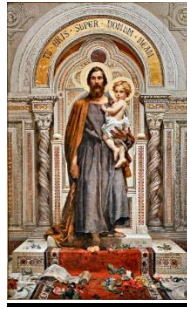


St. Joseph Society



Objective: Catholic morality is the practical outworking of the great dogmas of the Catholic faith. St. Paul commands us to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). This course examines various methods of making moral decisions and the core concepts of conscience, sin, freedom, law, and dignity. As we study these great truths of Catholic morality, we’ll also challenge ourselves to apply these principles in our daily life.

Unit 1 Podcast Schedule

- Episode #1 – Introduction to Ethics
- Episode #2 – Introduction to Moral Theology
- Episode #3 – Sources of Moral Theology
- Episode #4 – Moral Relativism

Monthly Meeting: Introduction to Moral Theology

I. Episode #1 – Introduction to Ethics

1. Morality of Obligation (Duty-Centered – Immanuel Kant) – If you hold a morality-of-obligation perspective, then determining which rules should be followed is a matter of determining who or what the proper authority is in some situation, and what that authority (ex. God, church, family, laws, etc.) says to do. Rules are imposed on us as obligations according to this perspective because they are not inherently connected to the further goal of human happiness and flourishing.
2. Morality of Happiness (Virtue Theory – St. Thomas Aquinas) – From a morality-of-happiness perspective, living morally is simply living a most fulfilling, happy life. Rules that we follow not only point us toward that further goal but are a very participation in that goal. In this approach, authorities are indeed important. We heed them because we do not know fully by ourselves the best way to live. But authorities are heeded not simply due to their status (as my God, my church, my family, or my nation), but as conduits to a better life.

II. Episode #2 – Introduction to Moral Theology

1. *Exitus-Reditus* – The theme of *exitus-redditus*, which envisions a movement composed of both downward “procession” and upward “return,” is central to theology as a whole and moral theology in particular. We proceed from God to return to him.

2. The Four Elements of Thomistic Moral Theology

- a. **Beatitude:** The moral life is essentially a response to the question of happiness and the ultimate end of human action.
- b. Humans progress toward beatitude by their actions. There are two types of principles that guide human actions.
 - i. **Interior Principles:** The virtues and gifts and their contrary vices and sins are the interior and personal sources of action.
 - ii. **Exterior Principles:** Laws, precepts, and grace are the exterior or superior principles of action.
- c. **Prudential Judgment:** The entire goal of moral theology is to form, from universal principles, the choice that generates the concrete act.

III. Episode #3 – Sources of Moral Theology

1. Faith: Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the Magisterial teaching of the Church,
2. Reason: Relevant human sciences (such as psychology, sociology, economics), and human reason (philosophy).

IV. Episode #4 – Moral Relativism

1. Moral Relativism? – Moral relativism holds that there are no unchangeable principles of human behavior, either because all truth is relative or because there are no inherently evil actions, since everything depends on other factors, such as customs, conventions, or social approval.
2. Moral Absolutism – There are moral truths (absolutes) that correspond to reality. Moral absolutes are: objective (not subjective – true for all persons), eternal (not temporal – true at all times), and universal (not local – true for all places).
3. Adolphe Tanquerey – *The Spiritual Life*
 - a. The world attempts to seduce us with its maxims or if that fails to terrorize us for holding our convictions. “To resist successfully this dangerous trend one must have the courage to look upon life from the point of view of eternity, and regard the world in the light of faith. Then the world will appear to us in its true colors, as the enemy of Jesus Christ, to be fought against with all our might in order that we may save our souls; it will appear to us as the scene of action of our zeal whither we must carry the maxims of the Gospel” (111-112).
 - b. Men of conviction among the laity need to let their “light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven” (Mt. 5:16). “It is for such select souls . . . to infuse into the more timid Christians the courage to fight the tyranny of human respect, of fashion and of legalized persecution. The best means of effecting this is to band together into societies those influential laymen who have the courage of their convictions, and who fear neither to speak nor to act accordingly” (114).