

## St. Thomas More – Advent Series

### Christ our Hope

Session 1 – December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Opening: Prayer to the Holy Spirit

**INTRODUCTION** to the series.

Session 1: Faith, prayer, Dignity of the human person

Session 2: Hope, Worship – Love of God

Session 3: Charity – Love of neighbor

**CREATION** The truth concerning creation is of major importance. It concerns the very foundations of human and Christian life” (CCC, 282).

*“God said, Let there be light, and there was light. God saw how good the light was.” (Gen 1:3-4)*

*“The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living soul.” (Gen 2:7)*

**Origin of the Soul.** Tertullian: The soul has its origin in the breath of God and did not come from matter. *“God breathed the breath of life into the face of man, and man became a living soul.” (On the Soul 3.4)*

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

### On the Soul

*“Then God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, ... God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him, male and female he created them.’ (Gen 1: 26-27).*

**The Soul:** The spiritual principle of human beings. Each human soul is individual and immortal, immediately created by God. The soul does not die with the body, from which it is separated by death, it will be reunited in the final resurrection. (CCC 363, 366, 1703)

**Intellect and will reside in the soul:** “God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions, so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him. (CCC 1730).

**Human freedom:** Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so perform deliberate actions of one’s own responsibility. By free will one shapes one’s own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness. (CCC 1731).

**Two Realms:** The **world around us** in which we live. **Spiritual reality** which was present before creation. Our senses connect us to this world. Our faith connects to the other.

**Wisdom:** *“Happy the man who meditates on wisdom, and reflects on knowledge; who ponders her ways in his heart, and understands her paths.” (Sirach 14:20-21)*

*“Say not it was God’s doing that I fell away; for what he hates he does not do. When God, in the beginning, created man, he made him subject to his own free choice. If you choose you can keep the commandments; it is loyalty to do his will (Sirach 14:11-18)*

**Faith:** Faith is man’s response to God who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the meaning of his life. (CCC 26).

## Steps toward faith

**Attraction:** Given by God: Beauty, goodness, truth, nature, witness of those following Christ.

**Interest:** Response to the attraction: without interest there is no further movement.

**To seek and to desire:** “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; God never ceases to draw man to himself.

**It pleased God,** in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature. (CCC 51).

“God, who dwells in unapproachable light, wants to communicate his own divine life to the men he freely created.” (CCC 52).

## Faith in the Scriptures

- “By faith we understand that the universe was ordered by the Word of God, so that what is visible came into being through the invisible” (Heb 11: 3).
- “Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it him as an act of righteousness” (Gen 15:6)

## Aspects of faith

- “Without faith it is impossible to please God, for anyone who approaches God **must believe that he exists** and that **he rewards those who seek him**” (Heb 11: 6).
- “By his Revelation, the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses man as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite them into his own company. The adequate response to this invitation is faith” (CCC 142).
- By faith, man completely submits his intellect and will to God. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the obedience of faith” (CCC `43).
- To obey (from the Latin *ob-audire*, to hear or listen to) in faith is to submit to God freely... because its truth is guaranteed by God.

## Faith and Prayer

- a. “*When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret will repay you*” (Mt 6: 6).
- b. “Prayer is the raising of the mind and the heart to God or the requesting of good things from God” (CCC 2559).
- c. “*Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, in prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus*” (Phil 4:6).

**Pray daily** “*I lift up my soul to my God. Make known to me your ways, Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me. For you I wait all the day long.*” (Ps 25:1-5)

“*Let us search and examine our ways that we may return to the Lord! Let us reach our hearts toward God in heaven!* (Lam 3:40).

“*Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus:* (1 Thes 5:16)

**Daily prayer is essential to come to know God.** Daily prayer is talking to God and listening to Him in faith. Without prayer it is impossible to know and to please God.