

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

34. Church teaching on moral matters is founded not only on reason, but also on Scripture and the Christian tradition developed through reflection on Christian practice, and through the teachings of saints, popes and councils, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Moral theology uses a method of reasoning enlightened by faith to develop moral arguments. Faith is not incompatible with reason but complements it, and reflection on the mysteries of the faith illuminates and deepens our understanding of human life.

35. A great early Christian writer, St Irenaeus, once wrote 'the glory of God is a human being fully alive, and full life for a human being is the vision of God'. Christians believe that life has meaning, and that the meaning of life is to find happiness through Christ in friendship with God and in the service of others.

36. Jesus showed that the one God is three persons, Father, Son and Spirit. Each is God, all are one, living in relationships of eternal love. From this mystery we draw truth for our own relationships. Treating people morally and respectfully involves recognising them as persons. All human beings, whatever group or class they belong to, should be recognised as human persons with basic human rights.

37. The Scriptures warn us of the reality of sin in ourselves and in others. The story of Cain and Abel (*Genesis* 4:1-16) tells how envy fractures the peace intended by God and leads to domestic strife, violence and even murder. However, since Jesus came to seek and save the lost (*Luke* 19:10), the recognition of sin in the life of the Christian is not a reason for despair. Rather it is an invitation to repent and trust in the mercy of God granted through humble confession and reconciliation. The path to holiness is often through many falls and many new beginnings.

38. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead shows that death is not the end of the human story. The life of the body is not an absolute good, but it should be cherished both for itself and as the opportunity to serve our fellow man. Because this mortal life is a gift from God, it is reserved to God to bring it to an end, to bring us to judgement and then, please God, to grant us eternal life. Jesus spoke of the need to die in order to find life (*John* 12:24-25), and this refers both to the Christian life here on earth and to the promise of life in the world to come.

39. The dignity of each human being is founded on his or her creation in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis* 1:26-27). The divine image is shown most perfectly in Jesus, the Son of God, who came in humble human form to restore human beings to a right relationship with God and with one another. The image of God is thus seen more clearly in love and humility than in power and worldly honour.

40. As every human being is irreplaceable and invaluable, it is always wrong intentionally to kill an innocent man, woman or child. This conclusion is also implied by the commandment 'You shall not kill' (*Exodus* 20:13). Nevertheless, we should note that the scriptural commandment does not apply to all killing. It does not forbid the killing of animals, as is clear from the laws on the ritual slaughter of bulls and goats. Furthermore, sometimes even the killing of people is presented in the Scriptures as excusable or as legitimate: for instance, unintended killing in self-

defence and killing in a just war.

QUESTIONS

The story of the Good Samaritan should inspire us as to how we should treat others, especially the neediest in our society. Discuss

Animal welfare people are very concerned as to how we should be kind to animals whilst at the same time not showing the same concern for the millions who go to bed hungry every night. Explore

"All men are created equal but some are more equal than others" Discuss