

St. Clare of Assisi Parish
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults - RCIA
Foundations of a Moral Life
Date: Thursday December 5, 2019

What does Moral mean?

- moral is derived from the latin -mores- meaning customs or habitual ways of doing things
- a comprehensive term for the human good or the common good.

Principles of Moral Thought and Structure

Catholics believe that acting morally means acting in accordance with the eternal laws of God, which are written into the human heart so deeply that even those who know nothing of God can follow the path of morality. Natural law, as this interior marking is called, comes to humans through their capacity to reason, which sparks the conscience to respond to the eternal law. This means that people of other faiths and no faith at all have the capacity to act as morally as Catholic Christians, although they will struggle more since they will not have the benefit of the sacraments that open them to the grace to resist sin.

When it comes to matters of faith and morals, the Church teaches that the pope and the bishops have great authority to instruct believers, an authority that becomes infallible in the very few instances where they are dogmatically defining a doctrine. A believer may not simply dismiss a Church teaching with which he or she disagrees; rather, the Catholic is called upon to study the teaching, pray for guidance and hopefully come to see the wisdom and power of the Church's teaching office, even if he or she does not immediately see the wisdom of the teaching itself.

Like all Christians, Catholics see the Ten Commandments found in the Hebrew scriptures as the basic groundwork for moral action, which together with the life of Jesus provide a deep and abiding understanding for how to act with love and justice in the world. The Gospel of Matthew relates that upon being asked which commandment was most important, Jesus replied that all of the law is contained in the commandments to love God and love your neighbour (Matthew 22:36-40). Catholics see this as going beyond the injunctions of moral law by drawing believers into a relationship with others as well as with God, and it is the foundation of the Church's teaching on social justice.

From the earliest days of the Church, Catholics have performed works of mercy to help those who most need it, but the Church's current involvement in social justice issues really took form in 1891 with the promulgation of the papal encyclical *Rerum novarum*.. It touched off a flowering of social encyclicals that have become central to the Church's work in the world. **Catholic social teaching focuses on the dignity of the person as the linchpin for all discussions of ethics, politics, and justice.**

TALKING POINTS / FOUNDATIONS OF MORALITY

- A. What I would like you to leave with:
- On what does the Church basis its moral teachings - Revelation and Tradition
 - How does the Church determine Truth
- B. Good theology is always based on sound philosophy
- “by their nature, faith and culture will always be in dynamic tension” - Cardinal Avery Dulles, SJ - Inform, Form and Transform
- C. Human Dignity - “The dignity of the human person.”
- D. The Natural Law - The Old Law 2052 ccc
- E. 1965 The New Law / The Law of the Gospel / The Law of Love / The Beatitudes
- F. “I came not to undo the law but to fulfill it” Mt 5:17

The morality section of the catechism reads like a philosophy texts on the pursuit of Happiness - here is a guide with reference numbers to the Catechism of the Catholic Church CCC

- 1950 The natural moral law is the work of Divine Wisdom
- 1954 “The natural law expresses the original moral sense which enables man to discern **by reason** the good and evil, the truth and the lie.”
- 1952 - “There are different expressions of the Moral Law, all of them interrelated: eternal law - the source in God, of all law, natural law; revealed law, comprising the Old law and the New law, or the Law of the gospel: finally, civil and ecclesiastical laws.”
- 1700 dignity of the human person - 1716 the beatitudes - 1718 the desire for Happiness - 1750 the sources of Morality - good and evil 1755
- What are the passions - ccc 1762 - 1772
 - 1776 moral conscience - natural law
 - 1778 conscience is a judgement of reason - informed 1783