

Introduction

The previous lecture addressed what constitutes effective counseling. The role of the counselor is not static but rather a dynamic one always researching and looking for causes of psychological ailments be it environmental or genetic or both. An effective counselor goes beyond just acquiring a degree in the field but adopts an attitude of a pilgrim on the road or quest depending on God's Word and His Divine knowledge while admitting his personal weaknesses and pouring himself in prayers before the God of Wisdom who gives freely and liberally without measure. This lecture distinguishes and expounds the various branches in Theology that are effective in counseling.

1. *Fundamental Theology*: delves deep into the existence of God and His eternal attributes. Fundamental Theology is a prerequisite in soul healing and its return back to God. Any attempt to help someone without improving their relationship with God is a futile one. St. Augustine affirms this truth in his famous saying, "Lord, You have created us for you, our souls will remain restless till it finds rest in you." Faith in God and the church sacraments are the route to God. Fundamental Theology reveals God's yearning and longing to enter into an

intimate and close relationship with each one of us. This love that God loves me with is a basic fundamental attribute of the Holy Trinity. Before going to the cross, our Lord acknowledged before the Father that He has loved us, "*Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.*" (John 17:24-26). Studying the Holy Trinity Dogma shows the love that exists as an innate attribute of the Holy Trinity. As such, the love that is in the Holy Trinity overflows to cover the whole world. Then and only then will I come to understand God's love for and pursuit after me. The initiative has always been from God since Adam and the pursuit for the lost sheep continues. We may not understand God's wisdom during hardships and tribulations. But we have to trust God's love and believe that all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28). The Lord Jesus assured St. Peter of this fact saying, "*Jesus answered and*

said to him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.'" (John 13:7) which led him to obedience. That should be the counselor's advice to his patients. In the Old Testament, Joseph's series of bitter experiences were not at all promising of any good outcome until we read to the end. Saul's fanatic attitude and hatred of Christianity were not revealing of any signs of any change until we see him beheaded for Christ's sake. St. Moses the Black's alteration from an obnoxious thief to a great saint and one of the desert Fathers is another example. A Christian counselor who studied, understood and experienced Who God is can explain and assert to his patient that God is able and is the only satisfaction to our deep needs. Sadly enough many people with psychological problems basically have wrong ideas about God as a strict father. This is common among kids whose parents are harsh in their treatment. For such kids the term "father" used to call both the earthly as well as the heavenly Father will project strictness on God and he will then imagine God as a harsh strict father just like his earthly one. Such a person needs to be offered the correct image about God as being a loving Father. This will lead to

forming a good relation with God and offsets healing.

2. Anthropological Theology: studies the human relationship with God. Genesis 1:26-27 shows three important truths about man:

- a. Man was created in God's image and likeness. The difference between the image and the likeness is that the image denotes capabilities that God has put in each one of us. If we use these capabilities we become in His likeness. As such, the image was free grace from God. Through endurance, we are being transferred from glory to glory into that same likeness of God.
- b. Man fell through disobedience.
- c. Man lost the likeness but retained the image.

Through the church sacraments, this corrupt nature gets renewed. Herein man begins to understand that the source of his human dignity is his identity and not his deeds. His identity is derived from the fact that he is created in God's image. If man's dignity stems from his deeds or social position, then rich people are the ones to be glorified and honored over the poor and the less advantaged socially. As a counselor I should

fight any discrimination based on color, race, sect or others.

God's command to Adam and Eve was to replenish the earth, have dominion over the creation for the glory of God "*Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'*" (Genesis 1:28).

Anthropological Theology teaches and communicates the concept of community life according to the mind of God. Baptism transforms a person from an individual to a member in Christ's body; such body with and in whom I recognize my value. That emphasis is the importance of community life. Man was also created with a free will. Deviation of the will from the course prescribed by God is the root cause of trouble. Remedy resides in repentance and returning to God without Whom we can never find Peace nor healing.

3. Christology: studies the nature of Christ. What does Christology hold for counseling?

a. Christ's birth: is the advent of a new covenant. *"'When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,' says the Lord God"* (Ezekiel 16:8). In this covenant God works the salvation and redemption of His fallen man. Christ's birth gives hope and aspiration because Christ became Son of man to make man son of God. When Christ gets born in one's life his light will shine upon them and marks the beginning of a new beginning. That is the role Christology plays in counseling.

b. Christ's Crucifixion: is the end of death and beginning of a new covenant and a new Life. Prior to going on the cross our Lord gave us His Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins and deliverance from fear, shame and guilt. His Body and Blood are present with us every day to renew our life in Him

c. Christ's Resurrection: is the transition from the grave of pain and death to life. In Christ's Resurrection a counselor will find reason and proof of victory to present to a fallen despaired person. That was the reason our Lord offered for his coming "*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10).

d. Christ's Ascension: presents Christ as sitting at the right hand, accepted by the Father as an intercessor for us. He also seated us with Him (Ephesians 2:6). Counseling revolves around unity with Christ the products of which are freedom, peace, forgiveness and joy.

In the book of Revelation, Christ is referred to, and indeed He is, the bridegroom and we His bride. Christ is also the Son of God. Through His death, Christ purchased us back from the bond of slavery to the status of adoption and hence sons of God worthy of inheritance with Him. The church carries the marriage ceremony through these sacraments:

- *Baptism: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).*
- *Confirmation: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!" (1 Corinthians 6:15).*
- *Confession: "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).*
- *Communion: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56).*

Without the sacraments, marriage with the lamb cannot take place. Hence, no inheritance, no salvation.

4. *Pneumatology*: explains the Holy Spirit's tremendous work of renewal in baptism and sanctification in the sacrament of confirmation. In addition the Holy Spirit works

- . Internally inside the believers as the counselor, teacher, comforter
- a. Externally with non believers convicting them for their unbelief.

5. Biblical Theology: Every word in the Bible is:

- . Inspired by the Holy Spirit. *"for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:21).
- a. Sanctifying truth *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth"* (John 17:17).
- b. Landmark on the road. Through God's word I learn that sin grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit. *"Do not quench the Spirit"* (1 Thessalonians 5:19).
- c. Loaded with God's love. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).
- d. Loaded with God's promises. *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out"* (John 6:37).

The counselor will find every reason to use the Word of God as a means of healing to the troubled soul.

6. Ecclesiology: (Latin ecclesia, from the Greek ek-ka-lein, to "call out of"). As the name explains, the church who is the Body of Christ, God's people separated from the world, bound together with love, is called out to play a major role in the healing process. St. John Chrysostom duly calls the church an "infirmary" as it is the place where the troubled soul can find healing and restoration. In the church unity with Christ and the rest of the believers takes place. It follows therefore that the best proven support systems are the church and the family.

7. Eschatology: is the study of the truth and reality of the existence of eternal life. It gives us great confidence and reassurance thus removing anxiety and fear from death and the mystery of the thereafter. The best revelation of eternal destiny and reward is found in the example of Lazarus and the rich man. If the story ended at the death of both, it would have been a sad, unfair, oblique and bleak ending to humanity.

However, the thereafter account of the story shows how the tables were turned around with the reward Lazarus received in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob while the rich man could not even reach him for a small favor (Luke 16:19-31). St. Paul confirms the existence of eternity by saying: *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* (2 Corinthians 4:17) and *"if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable"* (1 Corinthians 15:19). This type of hope initiates and propels endurance in our hearts making tribulations and pain worth enduring *"Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection"* (Hebrews 11:35). As such, belief in eternal life and the happiness thereafter makes earthly difficulties easy to bear.

Conclusion

The Theology of Christian Counseling has seven areas of studies all grounded in God, His nature and His love for man. God in His love created man in His image and likeness. When man sinned through disobedience, God's unlimited, unconditional love led Him to die on the cross in order to save man and

restore to him his likeness. Thus man was guaranteed newness of life, unity with Christ, and inheritance of the kingdom. All these privileges are meant to help man along his journey. Therefore, nothing should stand between man and victory over pain, trouble and tribulations.

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