

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). Last month, we looked at the nature of the human act. This month, we are going to discuss the nature of authentic freedom.

Unit 5 Podcast Schedule

- Episode #17 – Freedom
- Episode #18 – Responsibility
- Episode #19 – Modifiers of Freedom
- Episode #20 – Law and Morality

Monthly Meeting

I. Episode #17 – Freedom

1. What is freedom? True freedom is not license. Freedom is not “doing whatever I want to do.” True “Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. By free will one shapes one's own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude” (CCC 1731). **External freedom** includes freedom from factors outside ourselves that threaten or destroy our power to exercise choice (ex. Poverty, tyranny, etc.). **Internal freedom** includes freedom from interior factors that limit choice (ex. Fear, addiction, etc.).
2. The Bible & Freedom
 - a. John 8:31-32 – Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”
 - b. 2 Cor. 3:17-18 – “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
 - c. Galatians 5:13 – For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another.

II. Episode #18 – Responsibility – The principle of double effect says that it is morally allowable to perform an act that has at least two effects, one good and one bad, under the following conditions (Note: The act is not morally allowable unless all four conditions are fulfilled):

1. The act to be done must be good in itself or at least indifferent.
2. The good effect must not be obtained by means of the evil effect.
3. The evil effect must not be intended for itself but only permitted.
4. There must be a proportionally grave reason for permitting the evil effect.

III. Episode #19 – Modifiers of Freedom

1. CCC 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 (CCC 1735). Freedom can be perfect, imperfect, and wholly lacking.
2. Freedom makes man responsible for his acts . . . Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and self-discipline (asceticism) enhance the mastery of the will over its acts (CCC 1734).

IV. Episode #20 – Law and Morality

1. St. Thomas Aquinas’s Definition of Law – Law is “nothing other than a certain dictate of reason for the common good, made by him who has the care of the community and promulgated” (ST I-II, q .90, a. 4).
2. Four Kinds of Law
 - a. Eternal Law – The law which God uses to providentially govern the universe
 - b. Natural Law – The participation of the eternal laws by rational creatures. The aspect of the eternal law whereby the Creator governs and guides the moral actions of humans.
 - c. Human Law – The particular application of natural law to local communities.
 - d. Divine Law – The revelation of God’s law through Scripture and Tradition to Christians.
3. The precepts of the Church are the minimal obligations for members of the Catholic Church.
 - a. To attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and resting from servile works.
 - b. To observe the days of abstinence and fasting.
 - c. To confess our sins to a priest, at least once a year.
 - d. To receive Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist at least once a year during Easter Season.
 - e. To contribute to the support of the Church.