Prof Renee Kohler-Ryan “Why Splendor: On the Art of of the Moral Life.”
This paper will explore the choice of the term “Splendor” in the title of Pope St John Paul II’s encyclical. While emphasis in discussion of this encyclical is rightly placed on “Truth”, the intrinsic link between truth and splendour is important. This paper tests the hypothesis that this encyclical provides another way of considering the relationship between the transcendentals. Specifically, it will ask whether the personalism of John Paul II provides a way to contemplate the beauty of human desire for the good life.

Dr Paul Morrissey: “Freedom, Truth and the Moral Law.” St John Paul II was a champion of freedom rightly understood. In VS he presents us with a meaning of freedom that is contrary to that which is lived in the contemporary west. This paper will explore the richer and fuller understanding of freedom found in the encyclical and demonstrate how so much of our contemporary understanding of freedom, including within the Church, is impoverished. A freedom that is untethered to truth and law is a false liberty.

Dr Mariusz Biliniewicz: “Veritatis splendor and the Universal Call to Holiness.” The concept of the universal call to holiness is one of the most important theological highlights of the Second Vatican Council. This paper will briefly look at the history of this idea, its presence in the conciliar documents and its most important features. Then, it will look at the presence of the notion in Veritatis splendor. Finally, it will offer some reflections about the current state of the question. The paper will argue that the articulation of the concept of the universal call to holiness which St John Paul II offers in Veritatis splendor after 25 years from the publication of the encyclical remains as relevant as it was at the time of its release.

Prof Isabell Naumann: “Ordered to the One who alone is good” (VS 73) and the Beauty of the Immaculata.” According to Veritatis splendor, freedom is given as a gift, “one to be received like a seed and to be cultivated responsibly...Within that freedom there is an echo of the primordial vocation whereby the Creator calls the human person to the true Good, and even more, through Christ's Revelation, to become his friend and to share his own divine life.” [VS 86]. Thus, from our inmost being we are ordered to God, to the One who alone is good. Within the thinking of the best Christian traditions of the East and the West, we may perceive the Immaculata as the exemplar of being ordered to the One who alone is good. In her, we perceive the God-willed, God-formed human image, the epitome of human dignity and greatness and a most uniquely and singularly reflection of the splendour of divine beauty.

Christian Stephens: “Catholic or Utopian? Two irreconcilable views about ‘Ideals’ in Veritatis splendor.” Since the promulgation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, critics of certain sections expressed concern about describing moral goods and laws as ‘ideals.’ This paper will seek to demonstrate that Veritatis splendor, Pope St John Paul II’s landmark Encyclical on the principles of moral theology, in its own usage of the word ‘ideal’, indicates the true and false sense of the word in Catholic thought. In doing so he is in continuity with previous magisterial references to ‘ideals’, and gives a clear picture of two irreconcilable views regarding the relationship between goods
and ideals. In conclusion it will be shown that which of these views one adopts has extensive ramifications in all areas of moral theology.

**Dr Conor Sweeney:** “The mystery of evil and the truth of the acting person.” This paper explores moral agency against the backdrop of the "mysterium iniquitatis" of 2 Thess 2:7. It does so highlighting the theological, existential, and psychological aspects involved in doing good and avoiding evil. It is argued that an adequate account of moral agency requires (especially today) a much more robust account of the reality of evil and its relationship to the dimension of the acting person.

**Dr Nigel Zimmermann:** In an overlooked dimension of how truth is manifest in the dialogue between faith and reason, St John Paul II’s (Karol Wojtyla) Eucharistic theology is profoundly related to his development of theological anthropology. His understanding of personhood in light of the Eucharist serves as a point of disclosure about the numinous possibilities found in the mundane and the ordinary of ecclesial life, grounded as it always is within the liturgy. Surprisingly little has been said about the connection between his anthropology and his Eucharistic theology, but given how faith and reason interrelate in Veritatis splendor, we have much to learn about how reason operates within the broader Eucharistic horizon. The intertwining of personalism, phenomenology, Thomism and mysticism in John Paul II is imaginative and rigorous and helps us resist the superficiality of late modern Western culture. The Eucharist in John Paul’s thought is both an affirmation, and a generous opening up, to the mystery of redeemed personhood.

**Dr Doru Costache:** “John Paul II’s Veritatis splendor (1993) and the Encyclical of Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (2016): Shared Ethical Concerns.” Often and for a good reason, commentators have noted that whereas Western Christianity was quick to realise and consider the challenges posed by the modern, brave new world, Eastern Christianity proved to be far slower in its reactions. . . John Paul II’s Veritatis Splendor continues this conversation on ethical grounds, preceding by more than two decades the concerns recently expressed in the Encyclical of the first major gathering of the Orthodox Church in modern times, the 2016 Holy and Great Council of Crete. I will look at the ethical dimension of the two documents, pointing out how, despite the historical and cultural gulfs between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church, both encyclicals illustrate similar concerns about the moral dilemmas of our age.

**Dr Nathan Lyons:** “Biocultural Creatures.” In §46 of Veritatis splendor, John Paul II opposes philosophies that insist on an absolute divide between nature and culture. VS suggests an alternative approach to nature and culture, one which sees them as mutually implicated, especially in the case of human life. There are surprising affinities between this proposal and contemporary discussions of the nature-culture question. In a number of disciplines across both the humanities and the natural sciences today (including philosophy, anthropology, political theory, and evolutionary biology) many thinkers are similarly resisting the characteristically Modern divide of nature and culture and developing alternative approaches. My paper will trace some of these affinities and suggest how the orientation to the nature-culture relation that we find in VS can make a timely contribution to contemporary theorising about humans as properly ‘biocultural’ creatures.

**Helena Pasztetnik:** “Veritatis splendor and the Rupture Between Faith and Morals.” According to Livio Melina, in Veritatis splendor John Paul II sought to address two ruptures in contemporary moral theology: that between freedom and truth, and between faith and morals. In my presentation, I will focus only on the second rupture. After situating it within its historical and theological context, I will proceed to outline the two modes of this rupture. The first mode occurs when one claims to live according to the faith, yet the magisterium is perceived as lacking authority over the individual conscience when it comes to moral matters. The second mode can be summarised as morals without faith, or a disposition which regards faith as inessential to the moral life. It will be contended that both approaches are critiqued in Veritatis splendor, and that in their place John Paul II proposes a unitive approach to faith and morals.