

Elements of Catholic Moral Thought in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the Catholic School 2013b



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God comes to us through us

✦ *scripture*

✦ *faith*

✦ *nature*

✦ *church*

✦ *faith*

✦ *rational morality*

✦ *tradition*

✦ *reason*

✦ *grace*

✦ *world*

✦ *works*

✦ *faith morality*

both/and

What is the good?

- ✿ *happiness?*
- ✿ *pleasure?*
- ✿ *what is most useful?*
- ✿ *actualizing a being's potential "a being's own perfection"*
ST, I, q5

God is Good

- ✿ *God as the fullness of being*
- ✿ *Actions as good because they flow from the divine nature:
love*

I. human dignity

*1730 God created man a rational being, conferring on him the **dignity of a person** who can initiate and control his own actions. "God willed that man should be 'left in the hand of his own counsel,' so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him."*

Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts.

freedom

1734 Freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are **voluntary**. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and asceticism enhance the mastery of the will over its acts.

1735 Imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by **ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors**

2. Grace, Sin & Holiness

1987 *The **grace of the Holy Spirit has the power** to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ" and through Baptism*

1996 *Our justification comes from the grace of God. **Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help** that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life*

sin

1849 *Sin* is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law."

1850 *Sin* is an offense against God: "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight." Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it. Like the first sin, it is disobedience, a revolt against God through the will to become "like gods,"¹²³ knowing and determining good and evil. Sin is thus "love of oneself even to contempt of God." In this proud self-exaltation, sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience of Jesus, which achieves our salvation.

1854 Sins are rightly evaluated according to their *gravity*. The distinction between *mortal* and *venial* sin, already evident in Scripture became part of the tradition of the Church. It is corroborated by human experience

3. What must we do?

2054 Jesus acknowledged the **Ten Commandments**, but he also showed the power of the Spirit at work in their letter. He preached a "righteousness [which] exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees" as well as that of the Gentiles.⁶ He unfolded all the demands of the Commandments. "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill.' ... But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment."

2055 *When someone asks him, "Which commandment in the Law is the greatest?" Jesus replies: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets." The Decalogue must be interpreted in light of this twofold yet single commandment of love, the fullness of the Law:*

4. Habituation of Virtue

The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.

1804 *Human virtues* are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good.

The moral virtues are *acquired by human effort*. They are the *fruit and seed of morally good acts*; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.

Cardinal Virtues

1805 *Four virtues play a pivotal role and accordingly are called "cardinal"; all the others are grouped around them. They are: **prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.** "If anyone loves righteousness, [Wisdom's] labors are virtues; for she teaches temperance and prudence, justice, and courage." These virtues are praised under other names in many passages of Scripture.*

5. Sources of Morality

1750 The morality of human acts depends on:

*the **object** chosen*

*the end in view of the **intention***

The object, the intention, and the circumstances makes up the “sources” or constitutive elements, of the morality of human acts.

1751 The **object** chosen is a good toward which the will deliberately directs itself. It is the matter of a human act. The object chosen morally specifies the act of the will, insofar as reason recognizes and judges it to be or not to be in conformity with the true good. Objective norms of morality express the rational order of good and evil, attested to by conscience

1753 A **good intention** (for example, that of helping one's neighbor) does not make behavior that is intrinsically disordered, such as lying and calumny, good or just. The end does not justify the means. Thus the condemnation of an innocent person cannot be justified as a legitimate means of saving the nation. On the other hand, an added bad intention (such as vainglory) makes an act evil that, in and of itself, can be good (such as almsgiving)

6. Conscience

1777 Moral conscience *present at the heart of the person, enjoins him at the appropriate moment to **do good and to avoid evil**. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil It bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the **supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking.***

1778 Conscience is a *judgment of reason* whereby the human person recognizes the *moral quality of a concrete act* that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is *obliged to follow faithfully* what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man *perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law*

7. Common Good

1906 By common good is to be understood "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to *reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.*" The common good concerns the life of all. *It calls for prudence from each, and even more from those who exercise the office of authority. It consists of three essential elements:*

1907 *First, the common good presupposes respect for the person as such. In the name of the common good, public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person. Society should permit each of its members to fulfill his vocation. In particular, the common good resides in the conditions for the exercise of the natural freedoms indispensable for the development of the human vocation, such as "the right to act according to a sound norm of conscience and to safeguard ... privacy, and rightful freedom also in matters of religion."*

1908 Second, the common good requires *the social well-being and development of the group itself.*

Development is the epitome of all social duties.

Certainly, it is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on.

1909 Finally, the common good requires *peace*, that is, the stability and security of a just order. It presupposes that authority should ensure by morally acceptable means the security of society and its members. It is the basis of the right to legitimate personal and collective defense

solidarity

1940 Solidarity is manifested in the first place by the distribution of goods and remuneration for work. It also presupposes the effort for a more just social order where tensions are better able to be reduced and conflicts more readily settled by negotiation.