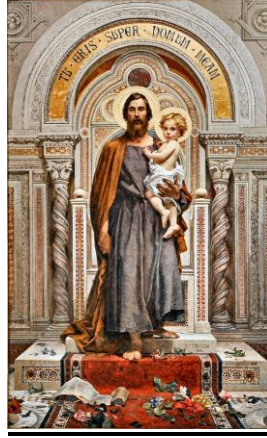


St. Joseph Society



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 1 – Introduction to Moral Theology
- Unit 2 – The Nature of Man
- Unit 3 – The End of Man
- Unit 4 – Making Moral Choices
- Unit 5 – Freedom
- Unit 6 – Conscience

Unit 5 Podcast Schedule

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

Episode #17 – Freedom

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: What does it mean to be free?
2. This month, we are going to discuss the nature of authentic freedom.
 - a. Episode #17 – Freedom
 - b. Episode #18 – Responsibility
 - c. Episode #19 – Modifiers of Freedom
 - d. Episode #20 – Law and Morality
3. Last week, we discussed the nature of the human act. Freedom characterizes properly human acts. It makes the human being responsible for acts of which he is the voluntary agent. His deliberate acts properly belong to him (CCC 1745).
4. This week, we will open our discussion by answering the question: What does it mean to be free?

II. Freedom

1. Determinism & Free Will
 - a. Incompatibilism – The thesis that determinism and human free will are incompatible.
 - i. Libertarianism: The thesis that free will and determinism are not compatible. Libertarian free will is a philosophical position that argues that humans are autonomous beings who can make their own decisions without being controlled by outside forces or others. For the libertarian, our choices are **free**, but they are not **rational**.
 - ii. Hard Determinism: the thesis that the conjunction of the past and laws of nature fixes a unique possible future. For the hard determinism, our choices are **rational**, but they are not **free**.
 - b. Compatibilism – The thesis that determinism and human free will are compatible.
 - i. Soft Determinism – determinism and human freedom are compatible. Freedom is seen as a function of a determined will (compatibilism).
 - ii. As we have discussed, St. Thomas Aquinas’s moral theology is teleological in nature. Which means that man and his various faculties have natural ends or goals they tend to. The intellect is determined to pursue truth as such, the will is determined to pursue the good as such, and the appetites are ordered to the beautiful as such. However, we are not determined to pursue this or that particular true, good, or beautiful object. The freedom to choose this particular true, good, or beautiful thing is predicated upon the fact that I am determined to pursue the true, good, and beautiful.

2. What is freedom?

a. Freedom is Not

- i. True freedom is not license. Freedom is not “doing whatever I want to do.”
- ii. Will Durant – “When liberty becomes license, dictatorship is near.”

b. Freedom Is

- i. CCC 1731 – 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.
- ii. Freedom is a positive quality that helps us to both express and develop our humanity. We should keep in mind the difference between external and internal freedom.
 1. **External freedom** includes freedom from factors outside ourselves that threaten or destroy our power to exercise choice (ex. Poverty, tyranny, etc.).
 2. **Internal freedom** includes freedom from interior factors that limit choice (ex. Fear, addiction, etc.).

3. 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.

III. Application

1. Keep practicing the Rule of Life
2. Meditation: Are we going to be free men in Christ or slaves to sin?

Episode #18 – Responsibility

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: Are we responsible for the consequences of our actions?
2. Last week, we discussed the philosophical question of determinism and free will, the proper understanding of freedom, and the implication of it for our moral lives.
3. This week, we are going to discuss the notion of moral responsibility and the Principle of Double Effect.

II. Responsibility

1. Responsibility & Freedom

- a. The word imputable refers to actions that can be ascribed, attributed, or definitely linked to a specific person or entity.
- b. Responsibility and freedom go hand-in-hand because our free choices, and the actions that result from them, help form us into the kinds of people we end up becoming.
- c. Voluntariness can be positive or negative. We can will to do something (commission) or omit to do something (omission).

2. Foreseen Consequences of Voluntary Acts

- a. There is a difference between the way in which the act itself is voluntary and the way in which its consequences are voluntary.
 - i. The thing willed as an end or a means is directly voluntary.
 - ii. The unintended but foreseen consequences of an act are indirectly voluntary. In other words, sometimes a person does not will certain consequences as an end or a means, but he sees the effect as a necessary consequence of his action.
- b. Why does this matter?
 - i. The question of the indirect voluntary is really important because most things in life are mixtures of good and evil. Good or indifferent acts may have bad effects. Our acts often include many consequences, some of which may be good and others bad.
 - ii. It appears that we are caught in the horns of a dilemma:
 1. Either human life cannot be lived as it actually is, or
 2. We are compelled to do evil and to do it voluntarily.
 - iii. We find the solution to this dilemma in the principle of double effect.

3. The Principle of Double Effect

- a. CCC 1737 – An effect can be tolerated without being willed by its agent; for instance, a mother's exhaustion from tending her sick child. A bad effect is not imputable if it was not willed either as an end or as a means of an action, e.g., a death a person incurs in aiding someone in danger. For a bad effect to be imputable it must be foreseeable and the agent must have the possibility of avoiding it, as in the case of manslaughter caused by a drunken driver.
- b. The principle of double effect is one of the most useful ethical principles and one that must be thoroughly mastered. Note: Evil must never be willed in itself as an end or a means. Nor may evil ever be voluntary in cause, as a foreseen but unwanted consequence, unless it can somehow be reduced to an incidental and unavoidable by-product in the achievement of some good the agent is rightfully seeking.
- c. 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:
 - i. The act to be done must be good in itself or at least indifferent.
 - ii. The good effect must not be obtained by means of the evil effect.
 - iii. The evil effect must not be intended for itself but only permitted.
 - iv. There must be a proportionally grave reason for permitting the evil effect.
- d. Note: The act is not morally allowable unless all four conditions are fulfilled.

III. Application

1. Keep practicing the Rule of Life
2. Freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and self-discipline (asceticism) enhance the mastery of the will over its acts (CCC 1734).

Episode #19 – Modifiers of Freedom

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: Are there degrees of freedom and responsibility?
2. Last week, we discussed the notion of moral responsibility and the Principle of Double Effect.
3. This week, we are going to discuss how our freedom may be modified by a variety of factors.

II. Modifiers of Freedom

1. Responsibility & Freedom

- a. 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.
- b. Perfect Freedom – Freedom is perfect, if the agent has full knowledge and full consent.
- c. Imperfect Freedom – It is imperfect, if there is something wanting in the agent’s knowledge, or consent, or both, provided he has both to some degree.
- d. No Freedom – If either the knowledge were wholly lacking or the consent were wholly lacking, there could be no freedom at all.

2. What makes freedom imperfect? Ignorance

- a. Vincible Ignorance – Ignorance that can be overcome by acquiring requisite knowledge.
 - i. The culpability of vincible ignorance depends on the amount of effort put forth to dispel it, and the amount of effort called for depends on the importance of the matter and the obligation of the agent to possess such knowledge.
 - ii. Studied ignorance (i.e. a person planning on using ignorance as an excuse) in a way lessens freedom because he doesn’t fully realize what he is doing, and in a way increases freedom because he intends to use his ignorance as an excuse.
 - iii. Vincible ignorance does not destroy freedom.
- b. Invincible Ignorance – Ignorance that cannot be overcome because the required knowledge cannot be acquired.
 - i. Invincible Ignorance – Ignorance that cannot be overcome because the requisite knowledge cannot be acquired.
 - ii. Invincible ignorance destroys freedom because knowledge is necessary for freedom. For example, a person who unknowingly pays for something with counterfeit money does so involuntarily.

3. What makes freedom imperfect? – Passion

- a. What is a passion? It is a very strong motion of the sensitive appetite for pleasurable or arduous goods.
- b. There are two kinds of passions:
 - i. Antecedent passions, or passions that arise spontaneously before the will has acted.
 - ii. Consequent passions are stirred up by one's brooding on the objects that arouse them.
- c. Antecedent passion is but an act of a man, but consequent passion is a human act. Antecedent passion becomes consequent when it is recognized for what it is, and then is deliberately retained or fostered.
- d. Antecedent passions may, but do not usually, destroy freedom; however, they do lessen freedom. Consequent passion does not lessen freedom, but may increase it because it may cause one to act in a way that he would not under normal conditions.

4. What makes freedom imperfect? – Habit

- a. A Habit is a firm, stable disposition for acting in a certain way.
- b. One who finds he has acquired a habit must choose either to keep it or get rid of it. Responsibility for habitual acts depends on the amount of advertence (turning one's mind away from the habit) and on the effort to get rid of the habit.
- c. If a person decides to let the habit remain, his possession of the habit may become voluntary. If one decides to get rid of the habit, the victim will struggle between a voluntary and involuntary desire. It can take a very long time and a great deal of effort to get rid of some habits.

III. Application

1. Keep practicing the Rule of Life
2. Freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and self-discipline (asceticism) enhance the mastery of the will over its acts (CCC 1734).

Episode #20 – Law and Morality

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: Do laws promote our freedom or take it away?
2. Last week, we discussed how our freedom may be modified and how this affects our responsibility.
3. This week, we are going to discuss the law and morality.

II. Law & Morality

1. St. Thomas Aquinas's Definition of Law

- a. 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).
- b. Aquinas's definition of law has several important elements:
 - i. Reasonable
 - ii. For the common good
 - iii. From competent authority
 - iv. Law must be promulgated

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 believers and it is not usually possible to impose these laws on society.

3. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, divine law has four purposes:

- a. It helps us stay on the right path on our journey to God.
- b. It helps us discern what is right when there are conflicting ideas of right and wrong.
- c. It speaks to our motivation.
- d. It indicates what is sinful and what actions will kill or stifle our relationship with God.

4. There are three types of divine law:
 - a. The Old Law – Also known as the Law of Moses, is the first stage of revealed law.
 - b. The New Law – The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the new law.
 - i. The Sermon on the Mount and the apostolic teachings in the New Testament letters (e.g. Romans 12-15, 1 Cor. 12-13, Eph. 4-5, and Col. 3-4 teach that the new Law is a law of love.
 - ii. The new law can also be called a law of grace and a law of freedom.
 - iii. The so-called evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience also flow from the new Law.
 - c. Church Law – What civil law is to natural law, Church law is to divine law.
 - i. The precepts of the Church are the minimal obligations for members in good standing of the Catholic faith community.
 - ii. Canon law is the full body of officially established rules governing the Catholic Church, which was last revised in 1983.

III. Application

1. Keep practicing the Rule of Life
2. Meditation: Think about how you may incorporate the evangelical counsels into your life. As laymen, we do not take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but we should incorporate all of them in a way that is suited to our state in life.