

**Imagine That!**

**We Make Moral Decisions**

# Oct 4 – Feast of St. Francis

Let us pray: Father in heaven, you helped St. Francis to reflect the image of Christ through a life of poverty and humility. May we follow your Son by walking in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi, and by imitating his joyful love. We ask you this through Christ our Lord.

# Foundation of Christian Morality

- Catholic teaching identifies morality as human actions coming from a heart that searches for truth and yearns for freedom.
- One can live in freedom only if one knows the truth.
- To live a good moral life, one must be in constant acceptance of truth.

# Foundation of Christian Morality

- As Christians we look for truth outside of ourselves.
- We look for truth from our Creator who has created us to give glory to Him and who loves us despite our failing to live up to His original expectations.
- He has given us the laws we need in order to achieve the freedom he has created us for.
- He has given us the tools we need to put ourselves on the correct path when we do stray.
- Thus our moral decisions are meshed with our life of faith.

# Foundation of Christian Morality

- God is transcendent and loves us unconditionally.
- He knows us better than we know ourselves. We are created in His image. We are created immortal.
- Thus we realize that he has set up for us laws to help us become fully human and to find our way to Him.
- We respond in freedom and we are responsible for our actions.
- Thus He has endowed us with tremendous dignity that needs to be fully respected in all persons.

# Basis of Christian Morality- Where are these moral laws?

Moral Law can be found in **Natural Law**

This expresses the original moral sense which enables people to discern by reason the good and the evil, the truth and the lie. It expresses the dignity of the human person and forms the basis of fundamental rights and duties of all persons.

# Basis of Christian Morality- Where are these moral laws?

Moral Law can be found in **Revealed Law**

The **Old Law** expressed in the 10 commandments. These are laws that contain some truths naturally accessible to reason. They are revealed by God and they impact our relationship with God and with one another.

The **New Law** expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. It surpasses the Old Law without destroying it and brings it to perfection. It calls the human heart to conversion and opens the road to greater freedom.

# Basis of Christian Morality- Where are these moral laws?

Moral Law can be found in **Teachings of the Church**

Throughout the ages the Church looks and listens to the signs of the times and proceeds to evaluate their goodness or their evilness.

The principles of Natural Law and Revealed Law are applied to current issues and thus their goodness or evilness can be determined.

# What makes a moral act good or evil:

- The chosen action itself:

Objective norms of morality determine if an act is good or evil, whether it is for a person's ultimate good or not, whether it conforms to God's will or goes against it.

Our reason and conscience help us discover the truth of these norms.

Certain actions are always seriously wrong because they involve moral evil.

# What makes a moral act good or evil:

- The intention of the action

This resides in the acting subject and indicates the purpose of why an action is done. It is concerned with the goal of the activity.

An evil intention always results in an evil action, whether the action of itself is good or evil.

A good intention never makes an evil action become good.

## What makes a moral act good or evil:

- The circumstances, including the consequences, are secondary elements.

They contribute to increasing or diminishing the moral goodness or evil of human acts. They can also increase or diminish the agent's responsibility.

Circumstances do not change the goodness or the evilness of an action.

# Role of our Conscience

- Its major role is to bear witness to the truth. When one listens to his/her conscience, the prudent person can hear God speaking. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil.
- It is important to be present to one's self in order to hear and follow our conscience. It requires reflection, self-examination, and introspection.
- Our conscience must be properly informed in order to be upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good revealed by the wisdom of the Creator. We are assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teachings of the Church.
- Our conscience can remain in ignorance or make erroneous judgments. Such ignorance and errors are not always free of guilt.

# An example

## Embryonic Stem Cell research.

We need to know what this entails. What sources do we rely on to get to the real info?

How does Natural Law, Revealed Law, and the Teachings of the Church apply – this is when our conscience becomes formed.

If the action is deemed evil, we condemn the action, not the people.

If the action is good, then we give glory and praise to God, since all comes from Him and should return to Him.

# Sinfulness in the world

- **Mortal sin** is serious sin. It includes attitudes, desires, actions, or lack of action that kill our relationship to God and others.
- To sin mortally, all following 3 items must be true:
- **Grave matter**: i.e. seriously wrong actions such as murder, adultery, apostasy, etc.
- **Sufficient reflection**: We know full well that what we are considering doing is seriously wrong, i.e., is sinful and opposed to God's law, but we do it anyways.
- **Full consent of the will**: We do the action with freedom and not under the pressure or influence of limiting factors like force, blinding passion.
- Sin committed with malice, by deliberately choosing evil, is the worst kind of sin.

# Sinfulness in the world

- **Venial sin** partially rejects God. It is a stumbling block on the path of following Jesus.
- They are not deadly, they do not destroy sanctifying grace nor friendship with God.
- Venial sins still need to be eradicated from our lives.
- The danger is that repetitive venial sins can lead to vices, especially what has been called capital sins – pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust. These can eventually lead us to mortal sin.
- Venial sins weakens love and attaches us to created goods rather than God.

# Sinfulness in the world

- All sin is the result of a personal action.
- Every sin produces social and institutional moments that are contrary to God's will.
- Every sin brings about evil in society and can entice people into committing sins.

# Grace in the world

- The gift of the sacrament of reconciliation

Our God is so loving that he continually invites us to reconcile ourselves to Him and to His plan.

We are called to continuing conversion: moving away from what weighs us down toward the loving arms of our God.

Thus we fulfill God's plan to bring all of creation, starting with ourselves, back to Him.

# Grace in the world

- Living the virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.
- Spiritual works of mercy
  - Counsel the doubtful
  - Admonish sinners
  - Forgive offenses
  - Pray for the living and the dead
  - Instruct the ignorant
  - Comfort the afflicted
  - Bear wrongs patiently
- Corporal works of mercy
  - Feed the hungry
  - Clothe the naked
  - Shelter the homeless
  - Bury the dead
  - Give drink to the thirsty
  - Visit the imprisoned
  - Visit the sick

# Grace in the world



- The call to continuing conversion and building the kingdom of God.
- As our grace-filled actions, guided by the Holy Spirit, become manifest, others feel motivated to do the same.

# Errors to be avoided

- Denying the value of truth and the value of freedom: Truth is relative, individualistic, changes with the whims of the person. Freedom is not possible, our decisions stem from the circumstances of our environment and our upbringing.
- Redefining truth and freedom so that they are no longer meshed together: Truth = what is right via opinion polls, popular consensus  
Freedom = license to do what pleases me
- Elevating the role of conscience to an absolute: My conscience is the sole authority to determine what is right and what is wrong. I have no one to answer to except myself. The only law is found in my inner self. This is individualism at its best.

# Sources

- The Splendor of Truth, encyclical written by John Paul II, August 6th, 1993.
- This is our Faith, Michael Francis Pennock – Chapter 17
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church:
  - Part 3 - Life in Christ
    - Section 1 - Man's Vocation: Life in the Spirit
      - Chapter 1 - The Dignity of the Human Person
        - Article 3 – Man's Freedom
        - Article 4 - The morality of Human Acts
        - Article 6 - Moral Conscience
      - Chapter 3, - God's Salvation: Law and Grace
        - Article 1 - The Moral Law

Many thanks for your attention and I hope  
this has been of some benefit for you!