives and our experience of wishing this would go away. It would be good to identify the thorn in the flesh. Paul says it kept him humble. Does it keep you humble?

However, Paul takes it a step further and herein lies fruitful spiritual ground for you and me. I suspect we can identify with Paul here: “Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me.”³¹ Have you ever prayed this way? I have. It would be so much easier if our faults and shortcomings could be eliminated. Their persistence leads to our discouragement and even loss of faith.

Instead of giving up on prayer or insisting in prayer that this thorn be removed, Paul experiences the grace of God: “but he said to me: ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’”³² Now that is a mighty mountain to swallow! Paul continues by giving witness for us: “I would rather boast most gladly of my weakness in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults,
hardships, persecutions, and constraints for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”33

This is not martyrdom or self-pity, traps into which you and I might fall. This is faith: total confidence and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and raised from the dead. Again, the death of Christ on the cross was a powerful example to Paul of weakness becoming strength. “For indeed he was crucified out of weakness, but he lives by the power of God.”34

The pattern of death and resurrection shows the initiative and the power of God. This is the source of Paul’s confidence. It is why he can say in the context of a discussion about circumcision: “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.”35

**PAUL’S MISSION TO THE GENTILES**

I have said that Paul’s call to follow Christ and his commission to preach the Gospel were one. This was not simply a commissioning to preach. It was specifically a commissioning to preach to the Gentiles. Paul will fight hard to fulfill this mission. He will insist that his mission is to the Gentiles just as Peter’s mission is to the Jews. In addition, he will resist any attempts to make Jewish ways the path for Gentiles to become Christians. He will resist Peter to his face and will operate out of a firm inner conviction in this regard. We will revisit this next time when we will turn to one of the most important and controversial issues in Paul’s writings and in his approach to Christianity. It is the notion of righteousness, the notion that justification comes through faith, not through the Law or the works of the Law.

---

33  2 Cor 12:9b–10.
34  2 Cor 13:4
Jean-Luc Marion opens his Gifford Lectures by framing the aporia of revelation. Marion contends that the history of the aporia is developed by wholly epistemological concerns which demonstrates the insularity of the problem and necessitates a phenomenal re-appropriation of revelation.1 This history exposes the aporia is forged as two seemingly opposing horizons of human knowledge: On one hand, the human mind knows things in the world precisely though the faculties available to rationality, that is as *scientia*; yet, at the same time, revelation as *apokalypsis* is the unveiling of something that originates from outside this epistemological limitation. *Apokalypsis* unexpectedly appears: It reveals itself not by deduction nor rationalistic processes but by pure gift, coming *from elsewhere.*2 This acute perceptivity to ‘the gift’ exposes the influence in Marion’s own philosophical thought of his mentor, Jacques Derrida, and his own philosophical investigations into the aporia of the gift. For Derrida an authentic, altruistic gift is always frustrated by a presumed economic bond. In every instance of a gift there is a give-and-take

---

2 Much more will be said about this component of Marion’s phenomenology, but, for now, it is important to simply acknowledge that part of the definition of *apokalypsis* is that it comes *from elsewhere.* See ibid., 2.
where any hope for a ‘true gift’ is always truncated by a corresponding presumption of return. For every gift, and the resulting return of even a simple thank you, an economic bond of benefit not only outstrips the possibility of authentic altruism but is thrown back on itself as insular to the internal dynamics of one person to another. These internal dynamics reveal that the aporia of this phenomenon discloses itself as a circularity which disturbs any desire for an authentic gift. In this sense a gift is stifling and frustrating as it cannot break through the circular limitations placed upon human interaction. As he notes, “It is always necessary to excuse oneself for giving, for a gift must never appear in a present, given the risk of its being annulled in thanks, in the symbolic, in exchange or economy, indeed, in its becoming a benefit.” More specifically, the phenomenological insights of the aporia of the gift ultimately disclose a paradox within the human person; for persons both desire an altruistic gift yet are frustrated in the impossibility of its reception. It is against the backdrop of this aporia that Marion’s philosophy, as a student of Derrida, must be seen, especially given their thematic and celebrated debates on the topic. While the intricacies of that debate fall well out of the scope of this paper, it is worth noting the specific contributions of each scholar to the ongoing conversation on the gift. 

3 See Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 27–30. Here Derrida remarks on the impossibility of the gift, as it always becomes reduced to the circular. As he notes on 29: “For finally, if the gift is another name of the impossible, we still think it, we name it, we desire it. We intend it. And this even if or because or to the extent that we never encounter it, we never know it, we never verify it, we never experience it in its present existence or in its phenomenon.”


of the scope of this article its very emergence discloses a *lumen quo* by which to see Marion’s own insight into the aporia of revelation as ostensibly carrying out a response to the Derridean paradox. After all, even if only preliminarily, it would seem that revelation might shed light upon the paradox, as revelation is an altruistic gift where the giver remains anonymous.  

THE APORIA OF REVELATION AND HISTORY

The thematization of the aporia of revelation was inaugurated by Thomas Aquinas. Marion begins by treating Thomas’ two-fold approach to theology, namely *sacra doctrina* (that is, knowledge derived from revelation) and metaphysical theology (philosophical knowledge of divine things reached within the limits of reason and known only indirectly through their effects). For Marion, the aporia originates from Thomas’ understanding of these two stems of knowledge as both *scientia.* Much depends on the Thomistic use of the word ‘*scientia*’. Marion observes the threefold way in which Thomas makes use of the word *scientia* in order to describe three methods of knowing God, namely: (i) *scientia* as metaphysical knowledge of God; (ii) *scientia* as revealed knowledge derived from the authority of scriptures, and; (iii) *scientia* as knowledge of the blessed (*scientia beatorum*). For Marion what unites all three levels of knowledge is in fact that they are *scientia*; in other

---

7 For more on ‘anonymous donation’ and is importance for an altruistic gift see: Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion, “On the Gift,” in *Of God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, 62. Moreover, an interesting dialogue partner in this discussion would be Pope Benedict XVI and his encyclical, *Caritas in Veritas*, where he discloses the ‘logic of giving’ which is precisely an answer to the ‘logic of economy.’ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritas*, pars. 5, 34, and 36.

8 While Marion cites Augustine as beginning to think through the problem of revelation, undoubtedly, Marion believes it was Thomas Aquinas who first thematized it. See Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 13, fn. 16.

9 Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 11.

10 Marion derives his exposition of *scientia* from Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 1, a. 1.
words, they are bracketed as existing primarily within the strictures of epistemology. Further, the first two *scientia* must be subordinate to the third. By definition the *scientia beatorum* must be the fullness of knowledge of divine things otherwise imperfections are introduced into the beatific vision. In this sense, revealed knowledge must avoid being flattened by succumbing to either pole: Collapsing into a natural knowledge where revelation turns out to unveil nothing that we do not already have access to, nor elevated to the level of the sublime (that is, to the saints in heaven where respect for our temporal life *in via* is obliterated). Hence, revealed knowledge is subordinated to the *scientia beatorum* which is the fullness of divine knowledge, yet, superior to natural reason because of its (albeit shadowy from our perspective) participation in the former. Yet, Marion believes, here we find our aporia:

...when we, *in via*, here and now, try to develop a *theologia sacra doctrinae*, revealed to us by God in his Word, we do not have access to the ‘science of the blessed,’ by which is by definition still to come, eschatological. Revealed theology, therefore, cannot have access to principles that would make it a science.11

Another way of disclosing the aporia is to frame it in the form of a question: If revealed knowledge has a privileged status which both surpasses philosophical knowledge and, at the same time, participates in the superior beatific knowledge, then how can revealed knowledge be confirmed as knowledge at all given that, by definition, it lies outside the limitations of all reason, namely, as a *scientia*?12 Revealed knowledge, precisely as knowledge, seemingly has escaped from our grasp as every effort to understand it as knowledge must have recourse to a *scientia* below its own epistemological milieu.13 It is thus that we arrive at our

---


12 While the framing of the question is my own, it is derived from Marion’s comments and, I believe, best cuts to the issue at hand. Cf. ibid., 12.

13 It should be noted that, albeit Marion has elsewhere insisted on a univocity in his thinking, such as in the phenomenology of love (See Christina M. Gschwandtner’s work *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* [Bloomington, ID: Indiana University Press, 2014], 112), nevertheless, here he is on guard against reducing
Nevertheless, for Marion, it was Descartes, Kant, and Hegel who obstinately determined the history of the aporia. He believes that Descartes contributed to the historical forgetting of the aporia by identifying *apokalypsis* as *aletheia*, thereby subordinating revelation to reason and confining it with the fetters of the Cartesian quest for certainty: Clear and distinct ideas. Yet it was Kant who codified the subordination of revelation to reason. Kant’s use of ‘reason alone’ as the arbiter of knowledge justified the now clear and distinct separation of *de revelatione* and *de fide*, thereby authorizing the right to critique revelation under the rubric of science. Finally, Marion traces the course of history to Hegel who surmounted the Kantian limitation of knowledge by legitimatizing universal knowledge through the use of concept, finally providing real, absolute knowledge. Disparaging the bleak consummation of history in Hegel, Marion notes, “Once again, revelation will reveal nothing other than what reason itself had known, but this time, rightly so, since with regard to ‘reason’, we are now dealing with an absolute knowledge.” Whatever else can be said of such a history, for Marion the result is clear: The aporia was quietly

---

14 Ultimately, as to Marion’s reading of Thomas’ answer to the aporia, he seems to think Thomas is ambivalent. Instead of determining an answer, he sees Thomas as bringing it into light without necessarily answering it, other than resigning to the mystery. See Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 20.

15 Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 35.

16 Ibid., 31. Marion sees this Kantian influence leading all the way to Friedrich Schleiermacher and Hans-Joachim Rothert. See 32, fn. 2.

17 Ibid., 33.

18 Ibid.
excised and revelation placed under the controlling jurisdiction of epistemology.

In the theological world, the germ of this exclusively epistemological reading of revelation was found in the work of the highly influential Jesuit commentator, Francisco Suárez. For Marion, it was Suárez who determined a decidedly indeterminate problematization initiated by Thomas Aquinas by developing the propositional theory of revelation.\(^{19}\) This resolution to the aporia became enshrined in much of the ‘Salamanca School of Thomism’ and became widely influential. According to Marion’s reading, Suárez argues that revelation “requires only the single sufficient proposition of the revealed object, whether or not the one to whom it comes believes in it.”\(^{20}\) Hence, revelation is displaced to the jurisdiction of that which is found in propositional form, even to the point that it becomes estranged from the person in whom revelation is supposed to speak. An outcome of this rationalization of revelation is that “the revealed becomes independent of scientia beatorum, precisely so as to attain the status of a sufficient scientific proposition.”\(^{21}\) Dependence of revelation upon the ‘higher science’ of the scientia beatorum provides it the status of true divine revelation while it seems Suárez’s position conflates the scientia of metaphysical knowledge of God and the scientia of sacra doctrina, which results in simultaneously removing its dependency on the scientia beatorum.\(^{22}\) In other words, revelation is flattened to a ‘piece of information,’ susceptible to the same limitations and strictures of other propositional statements.\(^{23}\)

After establishing this history, Marion moves on to what he believes

\(^{19}\) Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 20.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 21.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 22.
\(^{22}\) Although we cannot cover it in this article, Marion believes this to be same mistake that the “Thomasian tradition” took up with the invention of the so-called ‘revelable.’ Here the contention is that the entire domain of metaphysics falls under the jurisdiction of sacra doctrina [hence, it is ‘revelable’], which, Marion argues, conflates the two distinct scientia. See ibid., 18.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 22.
is the rejection of such a limited approach coming from the Second Vatican Council. Commenting on *Dei Verbum*, Marion remarks, “First and above all, God reveals Himself, and the economy of salvation. The goal of Revelation is not to grant us the knowledge of something else, or even a growth in our knowing, or a mere extension of our *scientia* ... The clearly non-epistemological intention of revelation aims to manifest God in person.” This non-epistemological model advocated by the Council does not believe in a sterile and, in Marion’s view, too easy separation between creation and revelation. The Council, far from attempting to disenchant the admittedly enigmatic relationship between creation and revelation, instead chose to highlight their more harmonious consonance. As Marion notes, “Vatican II understands what the textual evidence requires to be understood, and what the scholastic reading missed or masked: knowledge of God on the basis of creation, even if it is exercised (perhaps) through ‘natural light of human reason’ alone, does not precede revelation ... instead, it finds itself preceded by and comprised in it.” Marion envisions revelation as precisely, to use a Gadamerian phrase, the horizon upon which rationality is fused. To borrow from another (although related) theological debate: Inverting the usual scholastic approach of ‘grace building on nature’, Marion contends nature only makes sense within the confines of grace. For Marion the Second Vatican Council called for seeing in revelation God’s

---

24 Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 27. Marion quotes *Dei Verbum*, no. 6, “Through divine revelation, God chose to show forth and communicate himself and the eternal decisions of his will regarding the salvation of men.” For Marion, this personalistic approach of understanding revelation was intentional in reawakening an approach of dialogue. See 27, fn. 38.

25 Ibid., 28.


27 It is interesting to note that Marion himself invites such a comparison when he brings the controversies surrounding Henri de Lubac’s *Surnaturel* precisely within the context of the aporia. See Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 13.
desire to be made known and, more importantly, to be loved.\textsuperscript{28} It is this dialogue-based hermeneutic of revelation that does not fit within the narrow parameters of epistemology, Marion contends and therefore requires a radical new phenomenological re-appropriation.

**Martin Heidegger’s Existential Analytic**

The contention of this article is that Marion inverses the phenomenological project of Martin Heidegger. Therefore, our next step will be to elucidate the relevant points from Heidegger’s existential analytic. We will be drawing from Heidegger’s landmark text *Being and Time* because it represents his most seminal and systematic thoughts on the existential analytic and is the touchstone for early Heideggerian existential phenomenology.

Marion believes Heidegger to represent the radicalization of the Husserlian project. As he notes, “the radical definition of the phenomenon proposed by Heidegger—the phenomenon shows itself from itself and in itself, and thus shows *itself*—only radicalizes that of Husserl—a phenomenon only shows itself to the extent that it *gives itself*.”\textsuperscript{29} The important insight to note here is that Marion understands the radicality within Heidegger’s project to be the presumed epistemological access to the ‘things themselves,’ even if such an access is never naïve. For Heidegger this ‘getting to the thing itself’ demands a type of confrontation. Heidegger writes, “So in addition to what is asked about, an inquiry has that which is interrogated [*ein Befragtes*]. In investigative questions—that is, in questions which are specifically theoretical—what is asked about is determined and conceptualized.”\textsuperscript{30} Heidegger envisions

\textsuperscript{28} Here Marion might have an interesting dialogue partner with Joseph Ratzinger who argues that scripture must be understood as dialogue-centered. See Joseph Ratzinger, *God’s Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*, eds. Peter Hünermann and Thomas Söding (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 121.

\textsuperscript{29} Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 6.

such a confrontation with the phenomenon precisely as the role of the existential analytic, specifically as it interrogates \textit{Dasein}. It is a result of this confrontation that allows for the phenomenon to be ‘wrestled loose’ and to be seen as it gives itself.\footnote{There is a correlation between the equiprimordality of temporality and the destruction of ontology. “Understanding is grounded primarily in the future (whether in anticipation or in awaiting). States-of-mind temporalize themselves primarily in having been (whether in repetition or in having forgotten). Falling has its roots primarily in the Present (whether in making-present or in the moment of vision). All the same, understanding is in every case a Present which ‘is in the process of having been.’ All the same, one’s state of mind temporalizes itself as a future which is making present. And all the same, the Present ‘leaps away’ from a future that is in the process of having been, or else it is held on to by such a future.” Martin Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 401. This demonstrates the primordial foundation for the threefold unity of temporality as an authentic possibility for a disclosedness of being. This is important because this equiprimordality of temporality demands that Heidegger ‘take on’ the history of ontology, and therefore to address the \textit{Destruktion} of ontology in attempt to ‘wrestle loose’ the ‘un-thought-thought’ of the ‘having-been.’} For our purposes, the important note is that the early Heidegger does have a role for a proactive spontaneity which provides epistemological access to the phenomenon and thereby truly discloses \textit{something}.

For Heidegger this seeking is determined in some manner by that which is \textit{already} known and anticipated, concretely demonstrated in \textit{Dasein}’s futural possibilities which are always anticipated in the present.\footnote{Remarking on Kant’s notorious rebuttal of proof for epistemological access to any external world, Heidegger makes a revealing comment: “The ‘scandal of philosophy’ is not that this proof has yet to be given, but that \textit{such proofs are expected and attempted again and again}. Such expectations, aims, and demands arise from an ontologically inadequate way of starting with \textit{something} of such a character that independently of it and ‘outside’ of it a ‘world’ is to be proved present-at-hand (Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 249).” Although the extent to which Heidegger’s epistemology (whether or not such a term is appropriate) leads to a skepticism towards access to the phenomenon is a matter of debate. Cf. John Richardson, \textit{Existential Epistemology: A Heideggerian Critique of the Cartesian Project}, (Oxford University Press, 1986).} \textit{Dasein} already knows in advance that for which it seeks,

\textit{In the Shadow of Heidegger}
although in a loose and unthematized way. In fact, for Heidegger, the goal of the phenomenological method is precisely to use the already assumed givenness of everyday factual life in order to yield its existential meanings.\(^{34}\) As Heidegger notes, “Thus because Dasein is ontically-ontologically prior, its own specific state of Being (if we understand this in the sense of Dasein’s ‘categorial structure’) remains concealed from it. Dasein is ontically ‘closest’ to itself and ontologically farthest; but pre-ontologically it is surely not a stranger.”\(^{35}\) In other words, what Dasein is setting out to understand is both, at the same time, that which is closest to itself and that which is furthest away. Therefore, when the existential analytic is exposed to Dasein it already has in advance some pre-ontological awareness of what it is seeking. It is for this reason that Heidegger’s existential analytic prioritizes the lived, already experienced everydayness of life. “We must rather choose such a way of access and such a kind of interpretation that this entity can show itself in itself and from itself [an ihm selbst von ihm selbst her]. And this means that it is to be shown as it is proximally and for the most part—in its average everydayness.”\(^{36}\) The take away for our purposes is that the existential analytic: (i) relies on existing ‘alreadiness’ [Gewesenheit] of its own entity under investigation; (ii) such an ‘alreadiness’ means that the existential analytic falls under a category of exploration readily available for the mind to place and grasp, although only under the correct methodological conditions for such an investigation.

In addition, for Heidegger the task of clearing away [Lichtung] the

tering itself against death—that is to say, only which, as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of having-been, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be in the moment of vision for its time.” Heidegger, Being and Time, 437.


35 Heidegger, Being and Time, 37.

36 Ibid., 37–38.
history of ontology \([\textit{Destruktion}]\) requires a critical method which is methodologically both positive and negative.\(^{37}\) The more positive side of the \(\textit{Destruktion}\) of ontology is a critical-historical assessment of the historicality of ontology which is squarely aimed at the ‘wrestling loose’ of practical non-contemporaneity so as to actualize the unrealized potential within non-contemporaneity. In this sense the equiprimordial structure of temporality (the “temporality [that] temporalizes as a future which makes present in the process of having been”) is always one directed toward an active appreciation of the past.\(^{38}\) Nevertheless, there is a negative function of the \(\textit{Destruktion}\) of history. This aspect of \(\textit{Destruktion}\) is not part of the project of unearthing the past for unrealized possibilities; Rather it is the hermeneutical horizon that Heidegger employs when searching for the having been of authentic being.\(^{39}\) In this quest for the Being beyond being, he both remembers the otherwise forgottenness of Being, but he also suspends his obligation to the history of philosophy. This allows him to distance himself from the past and scavenge such history for unrealized possibilities. For our purposes we must note that Heidegger’s existential analytic, while preserving a positive role in making productive particular instances of having-been, is largely skeptical of most traditions, most explicitly in the epistemology of Thomas Aquinas and Rene Descartes.\(^{40}\) Here Marion will find agreement with Heidegger, yet with some important differences.

Finally, it is important to note that for Heidegger the point of the

\(^{37}\) By positive I mean Heidegger’s methodology has clear modes for ‘repetition’ of the having been and for possibilities of historical retrieval. For example, Heidegger’s appreciation of Augustine is well known. See: Martin Heidegger, “Augustinus und der Neuplatonismus,” ed. Claudius Strube, in \textit{Gesamtausgabe}, vol. 60: \textit{Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens} (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 157–299.

\(^{38}\) Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 401.

\(^{39}\) For a concise and well-structured work on both these ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ aspects see: Thomas Sheehan, “On Movement and Destruction in Ontology,” \textit{The Monist} 64, no. 4 (1981): 534–542.

\(^{40}\) See: Martin Heidegger, \textit{Gesamtausgabe: Geschichte der Philosophie von Thomas von Aquin bis Kant}, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006).
existential analytic and the interrogation of Dasein is always one aimed at breaking through being in order to disclose Being beyond ens. This means that while the practical givenness of things within the world are important and truly reveal items of meaning to Dasein, nevertheless, Heidegger is less interested in their own givenness than he is the possibilities opened up by their assigned reference by Dasein.\textsuperscript{41} In this regard we can already say, preliminarily, any notion of givenness within the work of Marion may not come from his Heideggerian influence but perhaps, rather, from Jacques Derrida.

\textbf{Jean-Luc Marion’s New Phenomenological Approach to Revelation Seen as the Inverse of Heidegger’s Existential Analytic}

The contention of this work is that Marion’s phenomenology of revelation is influenced by an inversion of Heidegger’s existential analytic.\textsuperscript{42} Given the insights to be discussed below, the possibility for such an inversion seems rich with fruitful possibilities, yet not without its challenges. Using the above ‘notes’ from Heidegger’s existential analytic, our next step will be to relate them to Marion’s phenomenology of revelation.

Perhaps the most central insight that Marion brings to revelation, especially when understood as apokalypsis, is that such an unveiling requires that it comes from elsewhere. For Marion, revelation is privileged in that it shows itself and gives itself in an unmatched way. As he notes, “In fact, biblical revelation puts into operation the privilege of a givenness that surpasses every expectation, every prediction,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item For an example of Heidegger’s understanding of such world equipment see: Martin Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 95–101.
\item It is important to note here that I am not making the rather bold, and impossible to verify, claim that Jean-Luc Marion consciously intended his project to be a verbatim inversion of Heidegger’s existential analytic, but, rather, that as I will show, such an influence cannot be denied, and can provide a new, and I believe, helpful hermeneutic in which to understand Marion’s phenomenology of revelation.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and, finally, every reception.” Revelation, precisely as an *apokalypsis*, breaks through all previous thoughts, all previous assumptions, and all previous expectations. In the coming of revelation epistemological expectations are obliterated and instead an invitation is given. Indeed, for Marion, there can be no revelation without a response, “for without the hermeneutic decision [the response of faith], there is nothing to see, nothing to believe, and nothing revealed. As regards revelation, the one who wants to see without yet having to believe sees nothing.” This is the direct inversion of Suárez’s revelation as propositional knowledge (*propositio sufficiens*) which is unrelated to the person in whom it speaks. Likewise, it is a radical break with the force of history he outlined moving from Suárez to Hegel and even to Heidegger. Marion juxtaposes this as a logic of uncovering, as opposed to a logic of unconcealment (Suárez to Heidegger). He notes, “what is at stake here is the logic of faith, which assumes as secured the discourse that it affirms…this discourse and this logic in themselves remain legitimate, but they cannot be joined to concepts or to reason…according to the logic of unconcealment (*aletheia*).” Here we see the explicit inversion of Heidegger, whom Marion had previously identified as the philosopher of *aletheia*. The spontaneous anticipated phenomenological approach of the existential analytic is supplanted by an inverted receptivity of radical givenness. For this reason, we can see our preliminary sketch that identified the

---

43 Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 7.
44 Ibid., 41.
45 Ibid., 42.
46 Ibid., 46.
48 Although it falls out of the scope of this article, it may be that Marion places an over-emphasis Heidegger’s role of spontaneity in the moment of disclosure, as it seems that Heidegger precisely understands that there must be receptivity on the part of the knower, or there would be no ‘dis-closure’ to begin with.
notion of givenness arising from Derrida, and not Heidegger, has borne out. Moreover, it can hardly be coincidental that this logic of uncovering fits perfectly within a hermeneutical landscape determined by Derrida and the space opened up by a discussion of the aporia of gift.

More specifically, Marion believes that this unexpected gift is an uncovering of the *Logos*. It is the *Logos* which uncovers itself, thereby requiring an entirely new and self-disclosing logic: One not imprisoned by a previous logic of systematic metaphysics.\(^{49}\) The logos of the philosophers must be displaced by the *Logos* of God. “The phenomenon [*Logos*] shows itself, then, from itself and in itself, because and in as much as it gives itself in person from itself.”\(^{50}\) The *Logos* cannot be known in advance because it comes *from elsewhere* as radical givenness; hence, any and all previous expectation which foresees it or conceives in advance is rendered unproductive.\(^{51}\) For Marion, the ultimate example of this radical givenness and the final destruction of any Heideggerian ‘alreadiness’ in knowledge is the facticity of the resurrection. “As resurrected, and thus as the pre-eminent phenomenon, because out of the ordinary, Christ shows himself in such an exceptional way because and insofar as he gave himself in an exceptional way.”\(^{52}\) In the resurrection all pre-determined systems of logic are displaced and a new locus, even new way of looking, is given over by that which uncovers itself in the jarring and unplaced event of the resurrection of Christ.\(^{53}\)

This purge of all pre-conceptual knowledge is an inversion of Heidegger’s existential analytic. The project of an existential analytic relies on existing pre-ontological ‘alreadiness’ which both guides the

\(^{49}\) Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 47.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 48. Brackets mine.

\(^{51}\) Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 47.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 49.

\(^{53}\) Although it falls out of the scope of this article, there is the interesting possibility of seeing Marion’s saturated phenomenon through the lens of place and displacement. The philosophy of place has had a resurgence of creativity. See: Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).
process and, in a loose way, already ‘knows’ the result. It is precisely this spontaneous approach to epistemology that Marion pushes back against. “Under \textit{aletheia} or unconcealment, the I always determines the phenomenon through anticipation … the I will organize its entire possible intuition according to the concept or signification that it will have assigned to it \textit{in advance}.”\textsuperscript{54} It is this approach to the phenomenon that he accuses Heidegger of representing, highlighted especially in his antagonism towards \textit{aletheia} and unconcealment. Speaking in no ambiguous terms, he writes, “No misinterpretation of Revelation could surpass that of Heidegger, in this respect a paradigm of the \textit{Aufklärung} and more Hegelian than might seem the case, who wanted to submit Revelation of God to the manifestation of the gods, that manifestation to the dwelling of the divine, that dwelling to the opening of the sacred, and that opening to the intact open region of Being.”\textsuperscript{55} Instead, as the inverse of the phenomenological project of Heidegger, Marion overstates the alien milieu of revelation that breaks open the present. Using an image borrowed from Karl Barth he notes, “The auto-manifestation of God by himself enters into the experience of men like a suddenly falling rock, undoing everything with its impact.”\textsuperscript{56} It is precisely this sudden and traumatic experience that, for Marion, calls forth a new phenomenological approach: One which utilizes the notion of saturated phenomenon. And, for Marion, it is in the aftermath of this falling rock upon which Heidegger’s existential analytic can be found.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} Marion, \textit{Givenness and Revelation}, 52.
\textsuperscript{55} Marion, \textit{Givenness and Revelation}, 57.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} There is a certain irony of Marion using a Barthian image here, especially given the young Heidegger’s affinity for Martin Luther. In fact, some have argued for an interesting parallel between Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger in both of their fascination with Luther’s theology of the cross. See Timothy Stanley, \textit{Protestant Metaphysics after Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger} (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010).
A second area of relation between Marion and Heidegger is disclosed in their receptions of history. With Heidegger, Marion agrees that there needs to be a historical-critical assessment of the past. Yet, while accepting Heidegger’s historical-critical assessment of the past, Marion nevertheless inverses his *Destruktion* by scavenging the past not for moments which allow for the breaking in of Being, but rather, for a way of understanding being which is supplanted by the will. In other words, Marion accepts the hermeneutical program of Heidegger which seeks to make productive non-contemporaneity, yet he seeks to find a historical thread that best solidifies his non-epistemological phenomenology.

As already mentioned, Marion judges the force of history as largely following the Hegelian or Suárezian approach to the epistemology of revelation and therefore in need of a new appraisal.\(^{58}\) Looking back at the past for historical retrieval of ideas that do not follow the standardized epistemological approach, Marion appeals to a rival tradition. As he writes, “yet there is another conceivable determination of revelation as *apokalypsis* that not only differs from the truth understood according to the system of metaphysics but inverts its terms.”\(^{59}\) Here he appeals to a tradition which goes back to William of Thierry, one that understands the will as drawing out reason.\(^{60}\) He quotes William, “If you do not will to believe, you do not believe.”\(^{61}\) In this sense, we can see Marion appealing to the so-called ‘Dionysian tradition’ of good over being, or the will

---


59 Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 36.

60 Ibid., 36.

61 Ibid., 43.
over the intellect. Putting it in his own phenomenological language he notes, “the condition of the possibility of uncovering [de
couvrement] is no longer assured by the conditions of possibility of the experience of finite objects (namely critique, the principles of metaphysics, clear and distinct ideas, evidence that is certain) but by charity which henceforth plays the role of a condition of knowledge.” Surprisingly, Marion does not cite Bonaventure and the Franciscan tradition which held celebrated debates with Thomists over the proper role of the will and the intellect. There was a long standing medieval debate on the agent intellect between Thomists, who argued the agent intellect was a faculty of the human soul, and the early Franciscan School, which had varied levels of meaning, but, all holding a larger role for receptivity and some going so far as to hold the agent intellect was correlated to God himself.

Nevertheless, Marion believes that this non-epistemological way of proceeding, with its origins in William of Thierry, coupled with his notion of revelation which comes from elsewhere leads to a dilemma. If the will proceeds the intellect and the intellect even fails to grasp on its own the place for appreciating revelation, then how can one speak positively of revelation? Here we see the role of Christ as saturated phenomenon, the icon of the invisible. In this the mysterion comes toward us in an unforeseeable way. Here we also find the phenomenon which self-discloses both a non-epistemological logic for understanding and a new


63 Marion, Givenness and Revelation, 38.


65 Marion, Givenness and Revelation, 62.
way of looking. In this way such a phenomenon is saturated: It stands out from all the phenomenon around it and discloses its own place. This type of saturation is due to the *mysterion* which, by definition, stands outside our field of vison and thus determines every aspect as Marion notes, “Only God uncovers God.”

Here we see the definitive inversion of Heidegger. “This is nothing less than an overturning of intentionality … This amounts to taking, with regard to a phenomenon such as it gives itself, a point of view that does not coincide from the outset with the one that we would take when holding the central position of a neutral and masterly spectator.”

Most obviously, this requires a break from usual epistemology but it also is a rebuttal to any phenomenological approach which relies on a predetermined place from which the phenomena may be interrogated, such as in *Dasein*. “In short, he expects the hearer to cross over the epistemological break by entering into what he does not understand.”

This is a radical shift precisely in point of view which is determined by the self-disclosure of Christ. For Christ reveals himself as *from* the Father’s point of view. By recognizing such a point of view, one becomes enmeshed in a hermeneutic circle which violates epistemology: “taking the correct point of view on the phenomenon that God gives us to see (in Jesus Christ) indeed can come only from God himself (the Father), who offers both the phenomenon (what gives itself) and the conditions of its visibility (what shows itself).”

This is the role of the icon, for it is precisely in Christ the icon that this new logic now finds its fullest expression: It allows for a new way of looking but also invites the looker into a deeper relation to that which precisely lies beyond, into the *mysterion*.

Opposed to this God-centered givenness is the idolatry of the force of history that led from Suárez to Heidegger. As he notes, “the historical interpretation of Revelation fails to move beyond the aporiae of its

---

66 Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 64.
67 Ibid., 64.
68 Ibid., 80.
69 Ibid., 84.
propositional interpretation, merely repeating its idolatry—no longer an idolatry of concepts, but that of ‘facts,’ or worse, of the ‘direction of history.’” 70 While Marion clearly is recognizing Hegel, he too is condemning Heidegger which, as highlighting the role of intentionality, is the end point of such a direction of history. Ironically, although he consciously distances himself from such a history it is, perhaps unsurprisingly, this tradition which he sees as the ultimate concern of his work. He concludes with, “Indeed, what is at issue when the issue is God either remains incomprehensible by definition or is degraded into an idol.” 71 It is precisely in Christ as icon that this issue, one unresolved by the tradition, is solved. “The request of faith in front of Revelation opens the non-idolatrous space of alterity” 72 In other words, it is in Christ as icon that alterity is preserved.

A POSSIBILITY, A LIMITATION AND A HOPE

Any project of relating Jean-Luc Marion’s phenomenology of revelation with the existential analytic of Martin Heidegger is not finished without at least beginning an evaluation. In this regard, the following opening of an evaluation provides a possibility, a limitation, and a hope which, far from determining, is intended to merely begin such a discussion.

First, as a possibility, there is an appropriate sensitivity in Marion’s phenomenology of revelation for alterity. If revelation is truly God’s revealed Word, it only makes sense that such a disclosure would emphasize its alterity in origin and in its inability to be placed in our everyday world. Hence, the possibility for saturated phenomena as icon seems to express the fulfillment of such a keen appreciation for alterity. The possibilities of such an approach also provides a well-structured response to the Derridean paradox of the gift, especially when relating alterity with ‘anonymous donation.’ Moreover, the fact that Marion

70 Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 99.
71 Ibid., 116.
72 Ibid., 117.
envisions saturated phenomena manifested most concretely in the resurrection of Christ can help aid in recalling a much-needed tradition in theology which takes seriously the centrality of the resurrection. Such a resurrection-focused theology has the potential to be fruitful in addressing many contemporary concerns while remaining intrinsically bound to revelation. As Richard Schenk has rightly commented, “Many Catholic theologians have … tended to overemphasize the contribution of experience to faith (a kind of theologia gloriae) and to minimize the negativity of factual death.”73 Schenk invites theologians to “recall an older tradition of new, ecumenical importance, recognizing the Resurrection as the center of our faith, but without minimalizing the negativity of death or falling into the extremes of relating faith and experience by contradiction or identity.”74 Perhaps the move begun by Marion in refocusing the attention and locus of theology upon a renewed appreciation of the resurrection of Christ will help aid moving in this direction while not minimizing the negativity of death, nor falling into the trap of conflating, nor making faith and experience disharmonious.

Second, a limitation of Marion’s project is the historical isolation that results in claiming the decided position of the will over the intellect. From a historical perspective, especially one of a historical-critical assessment that Marion himself advocates, such a move drastically limits the possibilities for retrieval to an almost intolerable few. Although the Franciscan School provides one historical tradition in which to appeal, it leaves untouched other hefty traditions which speak of the intellect and will not as antagonistic but mutually enriching. Moreover, there does seem to be undesirable repercussions of such a determined reception of the will over the intellect, namely, the possible collapsing of fides and ratio. Following the theological projects of the last few papacies, in the Catholic tradition there has been an intentional emphasis on the complementarity of these two ways of knowing. Ironically, in Marion

74  Ibid.
appealing to the Second Vatican Council, he alluded to the enigmatic relationship between creation and revelation which demonstrates this conciliar intentionality. While it is true that the Council understood such a relationship as commensurate, it neither contradicted nor conflated them. It seems that in pushing the alterity of revelation we could needlessly bracket out ratio from having any relation to revelation which would have extreme historical (the forgetting of helpful theological traditions) and theological (leading either to fideism or irrationalism) repercussions.

Finally, there is a hope to be found in a phenomenology of revelation: One that takes seriously the alterity of revelation, perhaps utilizing the notion of saturated phenomenon, yet, which is not antagonistic to other traditions. Precisely here we can see an invitation to a phenomenology of revelation which does not invert the existential analytic of Heidegger but rather uses it as complementary. Surely such an approach could both remember other traditions which see a role for spontaneity, yet be agile enough to take seriously the receptivity rightfully demanded by alterity.

Understandably, we are left with many questions, some of which are even unasked. What would it look like for a phenomenology of revelation to utilize Heidegger’s existential analytic? Could the use of such an analytic provide a safeguard against any temptation to bracket out ratio from fides? What does the saturated phenomenon look like when, not understood as radically opposed to Dasein, but as an ‘unthought–thought’ of its unrealized possibilities? If God truly gives himself in revelation, does not the fact that he gives himself to us require that we have some ability to place it—even if enigmatically and always like those disciples who first witnessed the resurrection—with fear and awe? And, if so, whence comes the question.

---

75 *Dei Verbum*, 1.
From early on in the Gospel of Matthew and all the way to Golgotha, we see plainly that Christ did not come into this world to tread the broad and easy way. On the contrary, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit he goes directly to the place where divine battles are fought: the heart of man, symbolized by the depths of Jordan’s waters, where demonic monsters were thought to lurk, and by the desert, where only the saint or the demon can survive. If Satan is the hero of the world—the lord of the earthyminded, plotting disruption of the divine order at every step—Christ is the divine Hero who comes to confront Satan’s logic with clear-headedness and humility. In this forbidding wilderness, two diametrically opposed solutions to the plight of man are at loggerheads: on the one hand, capitulation to the comforts of the satanic suggestions; on the other, surrender to the mercy of God’s providence. Either option requires listening and yielding to a voice outside ourselves. Which will it be for me?

The desert is the place of utter poverty and, therefore, an invitation to heroic trust in God. When we experience our own barrenness, when we are most in need, then the decisive crises arise. Will I accept quick fixes and adore their Provider, thus betraying my vocation as a person begotten of God? Or will I wait in silence and privation, fasting from all the world has to offer, for the perfect length of God’s pleasure,

---

1 This homily was originally given in the Immaculate Conception Chapel of the Pontifical North American College on Sunday, March 1, 2020. The Lectionary readings for the First Sunday of Lent Year A are Genesis 2:7–9; Romans 5:12–19; Matthew 4:1–11.
represented by the forty days and nights that recapitulate Israel’s historical wandering in the desert?

The story of humanity’s Fall through sin is explained today in the tale of our first parents’ seduction through the temptation to become like God. Genesis shows us that God did not create Man in a condition of alienation from himself but rather in a relationship of graciously bestowed friendship with himself. Harmony, and not disruption, is our origin. Further, because God creates us in his image, he gives us the highest of gifts, freedom, a gift that, for better or for worse, puts us squarely before the challenge of accountability. A creature pre-set in goodness as in a block of concrete would not be free at all. Goodness, like love, can never be the product of an automatic response mechanism but only the fruit of a free act.

And this is where the plot thickens, because God knows “in advance” that man, enjoying such freedom of choice, will yield to the temptation to become like God. This foreknowledge on God’s part, far from being a divine mistake, is a measure of how highly he regards the freedom he conferred on us. Yes, God is thus willing to risk the defeat of his wondrous design of friendship with man. It seems that for God everything hinges on our possessing by nature the privilege of freedom of choice. The reason must be that, without such freedom, there can be no reciprocal love, which is ultimately what God is after.

And yet God’s factual foreknowledge of man’s Fall is accompanied by an even deeper redemptive foreknowledge: namely, by his intention to send his Son into the world as the One who would face the very same temptation as Adam and Eve, but this time overcoming it. Today’s desert scene is, in fact, Paradise revisited: the unimaginable opportunity to undo the evil perpetrated there and to be re-established in the innocence of our first condition—something that clearly only a divine and human Savior could accomplish for us. And Christ does not triumph over temptation only for himself but for all humankind, for all who form his Body, so that every one of us can participate in his victory over proud rebellion and self-aggrandizement.
The gospel today portrays Jesus’ victory as occurring after a 40-day fast, that is, at a moment when, naturally speaking, he is at his weakest and most vulnerable but, supernaturally speaking, at his strongest and most confident. Make no mistake about it: the temptations he undergoes are genuine temptations. They are not a show of pious make-believe enacted for didactic purposes. We are not, after all, Monophysites! Jesus may not have experienced the seduction of evil superficially, that is, as an attraction to coarse sensual gratification, although we cannot be sure of this. But surely for him it’s all the worse, because he is tested at a much deeper ontological level. He suffers temptation in its pure state as a mighty gravitational pull to disobedience against his Father’s mission. What is here at stake is nothing less than infidelity to his divine Sonship.

We may indeed affirm that, in the course of his temptation, Jesus, as man, recognizes both the power of Evil and the power of Good, that is, the power of God; and then, engaging his genuine human freedom, he makes his choice to remain faithful to the Good. Jesus replies to Satan with three brief passages from Scripture. We note that, throughout the narrative, Jesus utters no new word as a private individual. He, the Word Incarnate, humbly limits himself to citing Scripture. And yet, this choice at the same time reveals the perfect harmony and oneness of him who is both Son of God and Son of Mary! But those three brief scriptural words, which had always belonged to him as divine Word, are well-aimed arrows that nullify the Devil’s deceitful way of quoting the Bible. Indeed, here Jesus shows us how only total obedience to God, total internal identification with his Word, can transform mere freedom of choice into perfect freedom of heart and soul. We are most fully and gloriously ourselves only when God’s Word pervades our whole being.

In the second reading from Romans, St Paul repeats in five variations the same fundamental thought, namely, that the universal infiltration of sin throughout humanity is more than counterbalanced by the powerful obedience of the One who represents all human beings before God. Jesus’ resistance to temptation and his perfect obedience have such power that he brings all people to justification. Paul affirms that “through one
righteous act acquittal and life came to all.” This means that, on the basis of Jesus’ obedience unto death, we are no longer slaves to sin but have received the offer of the grace of justification and of adoption as children of God, as well as the freedom that grace bestows and that enables us to embrace this justification wholeheartedly. Yes, even the right use of our freedom is itself a gift of grace! And we must pray continually for such a gift. God crucially opens the door before us, but he will not push us through it against our will. Our own feet must do the walking.

In today’s encounter between God’s Incarnate Wisdom and the archTempter, Satan, for all his angelic intelligence, did not understand the divine logic whereby obedient weakness is transmuted into spiritual power by the alchemy of the Father’s delight in the Son’s fidelity. Only faith can understand this because only faith can understand the paradoxes of divine love. Satan juggles rationality and irony masterfully, but he is woefully ignorant of love’s readiness to embrace weakness for the sake of the beloved. When Satan gets his sharp teeth into Jesus’ flesh, his fangs crumble like sandstone grinding against steel. Sly, patient, and quintessential Temptation then becomes quintessential Overthrow. Satan thought he was testing the weakness of a generic holy man, yet all the while the Wisdom of God was, in fact, exposing, for all to see, the ultimate impotence of the Deceiver in the face of obedient fidelity and love.

And behold angels approached and served him: I suggest, in conclusion, that in these last seven words of today’s gospel text we have nothing less than the surprising fulfillment, by Jesus’ heavenly Father, of the three offers Satan has just made to Jesus. As temptation leaves our Lord, fulfillment approaches. Instead of his eating the bread Satan tempted him to make out of stones, angels now wait on him as at the heavenly banquet, where the sole nourishment is the Word of the Father. Instead of casting himself down from the temple parapet, thus coercing the Father to send protecting angels to prove his love for him, now the Father, unbidden, sends a host of angels to take up, on earth, their jubilant task of waiting upon the eternal King of heaven. This divine liturgy occurs
in a witnessless solitude that establishes on earth an extension of that inaccessible and pure exchange of love that is the very substance of eternal Trinitarian life.

Along with Jesus, and by the power of his fidelity to the Father, the whole Kingdom of heaven comes to earth. And, because the Incarnate Word plainly refuses obeisance to anyone but the Father who utters him incessantly, Jesus himself receives the adoring service that Satan had tried to wrest for himself from him, the humble Son. We ourselves experience, don’t we, God’s marvelous generosity with us when, after we have struggled to serve only him, he then overwhelms us with the very things we thought we had renounced forever, only now raised to an infinitely higher potency of truth, durability, and delight. Paradise restored!

Let us, then, brothers and sisters, embrace the freedom given us today by the power of the words of this Gospel and by the grace of this Holy Eucharist we celebrate and choose with a joyful heart to follow Christ more intimately step by step wherever he may lead us during this particular Lententide.
I. CARL PETER CHAIR OF HOMILETICS

A. BIOGRAPHY OF FATHER CARL J. PETER

The late Fr. Carl J. Peter, in whose memory was established the Carl J. Peter Chair of Homiletics at the Pontifical North American College, was born in Omaha, Nebraska on April 4, 1932. Carl J. Peter was born to Carl and Mary Peter and was the eldest of four children, with two brothers, James and Fr. Valentine, and one sister, Mary Anne. Carl J. Peter attended Catholic schools his entire life. While attending Creighton University Preparatory School, Carl felt a vocation to the diocesan priesthood, following in the footsteps of his uncle, Fr. Paul F. Peter. Upon graduation from Creighton University Preparatory School, Carl attended the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception at Conception Abbey in Missouri. Having successfully proved himself ready to study philosophy, Carl was sent to the North American College in Rome where he studied from 1951 to 1958. Carl J. Peter was ordained to the priesthood on July 14, 1957 by Archbishop Luigi Traglia in the Church of Santa Sabina on the Aventine.

Fr. Peter returned to the Archdiocese of Omaha in July 1958 and began his priestly ministry at St. Patrick’s Church in Fremont, Nebraska.

---

1 This section is written by Aaron Kelly, Third-Year theologian from the Diocese of Rochester, New York, and Student Editor of *Ex Latere Christi*. 
where he served as assistant pastor and dean of studies at Archbishop Bergan Catholic High School. This assignment turned out to be his only assignment in the Archdiocese of Omaha. After two years, Fr. Peter was invited to return to the North American College where he served as assistant vice-rector. While serving as assistant vice-rector, Carl J. Peter pursued two doctorates, one in theology and one in philosophy. Fr. Peter received his doctorate in theology from the Gregorian University, and wrote a dissertation entitled *Participated Eternity in the Vision of God: A Study of the Opinion of Thomas Aquinas and His Commentators on the Duration of the Acts of Glory*. Simultaneously, Fr. Peter received his doctorate in philosophy from the Angelicum, and wrote a dissertation entitled *The Doctrine of Thomas Aquinas Regarding Eviternity in the Rational Soul and Separated Substances*. Both dissertations were published in 1964 and would turn out to be the only books he ever published.

On September 1, 1964, Fr. Peter was appointed assistant professor of Sacred Theology at The Catholic University of America. During his time at Catholic University, Fr. Peter taught courses on creation, grace, Christian anthropology, the Trinity, the Council of Trent, and eschatology—just to name a few. Fr. Peter enjoyed lecturing and preaching and taught with great conviction. In addition to teaching, Fr. Peter wrote a great deal, including nine articles for the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* which was edited by The Catholic University of America and published in 1967. In 1967, Fr. Peter was promoted to associate professor of dogmatic theology, and in 1971, was promoted to ordinary professor of systematic theology. Fr. Peter served several terms as dean of the School of Theology and Religious Studies at Catholic University and was given the Shakespeare Caldwell-Duval Chair in Theology. In addition to his academic responsibilities, Carl J. Peter served in many different capacities at The Catholic University of America. Peter’s reputation was well-known throughout the academic world. He taught on different occasions at the Graduate School of St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota and at the Princeton Theological Seminary.

Upon receiving the John Courtney Murray Award for distinguished
achievement in theology from the Catholic Theological Society of America, it was noted that Fr. Peter enjoyed “the respect and confidence of the Roman Catholic Bishops and of Protestant Scholars as well.” Fr. Peter served on a number of ecumenical committees. In 1967, Peter was part of the National Conference’s Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs’ dialogue between the Catholic Church and Presbyterian/Reformed churches in the United States. In 1972, he was appointed member of the Roman Catholic-Lutheran Bilateral Consultation in the United States. He was also an observer to the Department of Faith and Order in the National Council of Churches, and a member of the Roman Catholic-American Jewish Committee Dialogue. Fr. Peter was also a peritus for the five episcopal delegates from the United States to the Synod of Bishops in 1971; he would later serve on the 1983 Synod of Bishops. In 1980, Fr. Peter received a papal appointment to the International Theological Commission and worked alongside many prominent theologians including Bishop Walter Kasper.

Fr. Peter is remembered as being remarkably loyal to friends and family, quick witted, highly cultured yet simple, and very generous. It is noted that Fr. Peter often donated the honorarium he received for speaking engagements to charity. Fr. Peter died of a massive heart attack on August 20, 1991. To honor his memory two chairs have been established in his name. First, through the generosity of the Peter family, the Carl J. Peter Chair of Homiletics was established at the Pontifical North American College in 1999. Second, in 2002, the Carl J. Peter Chair of Systematic Theology was established in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America.

B. THE CARL J. PETER CHAIR OF HOMILETICS

To honor his memory the Peter family established the Fr. Carl J. Peter Chair of Homiletics at the Pontifical North American College. Thanks

---

2 Source: Pontifical North American College website.
to the generous gift of the family of the late Father Carl J. Peter, the seminary provides an intensive program of seminars, workshops, and courses in homiletics, and the occupant of the Carl J. Peter Chair, who coordinates the entire program, especially the required preaching practica in second, third, and fourth years. In addition to two full weeks of workshops during the fall, and seventeen practica sessions throughout the academic year, the Chair also offers an annual lecture to promote the art of preaching and to remember Fr. Carl J. Peter.

II. PRINCIPIA THEOLOGICA

A. HOMO CAPAX DEI, ET CAPAX ELOQUENTIAE.

On September 20, 2003, Pope St. John Paul II gave a message to the participants of The International Thomistic Congress on “Christian Humanism in The Third Millennium.” In this discourse, the Pope reiterates the Tradition of the Church’s Faith in the supremacy of God’s grace in every human endeavor. He then goes on to recall the Thomistic principle of gratia supponit naturam. He underscores that human nature is, in se, open and good. Man is naturally capax Dei (fit to receive God), created to live in communion with his Creator; he is a free and intelligent individual, integrated in the community with his own duties and rights; he is the connecting link between the two great spheres of reality, the material and the spiritual, and fully belongs to both. The soul is the unifying part of the person’s being and makes him a person.

This fundamental theological understanding of the human person nurtures itself from the fundamental axiom: man comes from God and must return to him. It follows that God alone is the Creator, but also

3 What follows is written by Rev. Randy Soto.
4 In man, St. Thomas observes, grace does not destroy nature but fulfils its potential: “gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit.” Summa Theologiae, Ia, q. 1, a. 8, ad. 2.
5 ST, Ia-IIa, q. 113, a. 10; St. Augustine, Trin. XIV, 8; PL 42, 1044.
6 “And the dust return into its earth, from whence it was, and the spirit return to God, who gave it.” Eccl 12:7 (DRV).
that He has deigned to entrust to his most perfect creation, the human person, the task of completing his work with his or her labor. Man has been endowed by his Creator with the capacity to draw benefits from his supernatural vocation (Gen 1:26); moreover, with the advent of the Incarnation of the Divine Word, Jesus Christ, men’s fallen nature has been restored anew, and friendship with God was re-established.7 This means that when man cooperates actively with divine grace he becomes ‘a new man,’ ‘a new creation’ capable to better respond to God’s plan. St. Thomas maintains rightly, therefore, that the truth of human nature finds its total fulfillment through sanctifying grace.8 For this reason, in the encyclical Sollicitude Rei Socialis, St. John Paul II reminds us that:

The Church has confidence also in man, though she knows the evil of which he is capable. For she well knows that—in spite of the heritage of sin, and the sin which each one is capable of committing—there exist in the human person sufficient qualities and energies, a fundamental “goodness” (cf. Gen 1:31), because he is the image of the Creator, placed under the redemptive influence of Christ, who “united himself in some fashion with every man” [GS 22 and RH 8], and because the efficacious action of the Holy Spirit “fills the earth” (Wis 1:7).9

It is based on this platform of our Catholic humanism that I offer these series of workshops on homiletics. I am honored to have been chosen and appointed by the Rector of the Pontifical North American College, Rev. Peter Harman, to assume the immense responsibility of training future priests to become effective preachers of the Word of God. I trust in God and in His Divine Providence; to His Divine Grace and Care I entrust this endeavor. Moreover, because I am rooted in the Catholic Tradition of homo capax Dei, ergo capax eloquentiae, I firmly believe that our seminarians already possess, at least in potentia, all that it takes to be

7 “It is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear,” that is, that “man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator.” Gaudium et Spes 22, 14.
8 “Perfectio naturae rationalis creatae.” Thomas Aquinas, Quodlibet IV, q6.
9 Sollicitude Rei Socialis, 47.
sancti et oratores eloquenti of our Mother Church in a not so distant future.

B. EXIHMUIM DEI VERBUM:

The Word of God always has been present to humankind from the first moment of creation. "Dabar HaShem" דָבָר יְהוָֹה is powerful, for we read in Genesis 1:1–2:4 that God Created everything ex nihilo. The Church teaches that it pleased God\(^\text{10}\) to reveal himself and to make manifest his will to establish a salvific and loving dialogue with the sons of Adam and Eve.\(^\text{11}\) The Church also teaches that God’s Divine Word has revealed itself through words and deeds\(^\text{12}\) and in the fullness of time,\(^\text{13}\) God wished to reveal to humanity the mystery of his life,\(^\text{14}\) hidden for centuries and generations.\(^\text{15}\) For this purpose, the only-begotten Son of God became man; “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”\(^\text{16}\) Like us in everything but sin,\(^\text{17}\) the Word of God had to express himself in a human way, through dicta et facta recorded in the Gospels.

By paying heed to Himself, The Word Incarnate, the believer discovers

---

\(^{10}\)  “Placuit Deo in sua bonitate et sapientia Seipsum revelare et notum facere sacramentum voluntatis suae (cf. Eph 1:9) […].” \textit{Dei Verbum (DV)}, 2.


\(^{12}\)  “Haec revelationis oeconomia fit gestis verbisque intrinsece inter se connexis, ita ut opera, in historia salutis a Deo patrata, doctrinam et res verbis significatas manifestent ac corroborent, verba autem opera proclament et mysterium in eis contentum elucident.” \textit{DV}, 2.

\(^{13}\)  Gal 4:4; “Intima autem per hanc revelationem tam de Deo quam de hominis salute veritas nobis in Christo illucescit, qui mediator simul et plenitudo totius revelationis existit.” \textit{DV}, 2.

\(^{14}\)  “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” Heb 1:1–2.

\(^{15}\)  Col 1:26.

\(^{16}\)  John 1:14.

\(^{17}\)  Heb 2:17; 4:15.
the identity of Jesus Christ, and experiences the powerful and transforming energy of his Love. Through His Logos, Jesus calls all men to repent and believe in the Gospel. Now, this call, though personal, is meant to be lived-out as the family of the children of God, of the Body of Christ, the Church.

Because of this, the Word of God is already a proclamation of who the Church is, the grace of her conversion, the mandate of her mission, the source of her prophecy, and the reason for her hope. In Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church is “a kind of a sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all humankind.”

The Church has the responsibility to proclaim the Word in the world as a response to its aspirations. Preaching is the Word of God communicated by a living God to living persons in Jesus Christ by means of the Church. From this vantage point, it can be understood that when God’s Revelation is preached, the Word of God finds fulfilment and fruition in the Church.

The task of the Church’s ordained ministers is to instruct the faithful in a proper conception of the Word of God by avoiding erroneous or oversimplistic approaches and any ambiguity. Emphasis needs to be placed on the Word of God’s intrinsic connection to the mystery of the Trinitarian God and his Revelation; its manifestation in the world of creation; its germinal presence in the life and history of humanity; its supreme expression in Jesus Christ; its infallible confirmation in Sacred Scripture and its transmission in the living Tradition of the Church. Since the employment of human language is part of the mystery of the Word of God, research in the sciences of language and communication will necessarily be involved.

Pope Benedict XVI echoes these words when he writes in Verbum Domini:

Generic and abstract homilies, which obscure the directness of God’s word

---

18 “As the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14.
19 Lumen Gentium, 1.
should be avoided, as well as useless digressions which risk drawing greater attention to the preacher than to the heart of the Gospel message. The faithful should be able to perceive clearly that the preacher has a compelling desire to present Christ, who must stand at the center of every homily.\footnote{Verbum Domini, 59.}

Through God’s Word, man is called to fulfill his destiny and to become himself a holy heir of God’s Kingdom. For the Word calls us to believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Shepherd of God’s Kingdom, who promised to return to bring us back with him to His eternal abode.

This second principle of the Eximium Dei Verbum is vital as we engage in training the men how to preach the Gospel on Sunday and Weekday Masses. Reassuring them of the faith of the Church in the power of God’s Word will result in preachers with exousia in the manner of Jesus Christ.

C. FIDES ET RATIO

The history of human thought has been fundamentally characterized by the way in which people approach reality to apprehend things (res). We can apprehend the singular, the concrete, the factual, and the contingent, on the one hand, but we can apprehend the universal, the necessary, and the abstract, on the other.\footnote{Hans Urs von Balthasar, Theology of History, 5–22.} This double apprehensive scheme of the theory of knowledge has undoubtedly marked the itinerary of the history of philosophia. Both elements can be emphasized in a variety of ways: if the universal is emphasized there is a danger of reducing the factual and empirical to the purely accidental, and if one emphasizes the particular, the real and historical, there is a danger of never being able to abstract principles with which the world of the practical can be ordained and, at the same time, know the absolute truths.\footnote{Fides et Ratio (FR), 69.}

We can affirm that both emphases correspond to the very nature of the human being: i.e., there exists within each person a dialogical nature that makes one perceive himself as a concrete being and different from
others, but at the same time belonging to the species of the human race, and thus able to abstract and transcend the very essence of being.24

Moving this principle from philosophical anthropology to the Scientia Theologica work has not been an easy task,25 because theology is based on the datum of Revelation and even though it works through the normal processes of human thinking, it does not deduce axioms and propositions alone on the human capacity to know. In order to know particulars or abstractions, our Catholic theological method establishes that one must let the mysterium revelationis attract the intellect with the Beauty and the Truth of the datum revelatum. And that datum indicates that it is God who in the sovereignty of his existence as the Living God and in his Eternal, loving freedom willed to communicate to us revealing his identity and his salvific design for his must precious creation, humanity.26

Our theological method also recognizes, per ipsa res, that it is God who calls us and invites us to enter in dialogue with him; that in order to be in religione we need a gratia ea ipsa a Deo collata.27

24 This statement is based on Aquinas’s Principle of individuatio ratione materiae or “principle of individuation in terms of matter,” cf., ST Ia, q. 3, a. 3; q. 39, a. 1; q. 54, a. 3; “l’essere è al tempo stesso identico e diverso e perciò non è contradditorio,” G. Ventimiglia, Differenza e contraddizione, 344; “homo capax Dei,” cf., L. Elders, La Metafisica dell’essere, II, 36; cf. J. Wipple, The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas, 94–131, 351–375.


26 DV, 2.

27 “Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son
The theology of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was greatly influenced by the empirical currents (Locke),\textsuperscript{28} rationalists (Descartes)\textsuperscript{29} and by the most influential German schools of modernity: i.e., dialectical phenomenology (Hegel),\textsuperscript{30} idealism (Kant),\textsuperscript{31} phenomenology of language (Husserl)\textsuperscript{32} and transcendentalism (Heidegger).\textsuperscript{33} All these currents forced Theology to make enormous efforts to preserve intact the gratuitous and transcendent character of\textit{ gratia} that arouses faith, its object of study.\textsuperscript{34} The result of this operation was the reduction of the theological method to staunch apologetics that sought to defend itself against the attacks of the so-called\textit{ scientiae positivae} of pre-Vatican II.\textsuperscript{35}

With the advent of Vatican II and the subsequent process of renewal of our theological method,\textsuperscript{36} there have been several attempts that contribute to disembarking theology of this eminently apologetic character. However, post-conciliar theology still runs the risk of enclosing itself within the modern trends of eclecticism,\textsuperscript{37} historicism,\textsuperscript{38} scientism,\textsuperscript{39} pragmatism,\textsuperscript{40} ...

---


\textsuperscript{35} \textit{FR}, 7–8.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{FR}, 9, 55, 92.


\textsuperscript{40} \textit{FR}, 89; cf., M. Rossi, “Pragmatismo,” 1569–1578; H. Thayer, “Pragmatism,” 430–436.
and nihilism. These currents, in one way or another, when assumed by theology, become dungeons that imprison theology and reduce it to mere technical rationalism.

The concept of the complementarity of *fides et ratio* proposed by St. John Paul II has contributed immensely so that theology may recuperate the status of being a discourse that speaks from an integral and wholistic understanding of the *Mysteria Fidei*.

St. John Paul II teaches us that the unity and complementarity of *fides et ratio* is, *ex analogia*, like the unity in the mystery of the hypostatic union of the Son of God. There is perfect harmony in man, the Pope teaches, between the two cognitive pathways, for “*Fides et ratio* are the two wings with which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”

It is under this principle that I propose to educate our future priests in the *ars praedicandi*. The complementarity of *fides et ratio* will allow them to be faithful to God’s Revelation contained in Holy Scriptures and interpreted authentically by the Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church. The preacher needs the tools of a solid theological method that allows him to be fascinated by the beauty and the truth of our faith. Only then can he elevate his soul to contemplation in search for guidance and knowledge on how to bring God’s Word to the shores of daily life.

**D. AESTHETICA THEOLOGICA**

*Aesthetica theologica* is another way by which our future preachers may penetrate the realms of contemplative meditation on God’s Word. Illumined by the Truth and Beauty of God, the ordained minister reaches a higher and more perfect fruition of his intellectual theological endeavor, as well as of his personal experience of God.

---

42 *FR*, 80.
43 “*Fides et Ratio binae quasi pennae videntur quibus veritatis ad contemplationem hominis attollitur animus.*” *FR*, incipit.
Aesthetica\textsuperscript{44} used to be called in antiquity mimetica (Plato) and poetica (Aristotle), but, since the eighteenth century, A. Baumgarten renamed it aesthetic\textsuperscript{a}.\textsuperscript{45} Now, when we apply the aesthetical categories to theology we realize that the transcendental Truth or veritas that attracts and invites the mind to contemplation is none other than the glory of God or “Cabod Hashem” כָבוֹד יְהוָֹה,\textsuperscript{46} and the Beauty of God expressed in the categories of the Greek καλοκαγαθία Kalokagathia\textsuperscript{47} in conjunction with transcendentals developed by the Scholastics.

Transcendentals speak of those fundamental attributes or notions that allow us to\textsuperscript{48} express the most universal content of something (\textit{ens}) that we have experienced\textsuperscript{49} either through the senses, through reasoning, or through the enlightenment of faith. This process cannot be subjective alone, if it were it would result in simple Kantian idealism. Aesthetica recognizes that the \textit{res} possesses a certain illuminating power that attracts the mind to seek to understand; consequently, the process includes the


\textsuperscript{45} A. Stopper, “Aesthetics,” 127.

\textsuperscript{46} Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{Gloria} VI (Madrid, 1988).

\textsuperscript{47} The term is a compound word that designates coexistence in the same entity of two distinct qualities: a) physical beauty καλός and, b) moral beauty ἀγαθός. In the harmonic conjugation of both qualities radiates the ideal of perfection. Cf. Plato, \textit{Apology}, 20.A; \textit{Parmenides}, 127b; Aristotle, \textit{Ethics}, 1248b; Plotin, \textit{Ennéadas}, I, 6,6; C. Garuti, “Kalokagathia,” 1645; Balthasar, \textit{Gloria}.

\textsuperscript{48} “Dicuntur addere super ens, in quantum exprimunt ipsius modum qui nomine ipsius entis non exprimitur.” Thomas Aquinas, \textit{De Veritate}, q. 1, a. 1, co.

\textsuperscript{49} “Res, unum, aliquid, verum, bonum.” A. Gazzana, “Nozioni Trascendentali,” 1294.
objective data emerging from that which is contemplated. Aesthetics, then, leads us into Metaphysics which expresses with greater coherence the universal value and transcendent Truth revealed.\footnote{FR, 83.}

E. Rhetorica: Ars Loquendi et Ars Praedicandi

The word rhetoric comes from the Greek ῥητορικός rhētorikós, “oratorical,” derivative adjective from ῥήτωρ rhētōr, meaning “public speaker.” The cognate noun ῥῆμα rhêma, res in Latin, “that which is said or spoken, a word or a saying.” Ultimately, it derives from the verb ἔρω erō: “I say, I speak.”\footnote{Definition taken from Heinrich Lausberg, Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 1998) 32–33.}

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion through effective speaking and writing. For many in our modern world, the word “rhetoric” has a pejorative meaning. They see rhetoric as the manipulation of truth or associate it with an overly fastidious concern with how things are said over what is said. But from ancient times up through the early twentieth century, men believed learning the art of rhetoric was a noble pursuit and considered it an essential element of a well-rounded education.

Delivering a public speech is not the same as preaching a sacred oration in a sacramental homily. Nonetheless, one could benefit from the wisdom which comes from those who train people to speak publicly. The Church Fathers referred in their time to the rules of classical rhetoric in order to bring God’s Word to different cultures and societies. Under the same theological principle of the Incarnation, it is fitting to teach the future preachers of the Church how to communicate most effectively with the people of God, using the wisdom of both contemporary and classical rhetoric.\footnote{Edward Corbett and Robert Connor, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, (New York: Oxford, 1999); For a short manual on rhetoric, cf. Ryan Topping, The Elements of Rhetoric (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2016).}
It is no secret that, following a rather simplistic piety some believed that it was an aberration against the Holy Spirit to offer Him an orator formed in the most perfect art of rhetoric, to be used as instrument, a herald of God’s message. This and other factors, like pragmatic views of modern life, indifferentism, etc., have contributed to the fact that the study of classical rhetoric has been abandoned in many parts of the world, including major seminaries. This has resulted in an impoverishment of the quality of the homilies preached in many parishes. This is also forgetting the doctrine of the instrumentum as expounded by St. Thomas Aquinas when talking about biblical inspiration.\footnote{The principal author of Sacred Scripture is the Holy Spirit, and man, instead, is the instrumental author;” Cf., Thomas Aquinas, Quodlibetales, 7,14,5.} While the Church has always retained that God is the author of scripture,\footnote{St. Augustine, Contra adversarium Legis et Prophetarum, 1,17,35, PL 42,623; Council of Florence, Bulla Cantate Domino, EB 47, DS 1334; Council of Trent, Decree on Sacred Scripture, EB 57, DS 1501; First Vatican Council, Constitution, Dei Filius, EB 77, DS 3006.} it is also true that hagiographers are considered instrumental authors.\footnote{“God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more;” Cf. DV 11; CCE 105–106; EB 686, DS 4215; Divino Afflante Spiritu, EB 556.} This doctrine requires, thus, that the instrument be trained with the most excellent cultural and theological education possible and with the best techniques of ars loquendi.

For the same reason that in Scripture, men are instruments of the Holy Spirit, we should offer ourselves as preponderantly active and not passive instruments. God uses our being, our faculties, our culture, our education, and talents as a precious instrument in his hands to bring Good Tidings to men of good will. An illustrious preacher of the Spanish Golden Century, Fray Luis de Granada states that there is nothing more temerarious and unworthy of such important ministry in the Church, than a man who enters it without being bothered to instruct himself
to be effective.\(^\text{56}\) Another great orator in the history of the Church, St. Augustine, defines the Ministry of the Word as *sapientia eloquente*,\(^\text{57}\) and if so, the first thing we must do is work hard to acquire wisdom. And St. Bernard says: *infunde ut effundas*;\(^\text{58}\) i.e., one cannot deliver if one has not invested in the subject matter.

*In primis*, we need to know what we are going to say and then we work on how to say it. For this reason, we are studying the principles of classical rhetoric in order to complement the theological formation of our seminarians with the technical aspects of oral communication. Training the mind how to think theologically is as important as training the mind on how to order the ideas to elaborate a discourse; how to make the oration memorable, thus, accessible to the people of God, in hopes that one may also learn; and how to deliver it well.

Often forgotten, there exist two most important dispositions in the Decree on Priestly Formation of the Second Vatican Council, *Optatam Totius*:

> The students should be accustomed to work properly at their own development. They are to be formed in strength of character, and, in general, they are to learn to esteem those virtues which are held in high regard by men and which recommend a minister of Christ. Such virtues are sincerity of mind, a constant concern for justice, fidelity to one’s promises, refinement in manners, modesty in speech coupled with charity.\(^\text{59}\)

That pastoral concern which ought to permeate thoroughly the entire training of the students also demands that they be diligently instructed in those matters which are particularly linked to the sacred ministry, especially in catechesis.

---

\(^{56}\) “En cuanto a mí, estoy convencido de que no hay nada más indigno que esta temeridad con la que se entra en un ministerio, tan importante, tan necesario en la Iglesia y, al mismo tiempo, el más difícil de todos, sin preocuparse de instruirse antes en alguna regla o método que aseguren el cumplimiento digno y fructífero;” Cf., Fray Luis de Granada, *Retórica Sacra*, Lib. I, Cap. II.

\(^{57}\) St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, IV, 2–3.


\(^{59}\) *Optatam Totius* 11.
and preaching, in liturgical worship and the administration of the sacraments, in works of charity, in assisting the erring and the unbelieving, and in the other pastoral functions.60

F. De Pedagogia: SynkatábasIs

We read in St. Paul’s letters that the Old Testament was in fact, a pedagogue: “Therefore, the law was our pedagogue until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a pedagogue, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.”61 When teaching the seminarians how to preach, we must assist them in learning how to embrace the pedagogy of Jesus, which is the pedagogy of agape love. Love can only be given in freedom and through the serene knowledge of God’s providential care that comes from our Faith.62

The pedagogy of Christ is also gradual and personal. It follows the principle of the synkatábasIs,63 which begins in God and comes down

60 OT, 19.
62 The Church Fathers expanded Paul’s analogy to describe the role of the whole Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament God was “raising” his children—stooping down to their level. He did not reveal to them the mysteries of faith, all at once. “The education of the human race, represented by the people of God, has advanced, like that of an individual, through certain epochs, or, as it were, ages, so that it might gradually rise from earthly to heavenly things, and from the visible to the invisible. This object was kept so clearly in view, that, even in the period when temporal rewards were promised, the one God was presented as the object of worship, that men might not acknowledge any other than the true Creator and Lord of the spirit, even in connection with the earthly blessings of this transitory life. … It was best, therefore, that the soul of man, which was still weakly desiring earthly things, should be accustomed to seek from God alone even these petty temporal boons, and the earthly necessities of this transitory life, which are contemptible in comparison with eternal blessings, in order that the desire even of these things might not draw it aside from the worship of Him, to whom we come by despising and forsaking such things.” St. Augustine, City of God, X.14.
63 “In Sacred Scripture, therefore, while the truth and holiness of God always remains intact, the marvelous ‘condescension’ of eternal wisdom is clearly shown, ‘that we
unto us, to lift us up to the realm of God in the Highest. St. John Henry Newman refers to the *synkatábasis* of the Son as one of the teachings of the Church Fathers of the first four centuries A.D. For many rhetoricians, *synkatábasis* is the adoption of a level or style suitable for the audience addressed.64

Perhaps, it is better if we let St. Paul exemplify this principle which is crucial for our preaching ministry:

> For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.65

**G. CONTEMPLATA ALIIS TRADERE**

Contemplation means to pay attention, to consider, to take great care, to think with intensity. In theology, it means to think about God and to consider his divine attributes or the mysteries of religion. The word contemplation derives from Latin *contemplari*, which means to observe,

---

may learn the gentle kindness of God, which words cannot express, and how far He has gone in adapting His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature.’ For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men,” *DV*, 13; the reference reads: St. John Chrysostom, *In Gen.*, 3, 8 (Homily 17, 1): *PG* 53, 134; “Attemperatio” or “condescension.” In Greek, *Synkatábasis* means ‘going down together with,’ and in Latin is said also *Anthropopathia*. In our Catholic Tradition is the ‘condescension’ of God below his transcendence for the purpose of creation, and our re-creation in Christ Jesus, who through the Incarnation came to bring us to God.

65  1 Cor 9:19–23.
to ponder, to show, to behold. *Ex semantica*, this word is attached to the worship actions of Roman priests who entered into the *templum* in order to see the divinity and consult oracles and omens on behalf of a member of the community. Thus, giving rise to the expression: *cum + templum = contemplari*.

*Contemplari* translates the Greek word θεωρέω which may mean in its most elementary notion to see, to understand, or to experience. In the NT θεωρέω appears fifty-eight times, it can be said that θεωρέω is used not according to the canons of Classical Greek but more in the canons of Septuagint Greek, and therefore under Semitic influences. Thus, θεωρέω has the sense of the Hebrew verb הָנַּ֥֫ר or internal vision, as opposed to the more generic verb רָאָה to see physically.

This internal vision does not mean, however, that contemplation should be reduced only to an exercise of human reason. The Semitic anthropology that runs through the veins of the Bible is much more unitary than the anthropology we have inherited from the Greeks and Hellenists. A good example is the most repeated confession of faith and prayer of Judaism, the *Shema*: “Thou shalt therefore love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy strength” (Dt 6:5). To contemplate, from the Bible, means to “love or know” in the sense that action is such that it involves all human realities.

As we discussed earlier, our Catholic Theology is firmly rooted in the

---

66 *LD*, 445–446.
68 *BDB*, 302; *KB* 285.
69 *BDB*, 906–909; *KB* 861–864.
70 “While it is true that the Scriptures do not speak of contemplation in terms that Plato or Aristotle used, it is decidedly untrue that the inspired word did not know and recommend the reality. A deep communion with God (and our Christ contemplation is nothing other than a love communion of increasing depth) is found repeatedly in the pages of both the Old and the New Testaments.” Thomas Dubay, *Fire Within*, 65.
Thomistic principle which states that grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it; grace, therefore, does not render any human effort useless. Consequently, this type of contemplation needs our human reason and requires the use of our intellectual capacities. Our seminarians need to infuse themselves completely in the *ars theologiae* in order to be able to understand and know the God who made them and redeemed them, but who also continues to invite them to quench their thirst from the springs of his amazing grace.

With their reason, seminarians will come to grasp that:

a) when, through study and rational contemplation we carefully analyze reality and go back to its first origin, we can discover that God exists, that is, that he is the cause of everything (*via positiva*);

b) when we perceive the difference between God and everything else, we discover that God is nothing that has been created (*via negativa*);

c) when we claim that he is the cause of everything, we discover that he is above everything (*via praeminent*).71

Now, this theandric process of knowing God does not stop there, for God himself the *Ens Verum, Bonum, Pulchrum et Unum* not only attracts us through Universal Principles, but also with the gift of His grace creates in the human being a certain connaturality with Him. This grace does not ravage our human freedom; on the contrary, it increases it, for our actions are more ours when we receive them entirely from the Lord. In fact, God is not an object, but rather the most perfect communion of Three Persons in one Nature, and if God is personal, he relates to us on that personal level. Consequently, knowledge of God attained by grace is deeper than the one attained through reasoning.

The principle of complementarity of faith and reason has taught us that there is no need to contrapose the two acts of knowing, but rather to complement them.

---

71  Cf. ST, Ia, q. 12, a. 12, co.
Contemplation implies stupor\textsuperscript{72} and admiration for the sublime greatness of the truth\textsuperscript{73} of divine\textsuperscript{74} realities.\textsuperscript{75} Contemplation also presupposes a certain passivity in the presence of God, whose illuminating grace reminds that we need\textsuperscript{76} His assistance to be able to contemplate Him.\textsuperscript{77}

Due to our human nature, we are not able to know everything about God. We need for him to come and establish with us a loving relationship that is fitting to his Divine Nature (God is Love) but also fitting to ours (God loves us in His Beloved Son). When knowledge springs from love, it makes us experience greater happiness and enjoy better our knowledge of God himself. St. Thomas Aquinas says that: \textit{it is better to love God than to know Him}.\textsuperscript{78} Love itself is already knowledge of God, for he has loved us first.\textsuperscript{79} There is no contradiction here with the famous adage that teaches that nothing can be loved if it is not previously known, for a person can be perfectly loved without being perfectly known; and something like this happens when one loves God.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{72} “When a soul rises to God with a desire for ardent desire for honor of Him and the salvation of souls, it exercises for some time in virtue. She installs herself in the cell of self-knowledge and becomes accustomed to it to better understand God’s goodness; because knowledge is followed by love, and, loving, seeks in favor of the truth and clothe itself with it.” St. Catherine of Siena, \textit{Dialogue}, 1.

\textsuperscript{73} Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysica}, II, 1, 993b,20.

\textsuperscript{74} Cf. \textit{ST}, Ia-IIa, q. 180, a. 7, ad. 1.

\textsuperscript{75} “O somma luce, che tanto ti levi / da’ concetti mortali, a la mia mente / ripresta un poco di quel che parevi, / e fa la lingua mia tanto possente, / ch’una favilla sol de la tua gloria / possa lasciare a la futura gente; / chè, per tornare alquanto a mia memoria / e per sonare un poco in questi versi, / più si conceperà di tua vittoria.” Dante, \textit{Paradiso}, XXXIII, 67–75.

\textsuperscript{76} As Francis’ prayer to the Christ of St. Damian says: “Oh God Most High and Glorious, enlighten the darkness of my heart, and give me righteous faith, true hope and perfect charity, meaning and knowledge, Lord, that he may fulfill your holy and truthful commandment.” Francis of Assisi, \textit{Writings}, 24.

\textsuperscript{77} “Lo que yo entiendo es que todo este cimiento de la oración va fecundado en humildad, y que mientras más se abaja un alma en la oración más la sube Dios.” Santa Teresa de Ávila, \textit{Libro de la Vida}, XXII, 11.

\textsuperscript{78} Cf. \textit{ST}, Ia, q. 82, a. 3, co.


\textsuperscript{80} Cf. \textit{ST}, Ia-IIa, q. 27, a. 2, ad. 2.
St. Thomas Aquinas explains the process of contemplation through a formula that best synthesizes the biblical concept of contemplation with the Tradition of the Church Fathers: *Contemplata aliis tradere.*

The purpose of contemplation is to reach the truth and beauty of loving God and neighbor. In this manner, the fruition of contemplation empowered by the *caritas Dei* cannot be contained in oneself but must be communicated to others. This is fundamental for any ordained minister who has the charge of preaching homilies, for he must *aliis tradere.* He must share the fruits of his contemplation with the community he serves.

### III. PROGRAMMATICA PEDAGOGICA

#### A. SECOND THEOLOGY

1. **Fall Workshop:** The purpose of the II Theology Homiletics Fall Workshop is to offer basic instruction in the practice and methods needed to successfully compose and deliver a liturgical homily. The Second Year of Theology will be introduced to the field of preaching. In the course of the workshop, attention will be given to the person and office of the preacher, the theology of the homily as given in the *Homiletic Directory* (2014), practical methods and resources for the preparation of a homily, as well as techniques for successful delivery of the homily. Special

---

81 “Sicut enim maius est illuminate quam lucere solum, ita maius est contemplated aliis tradere quam solum contemplari. Aliud autem est opus activae quod totaliter consistet in occupatione exteriori; sicut eleemosynas dare, hospites recipere, et alia huiusmodi.” *ST*, IIa-IIa, q. 188, a. 6.

82 “Radix merendi est caritas sicut supra (IIa-IIa, q. 83, a. 15; Ia-IIa, q. 114, a. 4) habitum est. Cum autem caritas consistat in dilectione Dei et proximi, sicut supra (IIa-IIa, q. 25, a. 1) habitum est.” Cf., *ST*, IIa-IIa, q. 182, a. 2.

83 “Mas en las luces de la oración y en sus gustos todo su trato de Cristo es con las potencias del alma y con el entendimiento, con la voluntad y memoria de las cuales a las veces pasa a los sentidos del cuerpo, y se les comunica por diversas y admirables maneras, en forma que les son posibles aquestos sentimientos a un cuerpo. Y de la copia de dulzores que el alma siente y de que está colmada, pasan al compañero las sobras.” Fray Luis De León, *Obras Completas*, 782.
attention is given to the document of the USCCB, *Preaching the Mystery of Faith*, in hopes that our seminarians may invest themselves more effectively in the ministry of preaching in the context of the Church of the United States of America. This document gives particular attention to the model of Our Lord Jesus as preacher and looks more deeply at the power of human language to carry the Word. There will be a review of common practices to improve voice and diction. An assessment will be given at the end of the course.

2. *Hebdomadary*

Day One

Session 1: Workshop 1 on *Homiletic Directory*

Session 2: Workshop on Using Rhetoric in Homilies

Session 3: Workshop on Homily Preparation

Day Two

Session 1: Workshop 2 on *Homiletic Directory*

Session 2: Workshop on Monologues

Session 3: *Practica*

Day Three

Session 1: Workshop 3 on *Homily Directory*

Session 2: Workshop on From *Ars Loquendi* to *Ars Praedicandi*

Session 3: Workshop on Delivering Homilies and *Ars Celebrandi*

Day Four

Session 1: Workshop 1 on *Preaching the Mystery of Faith* (USCCB)

Session 2: Workshop on Techniques on Public Speaking

Session 3: *Practica*

Day Five

Session 1: Workshop 2 on *Preaching the Mystery of Faith* (USCCB)
Session 2: Workshop on Articulation and Projection

Session 3: Workshop Evaluation

3. Practica: There are ten homiletics practica sessions scheduled throughout the entire academic year. The homiletics practica assignments for II Theology are intended to focus on the Sunday homily given in a typical parish. Particular attention is given to the privileged seasons of preparation in the liturgical year, Advent and Lent, as well as for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Second and Third Sundays of Advent focus on the person of St. John the Baptist and the Fourth Sunday of Advent marks a change in focus to the events immediately surrounding the birth of Jesus. The Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent – Year A can be used in Years B & C. They have a special catechetical value with the themes of water, light, and life pointing to the preparation of catechumens for Baptism as well as the renewal of Baptismal promises at Easter (Homiletic Directory 69).

Also, the Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time proclaims the Primacy of Peter. It is important on this day to explain the Petrine ministry. Christ the King has the Final Judgement of Matthew 25, an opportunity to incorporate the Novissima in the Homily.

Finally, weekday homilies should target three to five minutes and Sunday homilies should be five to seven minutes in length. Other homilies should take into consideration the local circumstances and should be adjusted relative to the length of the entire liturgical celebration and needs of the people.
C. Third Theology

1. Fall Workshop: The purpose of the III Theology Homiletics Fall Workshop is to build upon the practice and methods of composition and delivery of a liturgical homily learned in Second Theology. In the course of the workshop, particular attention will be given to the finer points of preaching with an emphasis on the dynamics of language, narrative, and the creative and imaginative aspect of preaching the Gospel. During the workshop focus will be given to the delivery of Marian and hagiographical homilies, as well as homilies for the rites of the Church, such as Weddings, Funerals, and Masses with Children. Special attention is given to teach the seminarians how to preach without a written text. For the practica, there will be two exercises, a funeral and a wedding homily. These homilies are key moments of evangelization and a key opportunity to practice preaching to a diverse congregation. Further information is given in class as to scenarios and situations for these ritual homilies.
2. **Hebdomadary**

**Day One**

Session 1: Workshop on Homilies without a written Text  
Session 2: Workshop on Preaching the Funeral Homily  
Session 3: Homily Preparation – Optional Lectio Divina

**Day Two**

Session 1: Workshop on Coping with Suffering and Death  
Session 2: Theological Reflection: Difficult Passages of Scripture  
Session 3: Funeral Homily *Practica*

**Day Three**

Session 1: Workshop on Preaching the Wedding Homily  
Session 2: Workshop on Preaching Homilies to Children  
Session 3: Wedding Homily *Practica*

**Day Four**

Session 1: Workshop on Preaching Marian Homilies  
Session 2: Workshop on Preaching Hagiographic Homilies

**Day Five**

Session 1: Workshop on Hispanic Ministry  
Session 2: Workshop on Preaching Spanish Homilies  
Session 3: Workshop Evaluation

3. **Practica**: There are seven homiletics *practica* scheduled throughout the entire academic year. The homiletics assignments for Third Year are intended to focus on specific liturgical celebrations which occur in the life of a typical parish. Particular attention is given to the great feasts of Easter and Christmas, as well as the civil commemoration of Thanksgiving. The Fifteen, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Sundays of OT – Year A give us the Parable Discourse from Matthew 13. This gives the
student an opportunity to focus on the *lectio continua* principle of the Lectionary.

Finally, weekday homilies should target three to five minutes and Sunday homilies should be five to seven minutes in length. Other homilies, especially those of Christmas and Easter, should take into consideration the local circumstances and should be adjusted relative to the length of the entire liturgical celebration and needs of the people.

**4. Sessions**

Session 1: Solemnity of the Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ – Year A  
Session 2: Thanksgiving Day  
Session 3: Christmas – Years ABC – Family Mass with Children & Carols  
Session 4: Easter Vigil – Years ABC – with Baptisms & Confirmations  
Session 5: 15th Sunday of OT – Year A  
Session 6: 16th Sunday of OT – Year A  
Session 7: 17th Sunday of OT – Year A

**IV. Methodologia Activa**

A lecture is a formal presentation conducted by a lecturer. It follows the German style of the *Vorlesung*, in which the professor dictates a class during a scholastic period at a University or other *Hochschule*; it could be a one-time event, a brief seminar, or an entire semester. Above all, it is a scholastic exercise in which the master talks and the students listen, normally without class participation, or very little. Though in some places, like in the USA, lectures tend to be more participative and engaging.

The nature of the Carl J. Peter Homiletic Workshop every Fall at the Pontifical North American College requires a different methodology, or students will get bored and, thus, miss out the opportunity of learning the ins-and-outs of this important *munus Ecclesiae*, i.e., Homiletics. Passive learning and workshops simply do not go well together.
A workshop, by definition, is a series of encounters of avid learners who seek to explore a specific subject, develop a particular skill or technique, and/or carry out a creative project together; the emphasis being on teamwork. Consequently, it is a learning exercise in which the privileged pedagogy is hands-on learning in order to instill in the participants, the acquisition of dexterity on a given topic or technique.

For this reason, our homiletics workshop is conducted with a dialogical and symbiotic pedagogy in which the facilitator engages the students in the *ars loquendi* and the *ars praedicandi* by means of written and oral *practica* on how to prepare, compose and deliver a Liturgical Homily.

The Facilitator leads presentations using PowerPoint and class discussions. He also facilitates the work of the students with pertinent activities and discussions about the required readings and other classroom handouts. There are several Q&A sessions, small group discussions and presentations, and small group homily preparation and delivery. Finally, there are faculty moderators accompanying each small group in the Homily *practica* and who provide feedback to each student.

V. **LECTIONES**


VI. **CONCLUSION**

By way of conclusion, I would like to recall what St. Bernard had to say about the preachers in his time. St. Bernard demanded many virtues in the priest. He often complained gravely that there were in the Church many channels but very few springs.⁸⁴ He also noted that priests were prompt to spill but slow to fill up, so he gave them this advice: “First

---

⁸⁴ St. Bernard, *In Cant.*, sermo 18, 3; PL 183,860A.
contemplate what sort of things you need to be filled up with before you begin to pour out in preaching. Give always out of fullness, not out of shortage. And then follow these seven steps: 1. Compunction; 2. Devotion; 3. The work of Penance; 4. The work of Piety; 5. Constant prayer; 6. Assiduous contemplation; 7. The Plenitude of Love.”

Later, writing to an abbot, he said: “Teach the priests that there are three necessary things in order to promote the salvation of mankind: doctrine, example, and prayer. The greatest of the three is prayer, because prayer is the one that reaches out for the grace to be efficacious in works and in words.”

Of the same opinion was St. Augustine, who said: “The preacher must strive to be heard and understood with joy and attention. He must not doubt, to do so more with the mercy of prayers than with the skill of the sermon, so that by praying for himself and for those who hear him, the preacher be first an intercessor before a doctor; And when that moment comes He may raise to God’s his thirsty soul before moving his tongue to profuse what he drank or to spill that of what has been filled.”

To be an effective preacher the priest must engage in prayer and meditation, and he must abandon himself to the solicitude of God’s gratuitous providence. To God we entrust our seminarians so that He may bestow onto them what they need to be effective preachers in the Church of the Third Millennium.

---

85 St. Bernard, *In Cant.*, sermo 18, 6; *PL* 183,862D.
86 St. Bernard, *Epist.* 201; *PL* 182,370B-C.
87 St. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 15, 32; *PL* 34,103.
Fr. Simeon, OSCO (Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis), is a monk of Saint Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, MA. He holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Theology from Emory University and served for many years as a professor of Literature and Theology at the University of San Francisco. He is the translator of several important theological tomes and is the author of the three (to date) volumes of Fire of Mercy, Heart of the World, published by Ignatius Press.

Rev. Mr. Nicholas Case, ’21, holds the MA in Philosophy from the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, CA and the MA in Theology from Union Theological Seminary, NY, as well as the STB from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum), Rome. A transitional deacon of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, he is currently a student for the Licentiate in Sacred Theology in the field of fundamental theology at the Angelicum.

Rev. John P. Cush, ’98, C’15, is Academic Dean and a formation advisor at the Pontifical North American College. A priest of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York, Fr. Cush earned the Doctorate in Sacred Theology (STD) from the Pontifical Gregorian University in 2017 in the field of fundamental theology. He also serves as lecturer of theology at the Gregorian and an adjunct associate professor of church history at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. He is the author of The How-To Book of Catholic Theology: Everything You Need to Know But No One Ever Taught You (Our Sunday Visitor: Huntington, IN, 2020) and is a regular contributor to National Catholic Register, Homiletics and Pastoral Review, The Evangelist (Diocese of Albany) and The Tablet (Diocese of Brooklyn.) Fr. Cush is the author of a forthcoming book on priestly identity and
priestly formation for Word On Fire Press.

Rev. Msgr. James M. McNamara, PA is a spiritual director at the Pontifical North American College. A priest of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York, Monsignor McNamara is the author of several books including The Power of Compassion (Paulist: Mahwah, New Jersey, 1983) and In the Presence of the Wise and Gentle Christ (Paulist: Mahwah, New Jersey, 1993).


Rev. Mr. Christopher Trummer, ’21, is currently a transitional deacon of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Deacon Trummer holds the STB from the Pontifical Gregorian University and now has begun studies for his STL in moral theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.