

# MORALITY

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## MORALITY

**“The Natural (Moral) Law, the Creator’s very good work, provides the solid foundation on which man can build the structure of moral rules to guide his choices.”**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1959)

**The Christian participates in the Grace of Christ. As an “adopted son” he receives the life of the Spirit who breathes love into him and who forms the Church.**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1957)

**The Ten Commandments (the Old Law) express man’s fundamental duties towards God.**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 2017)

**The Sacraments of the New Law, which touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life, were instituted by Christ.**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1210)

**The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus’ preaching.**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1716)

**The Theological Virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity.**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1813)

**The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit sustain the moral life of Christians.**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1803-1832)

**Human Virtues are purified and elevated by divine grace.**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1810)

**The Works of Mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities.**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 2447)

# MORALITY

## THE NATURAL MORAL LAW

1. “Man participates in the wisdom and goodness of the Creator who gives him mastery over his acts and the ability to govern himself with a view to the true and the good. The natural law, the law that is natural to our human nature, expresses the original moral sense which enables man to discern by reason the good and the evil, the truth and the lie.” The natural law, the light of understanding, is engraved by God on our souls commanding us to do good and to reject sin. The natural law is eternal and does not change as history varies.<sup>1</sup>
2. God created man in His own image and gave man the moral responsibility for continuing the process of creation. God gave man dominion over the Earth and everything created in it.<sup>2</sup> Man was thus given the moral responsibility for human life, everything created on earth, and for preserving the Earth itself<sup>3</sup>
3. Because of Original Sin, man does not clearly perceive the precepts of the natural law. Sinful man needs God’s grace, Divine Revelation, and the working of the Holy Spirit to comprehend the moral and religious truths God reveals to him.<sup>4</sup>
4. To live a moral life is more than just avoiding sin or evil. The rich man asked Jesus;  
*“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answered him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.’” He replied and said to him, “Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.<sup>5</sup>*
5. That rich young man did everything prescribed by the Mosaic Law but still felt an inner need. When Jesus asked him to give up all his possessions and follow Him, the rich man could not totally rely on God’s providence and will; that was too much for him.
6. It is not only the elimination of sin that leads us to fulfillment in Christ, but living a moral life inspired by the Holy Spirit, doing God’s will, that puts us firmly on the path to eternal life. The moral person should ask the question, “What can I do?” rather than “what must I do?” We must listen to the voice of the Lord speaking to our hearts and respond, “Here I am,” I said; “send me!”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (pp. 527-528, para. 1954-1958) Print.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 1:26-28 NABRE

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 2:15

<sup>4</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 529, para. 1960) Print.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 10:17-22

<sup>6</sup> Is. 6:8

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7. Ordinary daily actions and decisions do not revolve around the choice between vice and virtue. Most of our routine deeds involve choices between the good or the better. They are not mainly decisions of right or wrong, allowed or forbidden. However, all our actions and choices should be made within the context of serving God rather than serving self.
8. There is more to life than fulfilling obligations. A mother who does the minimum of feeding and clothing her child and does nothing more, can hardly be considered living up to her moral responsibilities. Fulfilling our obligation is the least we can do in a situation.
9. Each of us should always strive to do our best in every situation. Allow the goodness in our heart to flow and inspire those with whom we come into contact. Let the love of Christ guide our actions and help us to live a moral life in its fullest.
10. In order to do God's will, we need to have a well-formed conscience and enlightened moral judgment. Without these we cannot do what is right in God's eyes. We must educate our conscience, which is a lifelong process, so that we can resist negative influences and the temptations of sin. Sacred Scripture, the authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church, prayer, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit all help us to develop an informed conscience.<sup>7</sup>
11. With an informed conscience we can take a stand on issues that affect the wellbeing of others. A moral person gets involved in social justice interests. This requires fortitude and integrity. The moral person is completely honest in all business dealing, gives everyone his or her due, and is governed by the Law of Love.
12. When we are caught in the web of conflict, torn between alternatives, and not knowing which course to pursue, we must weigh the issue responsibly, pray, and decide sincerely the most moral path to follow. A rightly formed conscience can rest peacefully with decisions.
13. All of man's actions need to be governed by the great commandment: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and all your strength.*" Likewise, "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*"<sup>8</sup> On these precepts rests the whole moral law.<sup>9</sup> Love motivates one toward the good.
14. Practical, everyday situations which demand a moral decision require that we establish priorities. It would hardly be considered morally reasonable for a person to volunteer many hours at a soup kitchen and neglect family. Being charitable may give us greater satisfaction, but devotion to our duties and prime obligations must take precedence.
15. To be baptized and to live the Catholic faith in the spirit of Vatican II is to live the challenge of Christ in a morally responsible way. It is to live a moral life through love, not coercion. The mission of the Church is to be a sign, to transform the world,

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<sup>7</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (pp. 492, para. 1783-1785) Print.

<sup>8</sup> Mark 12:30-31; Deut. 6:5

<sup>9</sup> Mark 12:31

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and to evoke its redeeming qualities.

### GRACE

16. Grace is the help God gives us to respond to His call to become His adopted sons.<sup>10</sup> *He chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will.*<sup>11</sup> Grace introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life.<sup>12</sup>
17. Grace is first and foremost the gratuitous gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. It is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.<sup>13</sup> “Grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with His work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church.”<sup>14</sup>
18. Grace is freely given to all by God to allow us to share in His own life.<sup>15</sup> We cannot earn grace, we cannot demand grace, we have no rights to grace.<sup>16</sup> We can only cooperate with God’s grace as we try to work out our salvation with “*fear and trembling*.”<sup>17</sup>
19. Without grace, “*we cannot become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.*”<sup>18</sup> When we accept God’s grace, the Holy Spirit, over time, infuses it into our souls to heal our souls of sin and to sanctify our souls.<sup>19</sup>
20. God know the circumstances of our birth, the weakness of our nature, the shortfalls of our upbringing, the deficiencies of our physical being, and the lack or excesses of our basic needs. But most of all He knows our eternal need for His undying love. God’s grace allows us to rise above it all to follow Jesus, through whom the gift of eternal life has been earned for us by His suffering, death, and resurrection.
21. The divine gift of grace is first bestowed upon us in Baptism when we become

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<sup>10</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (pp. 538, para. 1996) Print.

<sup>11</sup> Eph. 1:4-5

<sup>12</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 544, para. 2021) Print.

<sup>13</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 544, para. 2023) Print.

<sup>14</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 544, para. 2023) Print.

<sup>15</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 538, para. 1997) Print.

<sup>16</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 541, para. 2007-2008) Print.

<sup>17</sup> Phil. 2:12

<sup>18</sup> John 1:12-18; 17:3; Rom. 8:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:3-4; CCC 1996

<sup>19</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 538, para. 1999) Print.

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members of the Church. We are cleansed of our sins and reconciled to God.<sup>20</sup> God's grace perfects our freedom by helping us overcome the restricting power of sin.

22. There are other graces that aid us along the road of sanctification. Actual grace is when God intervenes in our lives because of His love to offer us aid for the benefit of all.<sup>21</sup> Sacramental graces flow from celebration of the seven sacraments. Special graces or charisms are given to individuals for the common good of the Church.<sup>22</sup>

## THE SACRAMENTS

23. Everything flows from God's grace, which is showered upon us in many ways but especially through the Sacraments. The seven Sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life.<sup>23</sup> The Sacraments flow from the "New Law"<sup>24</sup> instituted by Jesus. This new law works through love, grace, and freedom. Jesus taught us to act out of love infused by the Holy Spirit, He gave us the strength of grace to act by means of faith and the sacraments, and He freed us from slavery to the Law of the Old Testament which could not lead us to salvation.<sup>25</sup>
24. Christ instituted the seven sacraments of the new law - Baptism, Confirmation (or Chrismation), the Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. The first three sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist are sacraments of initiation. Penance and the Anointing of the Sick are sacraments of healing. Holy Orders and Matrimony are sacraments of service.<sup>26</sup>

## CHRISTIAN GUIDELINES

25. The natural law, God's very good work, provides the solid foundation on which man can build the structure of moral rules to guide his choices.<sup>27</sup> It also provides the indispensable moral foundation for building the human community. Finally, it provides the necessary basis for the civil law with which it is connected, whether by a reflection that draws conclusions from its principles, or by additions of a positive and legal nature.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2006). *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (First ed., pp. 328-329). Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>21</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 538, para. 2000) Print.

<sup>22</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 539, para. 2003) Print.

<sup>23</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 341, para. 1210) Print.

<sup>24</sup> Also called the Law of Love and The Law of the Gospel. Significant expressions of this Law are found in Christ's Sermon on the Mount and His Last Supper discourse.

<sup>25</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 533, para. 1972) Print.

<sup>26</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 341, para. 1211) Print.

<sup>27</sup> Matt. 7:24-25

<sup>28</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 529, para. 1959) Print.

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26. We need to live in society. Society is not an extraneous addition to our nature but a requirement of our nature. And the requirements of the law are written into our hearts.<sup>29</sup> We develop our potential through mutual dialogue with and service to each other, and in so doing we respond to our vocation.<sup>30</sup>
27. Viewing others as mere means to that end leads to unjust structures which “make Christian conduct in keeping with the commandments of the divine Law-giver difficult and almost impossible.”<sup>31</sup>
28. We must always be aware that God gave us free will and revealed to us how we should use our free will. Our conduct should be guided by faith and love. Sacred Scripture and the moral teachings of the Church should strengthen our moral conscience so that we can determine whether our deliberate acts are good or evil.<sup>32</sup>
29. Man’s dignity is rooted in being created in the image and likeness of God. Man must freely conform himself to the good written in his heart.<sup>33</sup> Through His teachings, Jesus Christ has left us tangible guidelines by which we can respond to God’s grace and live our Christian lives to the best of our ability. The Church groups and explains these guidelines as follows:
- Theological Virtues
  - Moral Virtues
  - The Commandments
  - The Beatitudes
  - Corporal works of mercy
  - Spiritual works of mercy
  - Fruits of the Spirit
  - Gifts of the Spirit

## THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

30. The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man’s faculties for participation in the divine nature because the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the one and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object.<sup>34</sup>

*His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion,*

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<sup>29</sup> Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; Rom. 2:15

<sup>30</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 511, para. 1879) Print.

<sup>31</sup> Pius XII, Address at Pentecost, June 1, 1941; CCC 1887

<sup>32</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 485, para. 1749) Print.

<sup>33</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 474, para. 1700) Print.

<sup>34</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 498, para. 1812) Print.

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*through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. Through these, he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love.*<sup>35</sup>

31. The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. The Theological virtues are Faith, Hope and Charity (Love)

### **Faith**

The virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that He has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because He God is truth itself.<sup>36</sup>

### **Hope**

The virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

### **Charity**

The virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.<sup>38</sup>

32. It is upon these three virtues that we can build the foundation for our spiritual life and open ourselves to receive the fullness of the graces God has ordained for us.

## MORAL (CARDINAL) VIRTUES

33. The theological virtues inform and give life to the moral virtues. The moral virtues are acquired by human effort and are the result of morally good acts. As these acts are repeated, they are purified and elevated by divine grace.<sup>39</sup>

### **Prudence**

The moral virtue that guides our conscience to apply moral principles correctly in our daily living. It guides the other virtues especially the judgment of conscience. Prudence does not imply timidity or fear but helps us to apply

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<sup>35</sup> 2 Pet. 1:3-7

<sup>36</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 498, para. 1814) Print.

<sup>37</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 499, para. 1817) Print.

<sup>38</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 501, para. 1822) Print.

<sup>39</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 495,497,498, 564, para. 1804, 1810, 1813, 2095) Print.



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moral principles to particular cases without error.<sup>40</sup>

### **Justice**

The moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give what is right to God and neighbor. It disposes our hearts and minds to respect the rights of others and promote harmony and equity in human relationships.<sup>41</sup>

### **Fortitude**

The moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens us in difficult times and keeps us on the correct path. It helps us to overcome fear, even fear of death, and helps us to accept the trials and sufferings that come our way.<sup>42</sup>

### **Temperance**

The moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It is the mastery we gain over our feelings and appetites, enabling us to maintain a proper balance even in the midst of desires that are inherently insatiable. Temperance is referred to as moderation or sobriety in the New Testament.<sup>43</sup>

34. Moral training and education must be adhered to in order to lead a Christian life. It is not easy because of Original Sin. However, by God's grace conferred through the sacraments, our cooperation with the Holy Spirit, and by obeying the Commandments, we can follow Jesus' teaching to love what is good and avoid evil.<sup>44</sup>

## THE COMMANDMENTS

35. The most famous and best known moral teaching of many western religions is the Ten Commandments. God delivered the Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai to give to the Israelites for them to follow. The Ten Commandments are<sup>45</sup>:
1. I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me.
  2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
  3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.
  4. Honor your father and your mother.
  5. You shall not kill.

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<sup>40</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 496, para. 1806) Print.

<sup>41</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 496, para. 1807) Print; Lev. 19:15; Col. 4:1

<sup>42</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 496, para. 1808) Print; John 16:33

<sup>43</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 497, para. 1809) Print; Tit. 2:12

<sup>44</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 497, para. 1811) Print.

<sup>45</sup> Ex. 20:2-3, 7-8, 12-17

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6. You shall not commit adultery.
  7. You shall not steal.
  8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
  9. You shall not covet your neighbor's house
  10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. ...
36. The Book of Exodus explains these and other laws in more detail. The Ten Commandments (Old Law) became the central law of the people of Israel, and Jesus emphasized their importance by quoting some of them to the people of His day. The first and foremost commandment is to love God above all things. It is only through love of God that man can, through Jesus Christ, get a glimpse of the glory that God has promised. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind."<sup>46</sup>
37. But we cannot attain the first commandment unless we keep the commandments that demonstrate love for our brother (Commandments 4 through 7). We cannot love God unless we love our brother. For Scripture tells us, "*If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*"<sup>47</sup>
38. In the Gospel of Matthew, when a rich man asked Jesus what he must do to possess eternal life, Jesus tells him, "*Keep the commandments if you want to enter life.*" "What commandments?" he asked. Jesus answered. "*Do not commit murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal; do not accuse anyone falsely, respect your father and your mother; and (Jesus adds) love your neighbor as you love yourself.*"<sup>48</sup> Jesus, however, invites the man to live beyond the commandments and to come to perfection. He tells him, "*If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have, and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me.*"<sup>49</sup> The rich young man honored the commandments to love his brother but did not love God more than his possessions. Although Jesus honors the commandments, he asks us to do even more than what is demanded by the commandments.

## THE BEATITUDES

39. The Beatitudes are a set of blessings Jesus told to His disciples. They challenge us to a radical conversion and new way of life. These blessings can be found in the Gospels; the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew,<sup>50</sup> and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke.<sup>51</sup> The Beatitudes from Matthews Gospel are as follows:

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, / for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are they who mourn, / for they will be comforted.*

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<sup>46</sup> Luke 10:27

<sup>47</sup> 1 John 4:20

<sup>48</sup> Matt. 19:17-19

<sup>49</sup> Matt. 19:21

<sup>50</sup> Matt. 5:3-12

<sup>51</sup> Luke 6:20-23

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*Blessed are the meek, / for they will inherit the land.*

*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, / for they will be satisfied.*

*Blessed are the merciful, / for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are the clean of heart, / for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, / for they will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, / for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

40. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> beatitudes have parallels in Luke but the others are probably compositions by Matthew for his Jewish audience.

41. The format of “Blessed are (is)” occurs frequently in Old Testament and Wisdom literature and would have been understood by Matthew’s audience.

42. The Beatitudes in Luke are slightly different:

*And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said:*

*“Blessed are you who are poor, / for the kingdom of God is yours.*

*Blessed are you who are now hungry, / for you will be satisfied.*

*Blessed are you who are now weeping, / for you will laugh.*

*Blessed are you when people hate you, / and when they exclude and insult you, / and denounce your name as evil / on account of the Son of Man.*

*Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.”*

43. Beatitude values are reflected in the teachings of both the Old and the New Testaments. The grace of the Holy Spirit that we receive through faith in Jesus Christ represents the New Law. The Sermon on the Mount expresses some of this new law and summarizes what it means to live in accordance with God’s will.

### **Blessed are the poor in spirit.**

44. Poverty is a sign that the reign of God is not yet complete. People who seek God’s just reign strive to make an impact on physical or spiritual poverty. In prayer, they seek spiritual direction for the actions they should take. The spiritually strong do not go away sad as did the rich man of the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>52</sup> They spiritually bind themselves in solidarity with the poor and use their resources to chip away at structures that cause poverty.

### **Blessed are those who mourn.**

45. All followers participate with Jesus in messianic restoration of the world as foretold in Isaiah.<sup>53</sup> Jesus’ mission is made manifest as He touches, heals, and brings those

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<sup>52</sup> Matt. 19:21

<sup>53</sup> Isaiah 61:1-3

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lost back to life. The primary ministry of believers is to bring God's care to those who cry out because they need comforting.

### **Blessed are the meek.**

46. The prophet of Zechariah<sup>54</sup> foretold of a leader who would come in meekness. Jesus displayed meekness by submitting totally to God's will, and in so doing, he was given supreme reign over all the earth. Followers of Jesus are challenged to submit their own desires for owning things and power to the will of God. In so doing, they put the needs of the marginalized and the meek without dignified positions above their won interests.

### **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.**

47. In Isaiah, Jesus is seen as God's suffering servant who brings justice.<sup>55</sup> This servant's voice is used in such a way that people are not threatened or turned off by it. The acts of a just servant are gentle and nonviolent. People who identify with Christ feel a hunger and thirst for what is right.

### **Blessed are the merciful.**

48. Jesus exhorted followers to live with the compassion that comes from God the Father. As recorded in the Gospel of Matthew<sup>56</sup> Jesus demonstrates the cycle of mercy. Forgiveness is the key to relationships. No community or spiritual life is healthy if compassion is lacking.

### **Blessed are the pure in heart.**

49. The Psalmist links having a pure heart to seeing the face of God.<sup>57</sup> Matthew shows Jesus linking internal attitude to external action,<sup>58</sup> whereby the treasures a person stores up shows where the heart is. The light of God will come to those doing God's will. They will see clearly as they manifest God's love to others.

### **Blessed are the peacemakers.**

50. Jesus' mission is that of peace as indicated by John.<sup>59</sup> In resurrection appearances, Christ is the bearer of peace. Believers are to live in peace and spread that peace to others.

### **Blessed are those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake.**

51. The early Christian believers, especially those in Matthew's community, suffered persecution as followers of the new way. Jesus anticipates that persecution is an expected consequence for those who choose to live in a counter culture style.<sup>60</sup> Such suffering is not, however, to be feared because God will be with those doing what is right and the reward will be great.

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<sup>54</sup> Zech. 9:9

<sup>55</sup> Is. 42:1-4

<sup>56</sup> Matt. Chap 23

<sup>57</sup> Psalm 24:3-6

<sup>58</sup> Matt. 6:21

<sup>59</sup> John 20:19-27

<sup>60</sup> Matt. 10:16-18

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52. Moral training and education found in the Beatitudes challenge us to a radical conversion and way of life according to the teachings of Christ. Expressions of the new law are found in the Beatitudes. Because of the graces that flow from the new law, we can be freed from the sin that prevents us from acting in accordance with the law that is written into our hearts by God.

### WORKS OF MERCY

53. This Holy Spirit confers grace that helps us to grow spiritually through works of mercy. The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. The Spiritual Works of Mercy are primarily concerned with the spiritual needs of the Christian community, while the Corporal Works of Mercy are primarily concerned with the bodily needs of the poor.<sup>61</sup> Giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to brotherly love; it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.<sup>62</sup>

#### The Spiritual Works of Mercy

54. The Spiritual Works of Mercy emerge from the teachings in the Old and New Testaments. Divine grace strengthens us to perform these works and we and the worshipping community are in turn strengthened by performing these works. The Spiritual Works of Mercy are:

- Admonish the sinner;
  - *“If your brother sins, rebuke him.”*<sup>63</sup>
  - *“Admonish them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith.”*<sup>64</sup>
- Instruct the ignorant;
  - *“Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord.”*<sup>65</sup>
- Council the doubtful;
  - *“Amen, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for him.”*<sup>66</sup>
- Comfort the sorrowful;
  - Jesus said to them, *“My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me.”*<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 648, para. 2447) Print.

<sup>62</sup> Tob. 4:5-11; Sir. 17:22; Matt. 6:2-4; Luke 3:11

<sup>63</sup> Luke 17:3

<sup>64</sup> Tit. 1:13

<sup>65</sup> Eph. 5:17

<sup>66</sup> Mark 11:23

<sup>67</sup> Matt. 26:38

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- Bear wrongs patiently;
  - *“And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I am sorry,’ you should forgive him.”*<sup>68</sup>
- Forgive injuries and hurts;
  - *“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”*<sup>69</sup>
- Pray for the living and the dead;
  - *“We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith.”*<sup>70</sup>
  - *“If he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead.”*<sup>71</sup>

### Corporal Works of Mercy

55. The Corporal Works of Mercy are charitable works directed by Jesus and encouraged by the Church.<sup>72</sup>

- Feed the hungry;
  - *I was hungry and you gave me food.*
- Give drink to the thirsty;
  - *I was thirsty and you gave me drink.*
- Clothe the naked;
  - *I was naked and you clothed me.*
- Visit the imprisoned,
  - *I was in prison and you visited me.*
- Shelter the homeless;
  - *I was a stranger and you welcomed me*
- Visit the sick;
  - *I was ill and you cared for me,*
- Bury the dead;
  - Just as Joseph of Arimathea, a righteous stranger, had the courage to go to Pontius Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus and laid Him in a virgin tomb, so too must we by imitation bury our Christian dead as we await the

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<sup>68</sup> Luke 17:4

<sup>69</sup> Matt 6:12

<sup>70</sup> 2 Thes. 1:11

<sup>71</sup> 2 Macc. 12:44

<sup>72</sup> Matt. 25:35-46

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kingdom of God.<sup>73</sup>

56. If we internalize the works of mercy and live them, we will be adhering to many of the requirements for Christian living through our actions. Jesus said, “*Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.*”<sup>74</sup>

### THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT<sup>75</sup>

57. Living the moral life includes heeding the work of the Spirit within us who graces us with spiritual strength. Therefore, in our consideration of morality, we cannot overlook the virtues and habits we develop by responding to the Spirit. In theological language, we called these qualities the Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit. These lie at the base of our morality and show forth in our actions. They are open to all.

58. The Gifts of the Spirit are seven virtues related to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. They are:

- Wisdom,
- Understanding,
- Counsel,
- Fortitude,
- Knowledge,
- Piety, and
- Fear of the Lord.

59. They belong in their fullness to Christ.<sup>76</sup> They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.<sup>77</sup>

### THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

60. The Fruits of the Spirit are virtues related to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. St Paul speaks of the Fruits of the Spirit in Galatians<sup>78</sup> where he stresses the goodness of virtue as opposed to a life of sin. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them:

Charity	Generosity
Joy	Gentleness
Peace	Faithfulness

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<sup>73</sup> Luke 23:50-53

<sup>74</sup> Matt. 25:40

<sup>75</sup> Is. 11:2-3

<sup>76</sup> Is. 11:1-3

<sup>77</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 502, para. 1831) Print.

<sup>78</sup> Gal 5:22-23

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Patience	Modesty
Kindness	Self-control
Goodness,	Chastity

61. It would be a beneficial practice when we examine our conscience to consider how we include the exercise of positive good habits instead of focusing solely on the negative vices. The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory.<sup>79</sup>

### CATHOLIC VALUES TODAY<sup>80</sup>

#### Respect for Human Dignity

62. Catholics are called to respect, love, and promote human life; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all people. Human dignity is the belief that all people have been endowed by God with dignity and deserve respect. It is the belief that everyone has something to offer. The Catholic faith begins with the recognition of the infinite worth of each and every human being – seeing the value and worth of every human being and honoring and respecting the uniqueness of each person.<sup>81</sup>

63. Respect for the dignity of all people leads to defending their human rights – the right to the basics of life (e.g. food, clothing, shelter, education, work)<sup>82</sup> and ensuring that everyone in society works to see that people’s basic needs are met.

#### Respect for Creation and the Environment

64. Catholics are called to respect, care for, and defend all of creation. We are called to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, and how we live in harmony with God’s creation. Catholics are called to stewardship – the duty or responsibility to use the world’s resources responsibly.<sup>83</sup>

#### Love

65. Catholics are called to love one another. Jesus said that our love for one another is sign by which others will know that we are his disciples.<sup>84</sup> Jesus said that we need to love others as we love ourselves<sup>85</sup> and to remember that we are always loved by God.

66. Catholics are called to love even our enemies. “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ... If you love those who love you,” Jesus said, “what credit is that to you? For even sinners

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<sup>79</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 503, para. 1832) Print.

<sup>80</sup> St. Mary Oxford Ohio – RCIA Manual Session 19 – Morality Part I

<sup>81</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 474, para. 1700) Print.

<sup>82</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 638, para. 2408) Print.

<sup>83</sup> Gen 1:28

<sup>84</sup> John 13:34-35

<sup>85</sup> Mark 12:31



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love those who love them.”<sup>86</sup>

## Justice

67. Catholics are called to actively work to right the wrongs, to balance the indignities, to fight for the good causes, and to bring human dignity into this well-intentioned but imperfect world. Justice means working for human equality and decency by not displaying ignorance or prejudice, by not judging others, by respecting differences, by opposing bias, bigotry, and discrimination. Justice means expanding our care and concern beyond our family and local community to the nations of the world.

## Care and Compassion

68. Catholics are called to hear another’s cries of anguish, feel another’s pain, and respond. Compassion is the experience of feeling the other’s life as one’s own. One of Jesus’ most powerful stories focuses on the call to compassion; the Samaritan looks on the man in the ditch with compassion and responds in a way that no one expects.<sup>87</sup> Compassion moves us beyond just “feeling” the pain of another, it moves us to action.

## Service

69. Catholics are called to serve one another, humbly and unselfishly. Jesus gave us an example when he washed the feet of his disciples.<sup>88</sup> Catholics are called to serve the poor and the powerless – feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless...<sup>89</sup> Catholics are called to befriend those whom society looks down upon. Jesus made himself the friend of the outcasts<sup>90</sup> and did not avoid their company.<sup>91</sup>

## Forgiveness

70. Catholics are called to forgive one another and always to seek reconciliation with one another. Jesus said that we cannot ask forgiveness for our won sins unless we are also ready to forgive those who sin against us.<sup>92</sup> Catholics are called to renounce revenge. “If anyone strikes you on the cheek,” Jesus said, “offer the other also.”<sup>93</sup>

## Faithfulness

71. Catholics are called to develop relationships built on loyalty, trust, and love that provide intimacy, security, and happiness. Faithfulness in relationships involves respect and commitment between people. Catholics are called to reserve sexual

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<sup>86</sup> Luke 6: 27,32

<sup>87</sup> Luke 10:25-37

<sup>88</sup> John 13:4- 17

<sup>89</sup> Matt. Chap. 25

<sup>90</sup> Matt. 11:19

<sup>91</sup> Mark 2:16

<sup>92</sup> Matt. 6:12

<sup>93</sup> Luke 6:29

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intimacy to the committed relationship of marriage.<sup>94</sup>

### Honesty and Integrity

72. Catholics are called to be honest and genuine with other individuals, institutions, society, and self in every act, deed, and dealing. Honesty grows from an inner strength and confidence that is bred by exacting truthfulness, trustworthiness, and integrity.

### LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

73. Christians are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love - "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>95</sup> By God's endless facets of grace we have the strength to do God's will and if we strive to do God's will we will grow in love of neighbor and love of God. God calls us to special union with Him and even though we may not experience actual grace<sup>96</sup> from God, we can see and share in the effects of actual grace by observing the lives of those saints who have.
74. Christians are justified through faith. St Paul tells us, "A person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ."<sup>97</sup> Justification, being cleansed from our sins and reconciled to God, has been earned for us by Jesus Christ through his love for us, His suffering, death and resurrection.<sup>98</sup> This justification is accomplished by divine grace through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>99</sup> However, we have to cooperate with divine grace in our own redemption and in the redemption of others.
75. Although Christians cannot be justified by works, they can demonstrate their active faith by their works.<sup>100</sup> Selfless works are accomplished with the help of divine grace freely bestowed upon us through the Sacraments, the Virtues, observing the Commandments, living the Beatitudes, Works of Mercy, the Fruits and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the many Charisms (special graces) showered upon us.
76. We are to be stewards of the Church, continuing the redemptive work of Jesus Christ by proclaiming and teaching, serving and sanctifying. Fully participating in the Mass is a one way to accept God's saving grace as the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Catholic Christian life. Both parts of the Mass, The Liturgy of the Word and The Liturgy of the Eucharist, are equally important as we are fed both by the Word of the Lord and the Body of the Lord. This structure of the Mass has been common to

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<sup>94</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 623, para. 2349-2350) Print.

<sup>95</sup> Matt. 5:48

<sup>96</sup> God's direct intervention; Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 538, para. 2000) Print.

<sup>97</sup> Gal. 2:16

<sup>98</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 544, para. 2020) Print.

<sup>99</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2006). *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (First ed., pp. 328). Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>100</sup> Jas. 2:17-18

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all Catholics since the second century.<sup>101</sup>

77. We should be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble. We should conduct ourselves with reverence and be obedient to every human institution.<sup>102</sup> We should be eager to help others along the path to salvation and, to that end, the Church supports many ministries in which we can participate.
78. Our path to God is the way of the Cross which Jesus expects us to joyfully embrace. Jesus said, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”<sup>103</sup> We share in the blessed hope that we will join the saints in heaven after we have fought the good fight.<sup>104</sup> But until then, let us work with the divine grace infused into our souls to help complete the work of salvation begun by Jesus Christ; “*let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us,*”<sup>105</sup> so that we can join St. Paul and the saints and say, “*I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.*”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2006). *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (First ed., pp. 217). Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>102</sup> 1 Pet. 3:8; 1 Pet. 1:17; 1 Pet. 2:13;

<sup>103</sup> Matt. 16:24

<sup>104</sup> 1 Tim. 1:18

<sup>105</sup> Heb. 12:1

<sup>106</sup> 2 Tim. 4:7