

UNIT 5:

The Tent Roof.

A Suitable Helper. MORALITY



This unit delves into the moral dimension of the person. It presents morality to the youth as a help along the way, rather than a burden.

They will come to recognize the moral dimension as a constitutive part of themselves, and to see how their acts have consequences for themselves and for others, since their acts can either be morally good or morally evil.

They will walk along the path of the value of life and human dignity.

Today's young people have learned to separate themselves from their nuclear family and establish new relationships within their own social circles, producing a radical advancement in the construction of their own identity. Contemporary society presents to our youth a concept of sexuality that is either devoid of content or has a distorted meaning, totally separated from the person.

At this moment, it is urgently necessary to help our youth be able to critically evaluate the reality in which they live, and to discover the criteria of truth inscribed in the depths of the heart of every man and woman, conferring on them the dignity of a person.

The evolution of this unit seeks to offer the youth a suitable vision of human beings and a concept of sexuality that is integrated into the totality of the person, at the service of love and life. All this is presented from the point of view of Christian morality, laying the foundation for these principles, so that the youth may understand the difficulties of today and may take a critical approach to threats against life and human dignity.

Morality is an aid that will open up the world to them, helping them to think critically, and producing in them a desire to come to know the truth about human dignity, the meaning of the body, the right to love, dignified death, the right to motherhood, and alcohol and drug addiction.



This stage seeks to inspire the youth to learn how to critically judge and argue the twofold vision of the question of human morality, starting with their own lives and immediate surroundings. It seeks to foster responsibility for their actions and the recognition that personal acts always have consequences.

If the youth, upon completing this stage, are able to feel the call to collaborate with society to build a better world, then the unit will have been a success.

This path will have contributed to the youth having grown in maturity and strengthened the construction of their own identity based on the transcendent dimension necessary for their integral formation.

1. What Does the World Offer Me?

“Do not conform yourselves to this age”
(Rm 12:2).

- **Consumeristic advertising.** The French advertising executive F. Beigbeder wrote that dissatisfaction is the true heart of commerce. Those who impose lifestyles on us through the media don't desire our happiness, for the simple reason that happy people are not consumers.
- **A false idea of the person surrounds us in a society that is...**
 - **consumeristic**, where the person ends up being a simple object of desire;
 - **utilitarian**, where the person is only worth what he can offer or contribute to me;
 - **competitive**, where the other person is like an enemy that must be defeated;
 - **dualistic**, where the person isn't seen as a unity of body and soul.
- **We must make sure to look at things with a critical eye** so that we can keep in mind the meaning of our life and not allow ourselves to be led only by what is considered useful. Only in this way will we remain truly free. We must know how to critically evaluate all those invitations to transform ourselves into objects for consumption – both merely as consumers, and as simple objects to be used, since putting ourselves into those situations makes us more vulnerable to manipulation. We live in a “liquid society” (Z. Bauman), which exalts what is momentary, fleeting, ethereal, sporadic, ever-changing and devoid of commitment. A society that insists on weakening all bonds, except those of consumerism. We can sell more if we absolutize the experience of pleasure, satisfaction and instant gratification.
- Ch. Taylor says that there are three types of unease about modern times: “The first regards what we can call a **loss of meaning**, the erasing of our mental horizons. The second regards the **eclipse of our ends** in favor of a dominant, instrumental reason (what we previously referred to regarding the prevalent value of persons or actions based on purely pragmatic or utilitarian matters). The third is the **loss of freedom**”.

2. The Morality In My Heart

**“I will place my law within them, and
write it upon their hearts”
(Jr 31:33)**

- **Do I have a moral dimension?** Yes, it is part of my spiritual dimension. Let’s recall the dimensions of the person: physical, affective, social, intellectual and spiritual. The moral dimension is not something extra added on to me; it is a constitutive part of me as a person. For this reason, all **personal acts**, by the very fact that they are personal, are **moral acts**.
- **Morality is proper to and exclusive of human acts:** Man is the only being who, with his acts, can freely fulfill the final end/moral order than corresponds to him.
- Freedom can be understood in this sense as the capacity of the will to move itself toward the good presented to it by reason. In other words, freedom is the intrinsic indetermination of the will in desiring or not desiring something, or in desiring either this or that thing.
- Man is the only being to have mastery over his actions. Because of this, he can either fulfill his purpose or not. Man acts freely, while all other beings are led to fulfill their purpose. In this way, animals are moved by what we call “instinct”.
- **Freedom makes man a moral subject.** Human acts, that is, acts that are freely performed in consequence of a judgment of conscience, can be morally evaluated: they are either good or evil (cfr. CCE, 1749). They are related to freedom, the will, and conscience.
- **Acts must be ordered toward a greater good.** There are many goods or values. I can recognize them because morality is inscribed in my heart, in my body, in my person. What is good is not subjective; rather, it is subject to this greater good. That is why it is necessary to seek “all” of the truth, and not just part of it.

3. Where Can I Look for the Greater Good?

“I am the way and the truth and the life”
(Jn 14:6).

- **The sources of morality.** The morality of human acts depends on the object chosen, on the end in view or the intention, and on the circumstances of the action:
 - **The object chosen** is a good toward which the will deliberately tends. It morally specifies the act of the will, insofar as reason recognizes and judges it to be or not to be in conformity with the true good (cfr. CCE, 1751).
 - The moral object is the proximate end of a deliberate action, which determines the act of the will of the person acting (VS,78).
 - **The end** is the first goal of the intention and indicates the purpose pursued in the action. The intention is a movement of the will toward the end: it is concerned with the goal of the activity. It aims at the good anticipated from the action undertaken. Intention is not limited to directing individual actions, but can guide several actions toward one and the same purpose; it can orient one’s whole life toward its ultimate end (CCE, 1752).
 - **The circumstances**, or what surrounds the action, are secondary elements of a moral act. They contribute to increasing or diminishing the moral goodness or evil of human acts. They can also diminish or increase the agent’s responsibility. Circumstances themselves cannot change the moral quality of acts themselves; they can make neither good nor right an action that is in itself evil.
 - In the moral order, the goodness of human actions is not exhausted in the moral object and end of the action. We also have to keep in mind the circumstances, since they are “accessory” elements that modify the moral object. The main types of moral circumstances that affect human acts are:

- a. **The agent**, or the person who performs the action. The false statement of a notary does not have the same moral value as that of a private individual.
 - b. **The quantity or quality of the object produced**. It is not the same to steal a pencil as it is to steal a car.
 - c. **Where the action takes place**. An action committed in a public place cannot be morally evaluated in the same way as an action committed in private.
 - d. **The means employed**. A robbery committed using violence is not the same as a non-violent robbery.
 - e. **The moral way in which the action is committed**. There is a difference between the morality of actions committed with or without full deliberation (it is not the same to insult someone while drunk as it is while sober... even though the intoxicated person is responsible for their drunkenness).
 - f. **Quality and quantity of time**. For example, the duration of a kidnapping, or the difference between an act committed in a time of war or peace.
 - g. **One's motive for committing an act**. Someone can help their neighbor with the end of practicing charity, but they can also do it out of a desire to receive thanks for their service. Or for vainglory.
- The following chart shows what Pedro Lombardo points out when he states: *“Actions are good or evil based on their end, with the exception of those actions that are evil in themselves”*. This means that if the moral object of the act is evil then the action is evil, even if the end in view is good.

<u>Esquema moral de la acción</u>					
<u>Elementos de la acción</u>	<u>Buena</u>	<u>Mala</u>			
Objeto	+	+	+	+	-
Circunstancia	+	+	-	-	-
Fin	+	-	+	-	-
Resultado	+	-	-	-	-

- This chart introduces an interesting element: “the consequence”. This brings us to the issue of **consequentialism**, which refers to all those theories that sustain that the ends of an action form the basis of whatever type of moral appreciation should be attributed to that action. According to this doctrine, a morally correct act would be that which leads to good consequences and good actions. At this moment it doesn’t seem opportune to look at this issue in depth; we merely want to point out that **a good result must be desired in order for the act to be considered morally good**. Consequentialism is different from deontological ethics (what Christian morality is based on), which emphasizes the type of action rather than its consequences. It also differs from virtue ethics, which focuses on the importance of the agent’s motivations.
- **A morally good act** requires the goodness of the object, of the end and of the circumstances together. An evil end corrupts the action, even if the object is good in itself (CCE, 1755).
- It is therefore an error to judge the morality of human acts by considering only the intention (the end) that inspires them or the circumstances which supply their context. There are acts which, in and of themselves, independently of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely illicit by reason of their object. One may not do evil so that good may result from it (cfr. CCE, 1756).
- **The end does not justify the means.** A good intention does not make behavior that is intrinsically disordered good or just. On the other hand, an added bad intention makes an act evil that, in and of itself, can be good (cfr. CCE, 1753). We can lose sight of the intentional unity of the action. The choice of a means never lies outside of the intention, since the intention includes that choice of means.
- **So, what am I seeking with my actions?** I am looking to achieve the fullness of what was given to me as a gift: I am seeking to attain communion with the good that seduced me, with the person who attracted me in an absolute way. Nonetheless, the intentionality of my action is shaped in different moments, insofar as it is directed toward an end (by my intention) or toward a means (by my choice).
- **Do my acts have consequences?** Yes, always. Sometimes they will be good, and sometimes bad. What I do, my behavior, my attitude, my actions either make me grow as a person or harm me, make me small. The same thing happens with other people. For this reason, my actions not only have repercussions for me, for my happiness, and for my dignity and fulfillment as a person, but they also affect the lives of other people.

4. I Am a Child: Right, Gift, or Problem?

**“You formed my inmost being; you knit me in
my mother’s womb”
(Ps 139:13)**

- **The sanctity of life.** The foundation and justification of this sacred character do not come from the fact that human life is “life”, but rather from the fact that it is “human”, i.e., from the life of the person as such. The person is sacred and, by participation, so is his/her life. This fact confers a morally good or evil character on different acts related to human life, the life of those who have been born and of the unborn alike (*“nasciturus”*).
- **Children – all lives that have been conceived – are always a gift from God.** Everyone, regardless of the circumstances in which they were brought to existence, are the object of the favored love of God the Father, who wants to make His own love palpable in that of our parents. Generation may not have occurred according to the design of God, but from the beginning human life is always a personal gift from God the Father, and He never repents of his gifts. Children can be unexpected, but they are never, or should never be, unwanted. We know that God has desired them by the mere fact that they exist; and He will want to make someone participate in his paternal desire, He will call someone to to render personally clear this ever-welcoming, paternal “yes”.
- **The child as a problem rather than a hope.** The birth of a *child* is seen as a social problem, as a financial burden that gives rise to a series of future difficulties, especially regarding education. Children are no longer viewed as a *hope* for the rejuvenation of society or as a precious gift for the family (FSV, 40).
- **A child is not a right, but a gift.** Children cannot be seen as property, which would lead to a so-called “right to a child”. The only one who truly has rights is the child (cfr. CCE, 2738). A child is not the mere effect of a natural biological process, but a person who must be accepted in an act of love, an act of donating and receiving (FSV, 69).
- **Welcoming a child** does not occur when he/she enters the world. Rather, it takes place in the very act of conjugal love. This is the case even if the spouses were unaware that a new life was coming, or even if they did not want life to come forth from that act. If there was true conjugal love, then it was an act of love capable of generating life and communion.
- **Being a child necessitates being welcomed** with the unconditional love that is characteristic of parenthood. Thanks to this love, each person is able to discover that they are unique and unrepeatable, since they are loved for their own sake.

5. Can I Lose My Dignity? My Life?

**“I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly”
(Jn 10:10).**

- **The dignity of the human person.** We are persons, and for this reason we have a certain dignity. We are priceless. We are excluded from calculations, because we are the very measure of the calculation itself. We cannot be used as means to an end; rather, we are an end unto ourselves. For this reason, we all deserve equal consideration and unconditional respect. This is true about all people throughout every different stage of their life (embryo, newborn, adolescent, the elderly), as well as in different situations of sickness or health, or conditions of sex, race, belief, nationality, etc.
- **The dignity of the person is being attacked** by some of the darkest characteristics of certain ways of thinking and living that are made out to seem modern and developed. When the world is organized around individuals and the exchange of material goods, the person is left at the mercy of **utilitarianism** and technicality, which attribute more value to wellbeing, pleasure and efficiency in producing devices or consumer goods, than to people themselves. A world organized in this way finds itself subject to *structures of sin* that must be denounced and combatted (FSV, 105).
- **Hedonism kicks God out of my life.** Hedonism is the antithesis of the search for transcendence; it encloses me into my own world, prevents me from going beyond myself and indefinitely stretches the limit of my aspirations, leading me to quench my desires through degrading passions that destroy my loftiest purposes and leave me immersed in vice, solitude and anguish. This causes us to lose our freedom, and even the very meaning of our life. The result is loneliness and despair.
- **Losing the sense of God** leads the person to experience the drama that largely characterizes today's man: "when the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life" (EV, 21).
- **"Culture of death" versus "Culture of life".** *Work that favors respect for human life* and fights against the culture of death tends to be stigmatized as something typical of backwards attitudes, incompatible with life in a modern, democratic society. Those who commit themselves to this type of work are accused of trying to impose their private opinions as public ethical norms that ought to inspire the life of society (FSV, 108).

- Emptying the human being's sexual dimension of its personal meaning would lead us to look at people as "useful" or as "means for satisfaction". It is not difficult to deduce the harmful consequences of this emptying of meaning: a *culture that does not generate life*, which lives out an increasingly accentuated tendency to become a *culture of death* (VAH, 57).
- **The sanctuary of life is the family** (FSV), because it is, constitutively, "the place in which life – the gift of God – can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth. In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the **culture of life**" (CA, 39).