

UNIT 1: UNIT 1:

The TENT.

ME. BEING A PERSON



This is the first step on the itinerary that our youth are going to complete. They will learn to look at themselves, and to define themselves as persons based on the observation, amazement and experience of themselves. They will come to know and guide their intelligence, will, desires, affections, and spirituality. They will accept their own body and recognize it as an expression of them as a person, where the origin and destiny of every man and woman is inscribed.

Let's begin by meeting the protagonist of this adventure.



Each one of us asks ourselves “Who am I?”, and from this derive many other questions that will be vitally important for our future, but begin to be posed during adolescence.

It is of fundamental importance to help the youth take a good first. We are joining them on an adventure in which they will discover a multitude of things that were previously unknown to them.

Clearly, the first step of this adventure is recognizing what we have received, what we are starting out with, because it forms part of our nature. Recognition brings gratitude along with it. The second step will be for them to discover what they are: a unity of body and soul. They will discover that, like every person, they have various dimensions. Their task will be to work in order to know how to integrate them, always aiming for this unity. But the person goes beyond this, he/she looks toward the future and contemplates what he/she might become. Contemplating what we might become in fullness, that to which we are called, gives new meaning to everything that we do. In later units, we will see how the guiding thread of this whole adventure of growth and maturation is the *vocation to love*.

Along the way, we relate to each other, we communicate. One of the languages that brings us closest and that is most expressive of our own person is the language of the body. The body means many things, and our task is to recognize the truth of this language and the meaning that it points toward. We will change throughout this adventure. Our bodies will change, as will our feelings; our reason and our will, will mature, etc. These are changes that we have to acknowledge and accept. Everything in our being is being prepared so that one day we will be able to give what we have received for free: love. This will be a path along which we *learn to love*..

1. Who Am I?

“You have probed me, you know me”

(Ps 139:1).

- **The most existential questions:** *Who am I? Where did I come from? Who am I meant for? Why do I exist? Where am I going?* I ask myself about that which is closest to me, and yet unknown. But I cannot respond to these questions myself.
- **I am a child.** There is a love which precedes me and which called me into being. My identity is related to a life that is *received* and, with this, to a relationship with another person. I have been loved as a child, in an unrepeatable way, by my parents and by God (double filiation).
- **I am body and soul.** I am a spiritual and corporeal being. Body and soul form a whole. The body is animated by the soul, and the body is an expression of this spiritual interior. There is such an intimate relationship between body, soul and life that it is impossible to think that the human body could be reduced to its organic structure alone, that human life could be reduced to its biological dimension (VAH, 19).
- **Every human being is a corporeal being.** The body is clothed with personal **dignity**. The body is an expression of the person, and it has a spousal dimension as a mutual gift. The body manifests the vocation of the whole person to communion, to love.
- **Dignity** derives from the Latin word *dignitas*, and from the adjective *digno*, which means valuable, with honor, worthy. Dignity is the characteristic of worthiness and it indicates that someone is deserving of something, or that something has an acceptable level of quality. In Christian theology, man is a creature of God and, therefore, possesses dignity. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CEC), man was created as the image of God, in the sense that he is capable of freely knowing and loving his own Creator. And man is not just something, but *someone* who is capable of knowing himself, of giving himself freely, and of entering into communion with God and with other people.
- **As a person, I have various dimensions.** The person is a being who contains various dimensions within his/her integral unity. The person loves with his/her body, loves with his/her will, with his/her heart; and the person loves SOMEONE in a relationship. The person brings all of these dimensions that constitute him/her as a person into play:

DIMENSION	REFERS TO...
• PHYSICAL	• The body
• AFFECTIVE	• The heart and affections
• INTELLECTUAL	• The reason and the will
• SOCIAL	• Relationships
• SPIRITUAL	• Freedom and morality

2. The Body: Is It Something I Have or Something I Am?

**“There are many parts, yet one body”
(1 Cor 12:20).**

- I do not *have* a body in the way that someone has a thing; rather, I *am*, at one and the same time, a corporeal and spiritual being. It is very important for the adolescent’s maturation that they accept their bodily reality (cfr. FSVMT, p. 118).
- I am much more than numbers and mass. People can take away my possessions and tools, but I cannot be deprived of my body. It is not enough to affirm that a body belongs to me or that I make use of my body. I have to add: *“I am my body.”* My body is personal.

3. The Body as an Expression of My Person

**“My whole body is full of light”
(Lk 11:36).**

- **The body reveals to me the meaning of life**, since it expresses my call to a relationship, to a meeting with the other. It expresses my person. Since it is sexually differentiated, my body manifests my vocation to love, to the mutual gift of self, and to fruitfulness along with it.
- **The human body has a language** whose truth and meaning I have to discover. This will allow me to know how to identify expressions of authentic love and to distinguish them from those which falsify it.

- This is a personal discovery, which fills me with wonder: I am a unique, unrepeatable, different person. I have my own personal history: an origin and an end that are exclusive to me. This personal knowledge is important for my exercise of freedom, responsibility and the will throughout my growth and maturation.
- **The language of the body is the *language of the person and of love*.** When I shake hands with someone, it is me, not my hands, who says hello. In a loving or hateful glance it is not my eyes that love or hate, but my person. Through body language we can express our deepest feelings, which cannot be expressed through words (FSVMT, p. 118).
- We cannot live out or express our love if not ***in*** and ***through*** the body that forms part of our personal being.
- **Love contains the flavor of the whole person.** Love prevents us from dividing our being into different, disconnected pieces: “It is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves: it is man, the person (...) who loves” (DCE, 5).
- **My body contains and expresses my identity.** If someone uses my body, that person treats me like a “thing”; if I use my body like an object or a thing I cheapen myself; to respect my body is to respect myself; my body is meant for love (FSVMT, p.99).

4. *My Body Changes. My Identity Is Built.*

“When I was a child, I used to talk as a child. (...) When I became a man, I put aside childish things”

(1 Cor 13:11).

- As I grow and mature, everything changes. My body changes, and so do my responsibilities, my reason, my affections, my will, my social interests, my own spirituality. All the dimensions of myself change, integrating themselves into the unity that is my person.

- This personal and social maturation, directed toward knowing how to love and be loved, is especially noticeable during **puberty**. Puberty is the step from childhood to adolescence (they cease to be children and start becoming adults), and it produces:
 - Great physical and emotional changes, in addition to social, psychic and spiritual changes. They should know that this does not happen to all of them at the same time.
 - Anxieties, which they should identify and know how to redirect (cfr. FSVMT, p. 97).
- During this period it is important to promote and exercise personal physical development in a context of respect and esteem for life and for the human body, as well as to develop personal hygiene, social skills, and the observance of safety rules.
- In order to get to know myself, it is good for me to recognize all of the changes taking place within me. Plus, when I recognize them, I can try to guide my response: with my reason and my will; listening to my heart; interpreting my affections; choosing how to relate with others; getting to know my body and how to communicate with it...and, above all, accepting all of these changes, accepting myself, caring for myself, and loving myself.