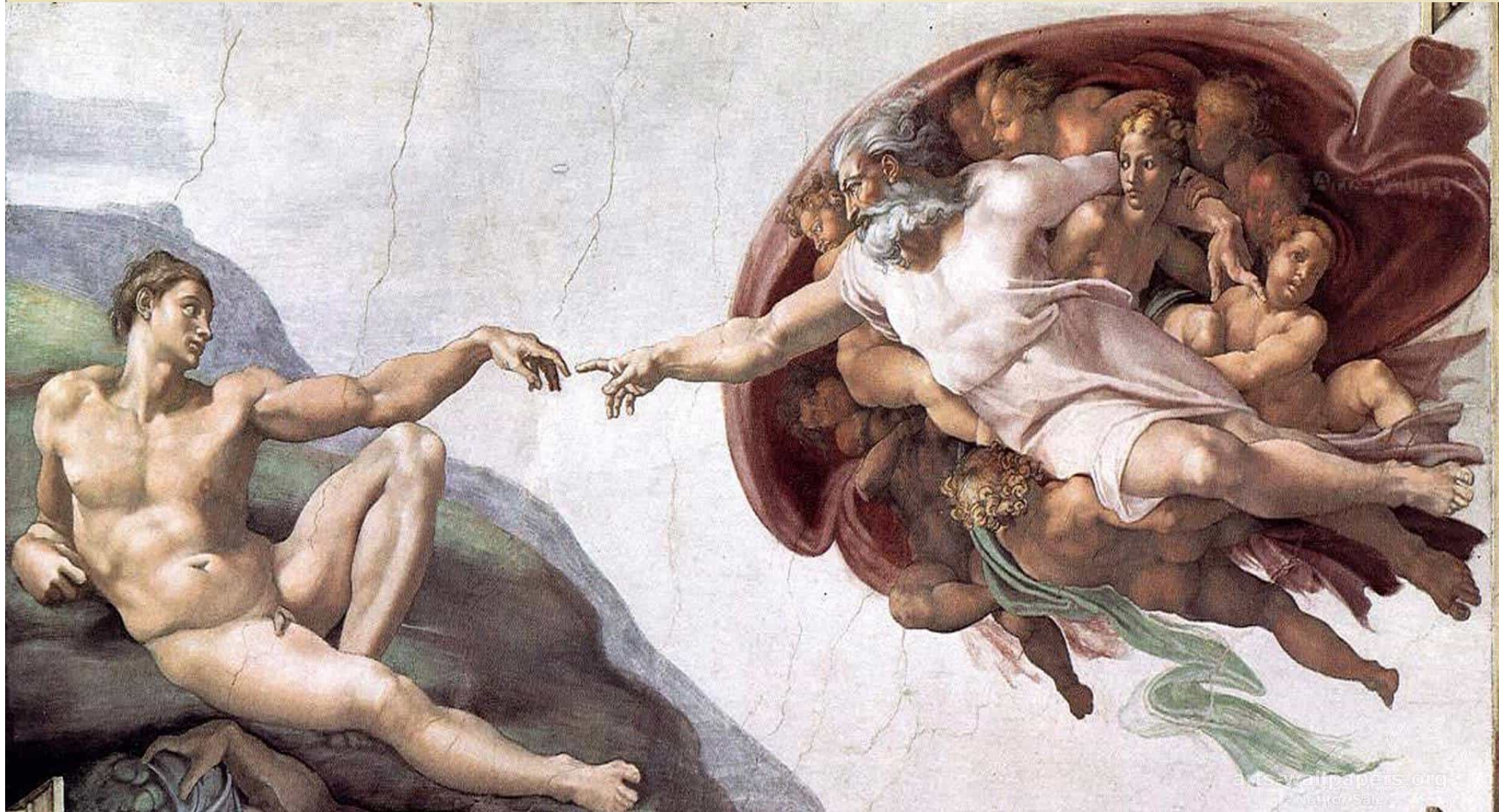


# Christian Anthropology: The Human Person in the Modern World



**Fr. Roger J. Landry**

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# The Leonine Forum

- Purpose: “To cultivate an emerging generation of virtuous leaders and empower them to form fully integrated lives of faith in order to apply the Social Teachings of the Church within their professional and civic lives.”
- Basic pillars of the Leonine Experience: worship and spiritual development, intellectual formation through the study of Catholic Social Teaching, friendship and community, cultural engagement and loving service of neighbor.
- More on the Study pillar:
  - Basic methodology: Learning the foundations of Catholic Social Teaching and applying them practically and effectively to current situations
  - Introduction to and Assimilation of Magisterial Documents.
  - Questions and Dialogue



## The Starting Point of Catholic Social Teaching

- There are various pillars of Catholic Social Teaching we will discuss in depth in a later lecture. But as the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* specifies, everything begins with an “integral humanism,” the “full truth about man,” loved by God, made in his image.
- Everything flows from this “personalist principle”: human dignity, human rights, common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, the Church’s teaching on marriage, the family, human work, economic life, political questions, the international community, the environment, justice, and peace.



## The Stages in the Leonine Journey Starting from this Personalist Principle

1. **The Human Person as the Image of God:** An Adequate Anthropology (adequate in itself as well as in persuasion).
2. **The Human Person is Created to Know:** The Intersection of Faith and Reason
3. **The Human Person is a Social Creature:** The Principles of Catholic Social Teaching
4. **The Human Person is a Moral Agent:** The Life of Virtue, Truth and Charity, Justice and Mercy.
5. **The Human Person is a Citizen of the City of God and the City of Man:** Catholics and Political Involvement.



## The Stages in the Leonine Journey Starting from this Personalist Principle

6. **The Human Person in the Image of the Divine Giver: Catholics Before Some Major Contemporary Bioethical Questions**
7. **The Human Person, “Male and Female God Created Them”: Sexual Identity and Gender.**
8. **The Human Person as Steward of Integral Ecology: “Filling the Earth and Subduing It” and “Having Dominion”**
9. **The Human Person as Co-Creator: The Vocation to Work**
10. **The Human Person is a Transcendent Being: The Right and Responsibility of Religious Freedom**
11. **The Human Person with Dignity in Vulnerable Situations: Poverty, Refugees and Migrants**



# Adequate Humanism in the Context of Modern Anthropological Confusion

- Pope Francis, in an Address to the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life on October 5, 2017, grounded many of the threats facing the human person precisely in an inadequate anthropology.
- Confusion about beginning and purpose of human life:
  - “Human beings seem now to find themselves at a special juncture in their history, in uncharted territory, as they deal with questions both old and new regarding the **meaning of human life, its origin and destiny.**”
- The impact of technology
  - “The key feature of this moment is, in a word, **the rapid spread of a culture obsessively centered on the mastery of human beings – individually and as a species – over reality.**”



# Adequate Humanism in the Context of Modern Anthropological Confusion

- The excessive focus on the self
  - “Some have even spoken of an *egolatry*, a worship of the self, on whose altar everything is sacrificed, even the most cherished human affections. ... **It induces people to gaze constantly in the mirror, to the point of being unable to turn their eyes away from themselves and towards others and the larger world. The spread of this approach has extremely grave effects on every affection and relationship in life.**”
  
- The need for renewed focus on and understanding of creation:
  - “Today there is great need of a **theology of creation and redemption** capable of finding expression in words and acts of love for each life and the whole of life.
  - “All creation is in some way part of God’s special love for human creatures. ... God’s original blessing and his promise of an eternal destiny are the basis of the dignity of every life; they are meant for everyone.
  - “The biblical account of creation needs to be read and reread.”



# Adequate Humanism in the Context of Modern Anthropological Confusion

- There is a specific need to understand original differentiation:
  - **“The covenant between man and woman is called to be a guiding force for society as a whole. ... This is not merely a matter of equal opportunities or mutual appreciation. It involves the way men and women understand the very meaning of life and human progress.”**
  - **“A new start must be made in the ethos of peoples ... through a new culture of identity and difference. The recent proposal to advance the dignity of a person by radically eliminating sexual difference and, as a result, our understanding of man and woman, is not right. Instead of combatting wrongful interpretations of sexual difference that would diminish the fundamental importance of that difference for human dignity, such a proposal would simply eliminate it by proposing procedures and practices that make it irrelevant for a person’s development and for human relationships.**
  - **“The utopia of the ‘neuter’ eliminates both human dignity in sexual distinctiveness and the personal nature of the generation of new life. The biological and psychological manipulation of sexual difference, which biomedical technology can now make appear as a simple matter of personal choice – which it is not! – runs the risk of dismantling the dynamic source that feeds the covenant between man and woman, making it creative and fruitful.”**





# Adequate Humanism in the Context of Modern Anthropological Confusion

- A need to grasp and protect human dignity in all stages of human life:
  - “We need ... to become sensitive once more to the **different stages of life, especially of children and the elderly.** Their frailties, their infirmities and their vulnerability are **not exclusively the concern of medicine and health care.** They also have to do with the soul and with human needs that must be recognized and taken into account, protected and esteemed, by individuals and the community alike.”
  - “A society that considers these things as buyable and sellable, bureaucratically regulated and technically managed, is one that **has already lost its sense of the meaning of life.** It will no longer pass on that meaning to its young or revere it in its aging parents.”



# The Second Vatican Council and The Need for An Adequate Anthropology

- The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was an attempt to repropose the faith in response to the “isms” of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Nazism and Communism, but materialism, hedonism, individualism, relativism, atheism.
- The ante-preparatory commission for Vatican II
  - It sought to respond to the yearnings, questions and provisional answers of persons today and responding to modern despair.
  - Wojtyla’s *Person and Act* and phenomenological personalism, seeking to blend metaphysics and ethics, focused on the person in action, his objective and subjective dimensions. The development of the personalistic principle.
- *Gaudium et Spes* 22 and 24
  - GS 22: [Christ] fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear
  - GS 24: Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself



# The Formation and Proclamation of An Adequate Anthropology

- The Church's Mission in the World
  - Authentic humanism: to help the human person discover who he really is, to provide an answer to her deepest questions.
  - John Paul II: *Redemptor Hominis*: “Man cannot live without love. ... In the mystery of the Redemption man becomes newly ‘expressed’ and, in a way, is newly created. ... The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly- and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being, he must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self, he must ‘appropriate’ and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself” (10).
  - Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*: “We urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge ... in the service of a more integral and integrating vision” (141).



# An Adequate Christian Anthropology

- We can focus on ten elements:
  1. The person is a creature
  2. The person is the image of God
  3. The person is fundamentally good
  4. The person is one in soul and body (*corpore et anima unus*)
  5. The person is either male or female
  6. The person has and seeks transcendence
  7. The person has a conscience
  8. The person is a moral agent
  9. The person has inalienable dignity and inalienable rights flowing from that dignity.
  10. The person within the mystery of human suffering and death



# An Adequate Christian Anthropology

1. The person is a creature
  - We don't create ourselves but enter life as the gift of another.
  - We are all related to the Creator, to parents, to each other.
  - We are summoned to participate in the mystery of Creation.



# An Adequate Christian Anthropology

## 2. The person is the image of God

- Like God, he is endowed with reason and will (to be discussed later)
- Like God, he is created to exist in a *communio personarum*. He is not atomized or solitary but a social being with a social nature, called to live in society. The capacity to give of himself in love leads to communion. The capacity for the family begins with this nature of the call to a communion of persons in fruitful love.
- He is made in the image of the Son, who is the “icon of the invisible God” (Col 1:15)
- He is called to work. God gave us the three-fold command to work before the Fall.



# An Adequate Christian Anthropology

## 3. The person is fundamentally good

- God pronounced the human person “very good.”
- We must discover and respect our and others’ inherent value.
- We are summoned to contemplate what God and others see as good in them.



# An Adequate Christian Anthropology

4. The person is one in soul and body (*corpore et anima unus*)
  - The bodily and spiritual realms are united. Both realms are good, not to be despised. Spiritualism and materialism are both deficient.
  - This hylomorphic nature means that the human person has reason, will and emotions.
  - Reason
    - He can know.
    - Bound to the truth about things.
  - Will
    - He can choose freely.
    - Freedom is valuable but limited, because of his creaturely nature.
    - Freedom is tied to responsibility, to the good, and to the truth. It is the capacity to do what we ought according to our nature rather than whatever we like.
    - Freedom is not contrary to dependence on God.
  - Emotions
    - The passions are good but must be ordered to truth and good.





# An Adequate Christian Anthropology

5. The person is either male or female
  - Men and women are equally made in God's image and likeness and have equal dignity
  - They are complementary, biologically, metaphysically, psychologically.
  - Original differentiation is tied to the nuptial meaning of the person



# An Adequate Christian Anthropology

6. The person has and seeks transcendence
  - The human person has the capacity for God and is a spiritual being.
  - He can get out of himself and into relationship.
  - He can exercise dominion over creatures
  - He is stable: while parts of us change, who we are remains constant.



# An Adequate Christian Anthropology

## 7. The person has a conscience

- The conscience is an inner organ of sensitivity in which we hear God's voice.
- It's a judgment of the practical reason recognizing, from general principles of faith and reason, the moral quality of a concrete act one is going to do, doing or has done.
- It's bound to the truth about right and wrong, to the way things are, to a law outside of ourselves that is at the same time connatural.



## An Adequate Christian Anthropology

8. The person is a moral agent, capable of choosing good or evil, virtue or vice, holiness or sin.
  - Virtue builds up a person to become more like God and more human. Virtue is an indication of the possibility for growth.
  - Sin and vice tear us apart. It divides us from God, from others, and within.
  - Sin and virtue impact our “second nature” as well as have a social impact.



## An Adequate Christian Anthropology

9. The person has inalienable dignity and inalienable rights flowing from that dignity.
  - This dignity and these rights are given ultimately not by the self, or the State, but found in relationship to the Creator and others.
  - They belong to one's being, not doing. They exist beyond one's functionality or utility to others.
  - There are universal, fundamental, inviolable and inalienable rights, on the basis of which other rights form and flow.
  - Persons cannot be manipulated for ends foreign to their own development.



## An Adequate Christian Anthropology

10. The person within the mystery of human suffering and death
  - We see in the Creation account about the pangs, sweat and toil.
  - Suffering and death are objective realities and subjective problems.
  - There are physical, psychological and moral sufferings.
  - Suffering and death remain mysteries, but receive light by Christ.
  - Ontological evils can become moral goods.
  - “Suffering ... is present to unleash love in the human person” (JP II, *Salvifici Doloris* 29).



# Various Anthropological Confusions

- Reductionist understandings of human anthropology
  - **Metaphysical problems**
    - *materialism* (we are just our physical reality)
    - *spiritualism* (we are our souls and our bodies don't matter)
    - *dualism* (our bodies and souls are not united)
    - *individualism* (we have no social nature)
    - *racism* (failing to recognize dignity in every human being)
  - **Epistemological problems**
    - *relativism* (we can't know the truth because there is no truth)
    - *Gnosticism* (most can't know the most important truths),
    - *Anthony-Kennedyism* (we define the meaning of life, existence and the universe).
  - **Ethical problems**
    - *voluntarism* (everything is determined by whether our intention is good)
    - *moral relativism* (there are no moral absolutes or a person can't know them),
    - *emotivism* (the supreme value is not hurting another's feelings)



# Various Anthropological Confusions

- Problems with identity
  - Self-definition contrary to givens of age, race, sex, etc.
  - Unshackling from human nature toward pure will.
  - Gender confusion, dysphoria, ideology.
    - Pope Francis has called “gender ideology” a modern form of Gnosticism that undermines our basic understanding of anthropology but also reality.
    - He made a distinction between the welcome, support, accompaniment, protection and loving pastoral care we offer to those who say they’re transgender and pretending and encouraging others to pretend that they are really women trapped in men’s bodies or vice versa.
    - “We must protect our humanity, ... accepting it and respecting it as it was created. [It is] one thing to be understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life and another to accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality” (AL 56).
    - Gender ideology has harmful consequences for women, children, those with gender confusion and everyone in society.
    - Are there really 54 or 71 or a conceptually unlimited number of genders?





# Various Anthropological Confusions

- Problems with loneliness or isolation
  - Because of our social nature, the epidemic of loneliness is a particular concern. Many people are living contrary to their nature — not just with regard to their biological sex, but also their social nature — and it is both leaving them lost but also at risk of several harmful consequences.
  - In 2023, Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, released an Advisory Report entitled *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation*. He wrote: “Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling—it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death. The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and even greater than that associated with obesity and physical inactivity. And the harmful consequences of a society that lacks social connection can be felt in our schools, workplaces, and civic organizations, where performance, productivity, and engagement are diminished.”



# Various Anthropological Confusions

- Problems regarding love and human sexuality
  - Love considered a feeling rather than a commitment, a choice, a willing the other's good for the other's sake.
  - Love is no longer universally understood as the gift of oneself. It can become mutual utilitarianism or harmonious hedonism.
  - There has been a reduction often to love as *eros*, rather than remembering *storge*, *philia* and particularly *agape*.
  - The connection has been lost between love and sex, sex and marriage, and marriage and children.
  - The confusion about sex as a verb has led to confusion about sex as a noun.
  - Misunderstandings of chastity, different from continence or celibacy. Chastity is linked not just to temperance, but to love, purity and piety.



# Various Anthropological Confusions

- Problems with work
  - Many treat vacation as the norm of human life rather than work. Others become workaholics, especially here in New York.
  - We learn in Genesis about the rhythm between work and rest.
  - The vocation to, and the Gospel of, work. The transitive and intransitive dimensions of work.
  - The anthropological crisis of unemployment, especially for the young.
  - Valuing women's work, especially in care giving.
  - Work for those who are disabled.
  - Communism/socialism/capitalism: what they get right, what they do not.
  - The work of study at all ages.



## Various Anthropological Confusions

- Problems with suffering
  - Many no longer see any meaning in suffering and pain
  - The suicide epidemic.
  - The opioid/painkiller epidemic
  - The push for euthanasia, of MAiD, of Physician Assisted Suicide.  
The temptation to treat human persons like we do sick pets.  
Voluntary euthanasia changes the approach to suffering and leads to involuntary euthanasia. The importance of palliative care.
  - The Importance of compassion: making sure people do not suffer alone.
  - Allowing others' love to be unleashed when we are suffering, rather than robbing them of this growth in humanity



## Concluding Thoughts

- Our world needs an adequate anthropology, adequate in itself (by corresponding to the data) as well as adequate in persuasion (by corresponding to the questions people have).
- The ideas constituting an adequate anthropology are obviously important, but the ideas must be lived. Catholic Social Teaching isn't just a corpus of thought but a way of life, consistent with who we are.
- We start off with anthropology because it's central. The Leonine Forum seeks ultimately not just to inform but to help form us in this adequate anthropology so that we might form others.  
Thanks for sharing in this project!



# Bibliography

- **Foundational documents of CST on anthropology**
  - *Gaudium et Spes*, 12-39
  - *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 105-159
  - *Redemptor Hominis*, 7-17
  - *Veritatis Splendor*, 6-27
  - *Laborem Exercens*, 4-10, 24-27
  - *Fides et Ratio*, 7-35
  - *Evangelium Vitae*, 39-47
  - Pope Francis, Audience with Participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life, October 5, 2017
  - Pope Francis, Audience with Participants in the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council for Culture, November 18, 2017
  
- **Contemporary documents and articles showing the relevance of those principles**
  - Peter Kreeft, "Why a Christian Anthropology Makes a Difference"
  - Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, "The Future of Humanity: New Challenges to Anthropology"
  - John Allen, "Where does Catholic thinking on 'Gender Theory' Go from here?"
  - Benjamin Vail, "The Battle Over the Sexes: Catholic Perspectives on the Gender Debate"



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Fr. Roger J. Landry

Email: [catholicpriest@columbia.edu](mailto:catholicpriest@columbia.edu)

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## Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read. Teach what you believe. Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and iHeart Podcasts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,  
Fr. Roger J. Landry

#### Most Recent Homilies

Ascending and Descending with the Archangels, Feast of the Archangels, September 29, 2022

Responding to the Lord's Call Promptly, Fully and Perseveringly, 26th Wednesday (II), September 28, 2022

Resolutely Determining to Welcome Jesus However He Comes, 26th Tuesday (II), September 27, 2022

The Receptivity to God at the Root of Christian Greatness, 26th Monday (II), September 26, 2022

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#### Most Recent Articles

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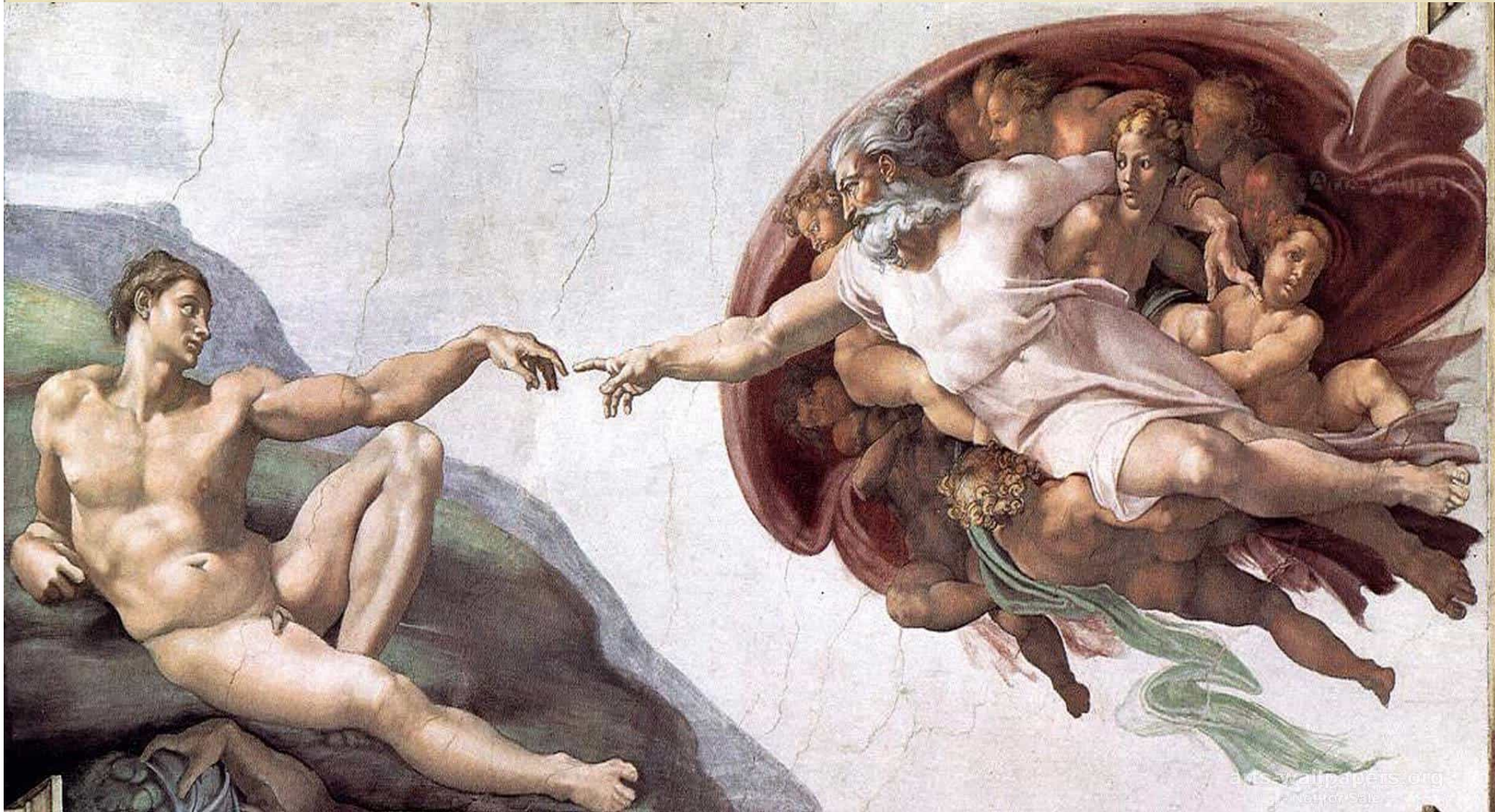
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Daring to Do All You Can, Parish Eucharistic Mission, St. Monica's Parish, Kalamazoo, MI, July 16-19, 2022

Day of Recollection for the Seminarians of the Rome Experience, Bracciano Italy, July

# Christian Anthropology: Man in the Modern World



Questions and Discussion