

# Volunteer Formation Series SAINT ANTHONY



## July 13 | The Moral Life: Virtue, Vice & Holistic Christian Living

#### Introduction

- To live in this world the way that Christ taught us takes preparation.
- If we want to become better Christians, with the indispensable help of God's grace, we must practice our faith regularly through prayer, the sacraments, growth in virtue, and service to others.
- Christ invites us, every one of us, to share in his life, both this world and the next.
- To accept his invitation requires not only that we have fai but also that we live according to that faith by using our free will to make good moral decisions.

**Morality -** refers to the standards by which we judge actions be good or evil.

Moral Law - refers to the standards of human behavior that were established by God and are taught by the Catholic Church.

### *Objective Morality vs. Subjective Morality:*

- In recent decades, there has been heated controversy over how to define certain standards of behavior for society as they relate to a number of disputed issues.
- Abortion Issue: A Woman's Right to Abortion vs. Right to *Life* shows the strong tensions and lively discussions that indicate that while most people agree in the existence of some kind of moral standards, there is a broad disagreement as to what exactly those moral standards should be.
- Those who form their conscience according to the teaching of Christ believe in an objective morality, one that is roote in the fundamental dignity of the human person and the sacredness of human life.
- Those who have not received the same moral education and formation might hold to a subjective morality, one that can vary from situation to situation and from person opinion to another (also known as moral relativism-the great heresy of our time).
- Catholic moral teaching and human reason leads us to affirm an objective moral law which by abiding by this law can help bring us true happiness and make us better

| Ξ,        | NOTES |
|-----------|-------|
|           |       |
|           |       |
|           |       |
|           |       |
| in<br>th, |       |
| ш,        |       |
| to        |       |
|           |       |
|           |       |
| r         |       |
|           |       |
|           |       |
|           |       |
| igs<br>ed |       |
|           |       |
| al        |       |
|           |       |

| human beings-helping us become, as St. Paul tells us, a new creation in Christ.  | NOTES |
|--|-------|
| <ul> <li>Now someone approached him and said, "Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?" He answered him, "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He asked him, "Which ones?" And Jesus replied, "'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother'; and 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" The young man said to him, "All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.</li> <li>God commands the rich young man to do good and avoid evil.</li> </ul> |       |
| <ul> <li>The rich young man is already following the commandments.</li> <li>Then God invites him to go deeper, to be a part of his inner circle (personal relationship/vocation), and the rich young man turns that invitation down.</li> <li>He is more concerned with following the Law than following the Law Giver.</li> <li>To "be perfect (holy), just as [our] heavenly Father is perfect (holy)" (Matthew 5:48), takes a life of grace and means that we must be willing to go beyond the minimum (The Decalogue) in order to live the maximum (The Beatitudes) that God has called us to live.</li> </ul>   |       |
| <ul> <li>Dignity of Human Person:</li> <li>Is rooted in his/her creation in the image and likeness of God and is fulfilled in his/her vocation to divine beatitude (true happiness).</li> <li>The Call to Beatitude → free will &amp; responsibility, thus moral value → 3 factors of morality → conscience → Virtues/Vices → Sin → Conversion</li> <li>Human Acts: <ul> <li>The dignity of the human person coupled with the knowledge of and relationship with God involve a call to a certain type of living so as to fulfill his vocation to beatitude - eternal happiness coming from presence with God. (ref. CCC 1723)</li> <li>Because we have the gift of free will, this type of living involves choices and therefore responsibility. (ref. CCC 1731 &amp; 1734)</li> <li>Therefore, human acts can have a moral value: being either good or evil. (ref. CCC 1749)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>           |       |

| <ul> <li>There are three factors that play a role in the morality of an action:</li> <li>1. The actual act (object chosen)</li> <li>2. The intention</li> <li>3. The circumstances in which the act happens</li> </ul>  | NOTES |
|---|-------|
| <ul> <li>Conscience:</li> <li>Conscience is the capacity of the human heart to make a moral judgment on the goodness of an action.</li> <li>It is our responsibility to properly form our conscience</li> <li>The formation of conscience involves education in the virtues, divine law, the right exercise of reason, and especially the word of God in the Scriptures</li> </ul>  |       |
| <ul> <li>"A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions." (CCC 1803)</li> <li>So, since human actions have a moral value (good or evil) because of freedom and responsibility, virtues dispose one to choose the morally good with a given object and circumstances</li> <li>Theological vs. Cardinal Virtues</li> <li>Theological virtues are infused into the soul of the individual. They adapt the Christian's faculties to be able to participate in the divine life and live in relationship with the Trinity</li> <li>Therefore all human virtues "flow from" theological</li> </ul>   |       |
| <ul> <li>virtues since they are then ordered towards the ultimate vocation of the human: participation in the divine life</li> <li>Faith, Hope, &amp; Charity/Love)</li> <li>CCC 1812-1813</li> <li>Human Virtues</li> <li>Are acquired by human effort (such as education to form one's conscience and repeated effort in the good) and allow virtuous living to happen with "ease and selfmastery".</li> <li>While they may be innumerable, there are four human virtues, deemed "cardinal virtues" which play a pivotal role and group all other human virtues around themselves: prudence, justice, temperance, &amp; fortitude</li> <li>Interplay of Virtues &amp; Grace</li> <li>Wounded by sin, we may find pursuit of virtue a daunting &amp; undesirable task</li> <li>Grace creates a dynamic interplay with human nature such that our effort is elevated and supported by the life</li> </ul> |       |

| <ul> <li>of the Spirit.</li> <li>The fruit and virtues of the Spirit, produced in the soul through the life of prayer &amp; the sacraments, sustain the moral life</li> </ul>   | NOTES |
|---|-------|
| <ul> <li>Sin is an offense against virtue, right conscience, and God.</li> <li>Sin is an evil resulting from a perverse attachment to a good and self-"love"</li> <li>In Christ's Passion, both sin and mercy find their fullest display. At the Cross, Christ is both the victim of the effects of human sin as well as the source of divine forgiveness.</li> <li>Therefore, while all sin is grave and serious, Christ's mercy is even more powerful, providing forgiveness for every sin for which forgiveness is sought.</li> </ul>  |       |
| <ul> <li>What remains for the Christian is to be convicted of sin and to be repentant</li> <li>Different Kinds of Sin:</li> <li>While there might be many qualities which can differentiate sins from one another, an important criteria that can distinguish the quality of sins is the gravity of the act itself, thus: the distinction between mortal and venial sin. (CCC 1853-1854)</li> <li>"Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him. Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it." (CCC 1855)</li> <li>Three conditions must coexist for a sin to be mortal:</li> <li>grave matter,</li> </ul>  |       |
| <ul> <li>full knowledge,</li> <li>complete consent.</li> <li>Therefore the individual must both know that the act opposes God's law in a grave manner and still freely choose to commit the act. Therefore, the result of mortal sin is the deprivation (loss) of sanctifying grace in the soul (state of grace) and, if not repented of and girgiven, will result in the loss of God's kingdom</li> <li>Mortal sin normally requires a new manifestation of the mercy of God through the sacrament of reconciliation</li> <li>Venial sin, while not destroying charity/grace in the soul, does still damage it, impedes one's progress in virtue, and merits temporal punishment</li> <li>The repetition of sinful acts (even venial) leads to the development of vices which are in direct opposition to the virtues themselves and the life of virtue in general.</li> </ul> |       |

### Conversion:

- The dignity of the human person, the reality of sin/vice coupled with the call to a life of virtue, and the effects of grace all invite the human person to a process of *conversion*.
  - Conversion literally means "to turn around": requiring the twofold movement of turning *away* and turning *towards*.
    - Turning *away* from the life of sin involves both the *conviction of sin* and *repentance* an expression of sorrow, the seeking of forgiveness, and the plan to amend one's life for the better.
    - This is always the manifestation of a response to God's initiative, thus once one turns away from sin, one turns toward the *mercy of God*.
    - The mercy of God is manifested in forgiveness given to any person who repents and intends to amend life

**Challenge:** Identifying personal key virtues & vices and making a "plan of growth"

| <br> |   |  |
|------|---|--|
| <br> |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
|      |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
|      | _ |  |
|      |   |  |
|      |   |  |
| <br> |   |  |
|      |   |  |