

**A Summary
of His Beatitude, Patriarch Sviatoslav's Presentation
of the Third Part of the Catechism of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church,
Christ Our Pascha : "The Life of the Church"**

His Beatitude's presentation began with the following statement: "When we began writing this third section, (we) for the first time encountered a very complicated theological dilemma: does a moral theology exist in the Eastern Church?" Two opposing answers to this question were expressed. Some insisted it did not, that moral theology was a Latinization of the Eastern Church, that those who live a deeply spiritual life do not need one and the third part should be exclusively about the spiritual life and askesis.

After many discussions and the realization that many Eastern non-Catholic Churches adopted certain elements of the moral theology of the Roman Catholic Church, it was evident that neither side made sense. Thus, the concept of the third part of this Catechism emerged.

In the process of writing the third section, certain structural changes had to be made from the original outline. Once again much thought and discussion placed personal prayer at the end of the second section on Liturgy and teaching on the foundations of spiritual life at the beginning of the third, giving this section a new tone and the character of our Church. The key to understanding the arrangement and logic of the presentation of the catechetical material in this third section lies in the phrase: "The spiritual life is a) signs, gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit and, b) Christian morality as the Liturgy of life."

Many in today's culture have the mistaken idea that the spiritual life is non-material or disembodied – beyond the visible world. But this is not a Christian understanding of spirituality, and so this section begins by explaining that the spiritual life involves a person's entire being - body and soul – in the action of the Holy Spirit. This is the prologue and opening to all that follows: the teaching of the person as a New Creation.

Here we establish very interesting foundations for the Moral Theology of the Eastern Church, because here, the spiritual-ascetic teaching of the Church comes together with the foundation of moral theology. Everything then stands in its rightful place.

Pope Benedict XVI stated that a great achievement of the Catechism of the Catholic Church was the discussion of God's grace in the moral section. The same is achieved in the Catechism of the UGCC, but in different way: we cannot speak about the concepts of sin, moral law, or conscience without presenting the person as a spiritual being who became a new creation in the Divine Liturgy.

This person – the New Creation in Christ – will sometimes experience a spiritual battle (as is described in the second part of our Catechism) the purpose of which is for the New Creation to change, transfigure, and to some extent heal that which we call the "old". This is why askesis is discussed in this section of the Catechism. It is interesting to note that the Christian East recounts eight deadly sins, rather than seven (as does the Latin Church in the CCC) and focuses not on the visible sin and the passions, but rather on the disordered desires and woundedness of the human person – the source of that, which later becomes evident as sin. Thus is revealed the dynamic of

an askesis, which purifies, contrary to some theologians who argue that this is a negative askesis. Patriarch Sviatoslav emphasizes the fact that the Catechism of the UGCC is not a theology textbook, but rather a work that clarifies this terminology and more clearly reflects what we need to discuss: prayer in our spiritual life and an askesis which enlightens. This involves questions on The Law of God, questions of freedom, of moral judgment, and of virtues, which reflect the growth and moral maturation of the person in Christ.

The foundation for the discussion of the moral life is the person as the New Creation. This naturally leads to the Family as a New Creation and, in the context of the family, the Catechism presents the principles of sexual ethics, ethics of marriage, and bioethics. Bioethics is necessarily included in this context, because all bioethical problems in today's culture are problems of the loss of the sense of the sanctity of human life – especially at its beginning. These moral problems are really problems that result in the dehumanization of human life outside the context of the family, which is the natural center of life's conception and natural end.

The family as the cell of society that nurtures in itself, this new life in Christ, is called to share this new life with all of society. The social doctrine of the Catholic Church is presented within the tradition of Eastern Theology by presenting it as a social ecclesiology. The Church gives birth to a new society. This is why this section of the catechism does not refer to The Church in the World (as in *Gaudium et Spes*), but instead the World Transfigured in the Church. The Church community becomes the model of the perfect society and this is why the foundations of Christian ethics are discussed in ecclesiological terms. For example: the principle of solidarity is presented from the perspective of the Universal Church, the principle of service as diakonia and apostolate. All social teaching on love, justice, the Christian understanding of economy, freedom, and maintaining peace in our society was rethought and presented in accordance with our Church's moral, ascetic tradition.

Finally, the fact that our Catechism is published on the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster is, in a sense, a response to the reality of today's culture. The question of ecology could not be ignored. The foundational principles of the Church's teaching on ecology are presented as the transfiguration of the world and our responsibility for it.

His Beatitude concludes: "Thus, we see how this new life, which is born in the Liturgy - from which flows our daily life, - is open to accomplishing the transfiguration of the world, when God will be all in all."

(Patriarch Sviatoslav's full address is on p. 44-53 in *Презентація Катехизму УГКЦ*.)