

August 15, 2021

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

After listening to the recent testimony from four law enforcement officers who were present at the Capitol on January 6, 2021, I was compelled to re-read “The Abolition of Man.”

As many of you know, this book written by C.S. Lewis during the horrors of World War II foresees the peril associated with the West’s abandonment of natural law and God. The book is a collection of three lectures Lewis delivered out of concern for how the British academic community was pushing subjectivism into elementary schools. Lewis makes the case that if we fail to pass along to our children specific rules of right and wrong, then we must share the blame for the consequent failings of character.

Concerned with the primary purposes of education, Lewis writes:

“St. Augustine defines virtue as *ordo amoris*, the ordinate condition of the affections in which every object is accorded that kind of degree of love which is appropriate to it. Aristotle says that the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought. When the age for reflective thought comes, the pupil who has been trained in ‘ordinate affections’ or ‘just sentiments’ will easily find the first principles in Ethics; but to the corrupt man they will never be visible at all, and he can make no progress in that science.”

In his book, Lewis dismisses subjectivism and argues that objective truth is real, and that this truth is found in the natural law. Lewis warns that “either we are rational spirit obliged for ever to obey the absolute values of [natural law], or else we are mere nature to be kneaded and cut into new shapes for the pleasures of masters who must, by hypothesis, have no motive but their own ‘natural’ impulses. A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is **not tyranny** or an obedience which is **not slavery**” (emphasis added). In the book’s Appendix, Lewis offers illustrations of the natural law that are “collected from such sources as come readily to the hand of one who is not a professional historian.”

Our Catechism teaches: “The natural law expresses the original moral sense which enables man to discern by reason the good and the evil, the truth and the lie” (CCC 1954). In his 1888 Encyclical (great read!!), *Libertas*, Pope Leo XIII states that the natural law is written and engraved in the soul of every man by our Creator; and this is nothing but our reason, commanding us to do right and forbidding sin (8).

So, what rules and laws are our children (the future leaders of our country) being taught today? What are they being taught to “like?” What are they being taught to “dislike?” Are they receiving moral education that provides training in good habits?

St. Paul teaches: “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things’ (Phil 4:8). Our Catechism adds: “Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life (CCC 1904). The Book of Wisdom tells us that there are four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, courage and temperance” (Wis 8:7).

Lewis concludes the 1st chapter of his book with a warning that is as current today as it was during World War II: “You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more ‘drive’, or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or ‘creativity’. In a sort of ghastly simplicity, we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”

Let’s pray that our schools are teaching our children to move away from self-indulgence, to pursue the common good, and to focus their energy on community-protecting, relationship-building, and family-forming. In this way we can hope against the abolition of men and women.

Peace and all good,

Deacon Jim