

## An Introduction to Moral Theology

### The Ten Commandments and The Significance of God's Laws in Everyday life



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## Human Dignity

- We are created in the **Image of God** as infinitely valuable and capable of receiving our Lord's divine life. (Sanctifying Grace)
- We are **intelligent and capable** of determining our own lives by our own free choices. (reason & free will)
- We are **Children of God**, members of the divine family and brothers and sisters of Jesus.
- Our ultimate **end** is to "become **Partakers in the 'Divine Nature.'**"

## Eternal Law

- The eternal law is the **governance of all things**. It directs the entire created universe and the activity of all created things including the activity of human persons.
- The **end** (or goal) to which the eternal law directs all things is the **universal common good** of the entire created universe.

## Natural Law

- All created realities "**participate**" in the **eternal law**. Non-rational beings participate in purely a **passive** way.
- Human persons, inasmuch as they are intelligent, rational creatures, participate in the eternal law in an **active** way. They have **inclinations toward proper acts and ends**.

## Natural Law

- **Our active intelligent participation** in the eternal law is precisely what the natural law is.
- Natural law **characterizes the nobility** of the rational creature as a being created in the image and likeness of God.

## Character

- The entire person in all of his or her dimensions is **shaped by morally good or bad choices**.
- The free and self-determining choices at the core of a human act abide within the person as **dispositions inclining the person to make similar kinds of choices in the future**.
- William E. May, An Introduction to Moral Theology

## Virtue

- Virtues and vices are both a **residue** of a person's prior acts and **they dispose us** to engage in further acts.
- Virtues are **habits** engendered by consistently choosing freely to do what is good.
- Virtue is an **aspect of a person's personality** integrated through commitments and other choices made in accord with relevant moral norms.



## Moral Absolutes (Norms)

- If we are to become fully the beings God wills us to be, we must make good moral choices.
- Choices are possible only when there are alternatives. Our task is to discover which alternatives are morally good and which are morally bad.
- Moral norms are thus the "truths" intended to guide us in our choices.

## Moral Absolutes (Norms)

- These moral absolutes remind us that by freely choosing to damage, destroy or impede what is really good, either in ourselves or in others, we make ourselves to be evildoers.



## Conscience

- Conscience is one's personal awareness of basic moral principals or truths. (W. E. May)
- The voice of God's law, made known through conscience, calls upon man "**to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil.**" (Gaudium et Spes)
- Our judgment of conscience does not make what we choose to do morally good and right. (Dignitatus Humanae)

## Informed Conscience

- Our obligation is to conform our conscience to objective norms of morality that have their ultimate source in God's divine law. (Dignitatus Humanae)
- The teachings of the Church are meant to help people walk worthily in the vocation (holiness) to which they have been called as Children of God. (W.E. May)

## Moral Life

- The ultimate goal of the moral life is to become that which we are called to be.
- We are to **image Christ** in our lives and to cooperate with him in the redemption of others.
- It is possible through God's grace.



## Christian Morality



Christian Morality is one's values, choices and actions informed by faith and guided by the Word of God and His Church.



## SIN

Sin is any thought, word, action or omission that hinders, violates or breaks the right relationships which support human well-being.

Richard M. Gula, S.S.



## Sin

- Sin is **an evil or privation** in the moral order, the sinful act blocks the fulfillment of the human person, damaging the human community, and rupturing the relationship that God wills should exist between himself and humankind. (Gaudium et Spes)
- Sin is a deliberately chosen act known to **violate the basic norm** of moral human activity, eternal law. (W. E. May)

## Two Models of Sin

- |                     |                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Legal Model:</b> | <b>Relational Model:</b>   |
| ■ Obligation        | ■ Responsibility           |
| ■ Commission        | ■ Omission                 |
| ■ Law-oriented      | ■ Value-oriented           |
| ■ Minimalist        | ■ Quality of relationships |
| ■ Act-centered      | ■ Conversion               |
| ■ What am I doing?  | ■ Who am I becoming?       |

## Three Faces of Sin:

- Original Sin
- Social Sin
- Actual (personal) Sin



## Original Sin Romans 5:12-14

Original Sin is the face of sin that we recognize as **the condition of evil into which we are all born**. We feel the effects of this evil in the pull toward selfishness which alienates us from our deeper selves, from others and from God. Because of original sin we will always know struggle and tragedy as part of life.

Richard M. Gula, S.S.

## Social Sin

Social sin describes human-made structures when they offend human dignity by causing people to suffer oppression, exploitation or marginalization. Racism is a good example of social sin.

## “In the World but not of the World”

- The sinful acts of individuals, when accepted by society, become a part of that society's way of life. The “World” shaped by sin, obscures values, provides bad example, pushes us toward sin, and even pressures us to sin.
- This leads us to rationalize our sinful choices. (proportionalism, consequentialism, utilitarianism)

## Actual (or Personal) Sin

Actual sin is personal sin. It is an act (thought, word or deed) or omission which violates our right relationship with others and/or our right relationship with God.

## Effects of Sin

- Inclination or disposition to further sin
- Ourselves
- Others
- Family
- Community
- Society
- World



## Mortal Sin

Mortal sin is a serious break in a relationship of love with God, neighbor, world and self. It is a serious moral evil which is supremely selfish and by which we choose to separate ourselves from God.

## Conditions for Mortal Sin:

- Serious Matter
- Sufficient reflection
- Full knowledge
- Full and deliberate consent of the will - *freedom*



## Culpability / Moral Choice?

- The Act (What?)
- The Circumstances (When Where How Who Whom?)
- The Intention (Why?)



## Objective / Subjective

- Objective – The Act Itself
- Subjective – Circumstances and Intention



Hate the sin but love the person who did it. Let God be the judge.

“Judge not, lest ye be judged.”

## Venial Sin

The habit of unloving acts or omissions that can corrode our relationship with others and with God. Venial sin enters our lives when we fail to show care for others.

Richard M. Gula, S.S.

## Divine Mercy

Our God is a God of mercy and forgiveness – A God of second chances. He wants everybody to go to heaven. This is why we were created. Nobody goes to hell by mistake.

## Christian Morality Part II

- The Ten Commandments and the Significance of God’s Laws in Everyday Life

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## The Ten Commandments

- “What good must I do to gain eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16-19)
- Exodus 20:1-17
- Deuteronomy 5:6-21



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## The Ten Commandments

- I am the Lord your God. You shall not have false gods before me.
  - You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
  - Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.
  - Honor your mother and father.
  - Thou shall not kill.
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## Ten Commandments

- Thou shall not commit adultery.
  - Thou shall not steal.
  - Thou shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
  - Thou shall not covet your neighbor's goods.
  - Thou shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
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