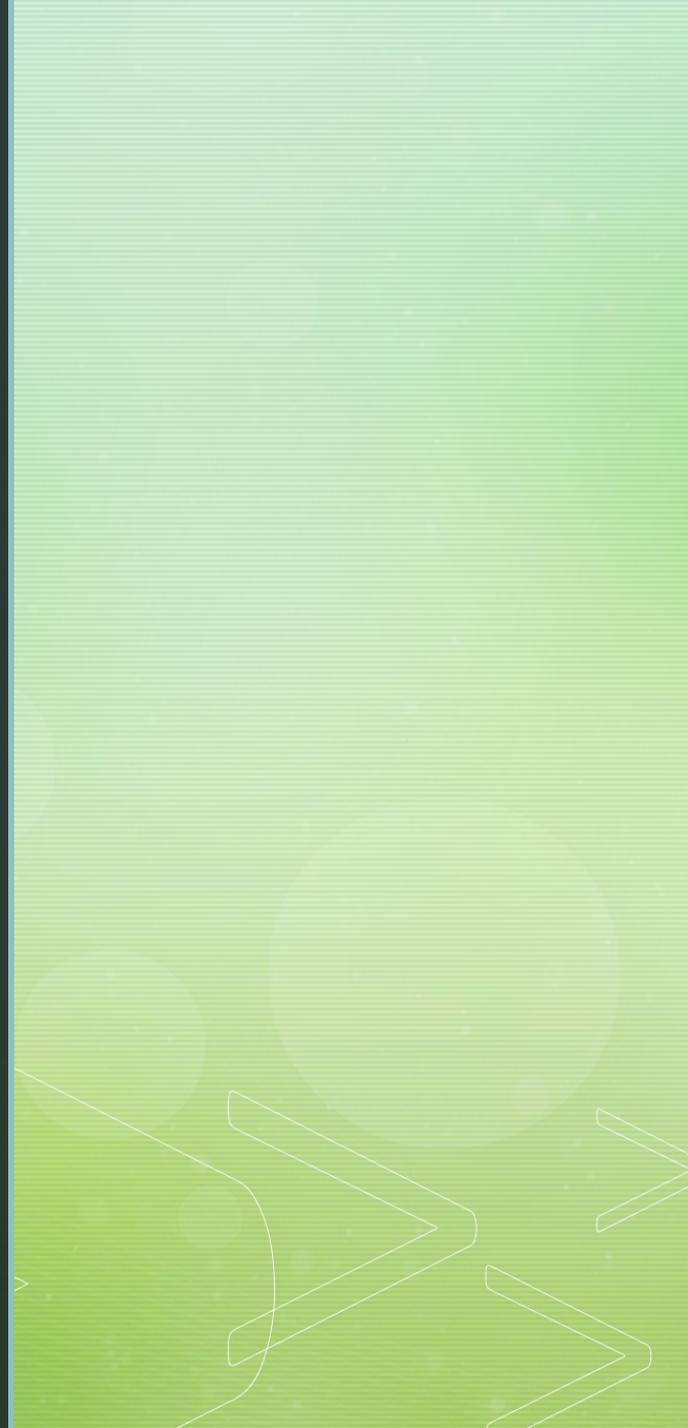


Ministry Formation 2021

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Morality





- Pop Quiz!!



- Name the 10 Commandments in order...
- You have 5 minutes...
- No cheating!
- GO!!!



- Time's up!
- Let's see how you did...





1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

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4. Honor your father and mother.
 5. You shall not kill.
 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 spouse.
 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

- 
- The Ten Commandments are a pretty basic and well known expression of a moral code.
 - For us as Christians, the “*decatalogue*” (10 words) gives us more specific instruction on how we are to fulfill the two great commandments: 1. love God and 2. love our neighbors...



Morality and Ethics

- **Moral teachings are ultimately about love... how to best love God, self and others...**

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- What was the point of this?
 - Similar tests have been given to others...
 - Every single day we have to make moral decisions. The more we know, the better our chances of making good decisions...
- 



- Today we are just barely going to scratch the surface of a huge topic...
- And really, we're going to be focusing on what is typically called "fundamental moral theology" – looking at morality in a more foundational, general way – to see how it works and what it's about, rather than be looking at specific moral issues – that is for another class...



Morality and Ethics

Why are we here?





Morality and Ethics

Happiness...



Morality and Ethics

Where do we find it?

How do we get there?





- A little story about arriving at our destination...





Morality and Ethics

- In 1846, 87 pioneers set out from Independence, MO to head to California along the Oregon Trail.
- Only 48 of them survived the trip...
- The problem was that they had decided to take a new route, a route called the “Hastings Cutoff” - a route promoted by a man named Lansford Hastings who claimed it was quicker and easier than the established route.



Morality and Ethics

- Unfortunately, this new route, despite being sold to them as “easier and quicker,” turned out to be more difficult and much longer.
- They lost approximately a month of travel time by taking this new route (not to mention all the extra supplies this entailed).
- On October 20 of that year the snow began to fall... a very early snowstorm stranded them in the Sierra Nevada mountains.
- The survivors were not rescued until the next Spring...



Morality and Ethics

- Of course, this is the story of the Donner-Reed party... a story made infamous because some of the survivors reportedly resorted to cannibalism in order to survive.



Morality and Ethics

- The story of the Donner-Reed party is a good historical example of what can happen if we follow the wrong “map” or try to take unproven shortcuts.
- It might mean we don’t arrive at our destination at all or that we end up getting lost for a time along the way.



Morality and Ethics

- Morality and Ethics can be thought of as “roadmaps” or “gps” for our lives.
- They help us to arrive at our final destination (happiness) and also help us to navigate the obstacles we find along the way.
- Morality will not make us happy in and of itself, but it is a necessary part of living the life of blessedness we are called to as Christians.

Morality and Ethics

- When we think of morality or ethics we tend to think of moral issues – especially controversial issues...
- Sometimes we also tend to think in terms of rules or laws...
- Occasionally we can try to reduce morality to our feelings about something...
- All of these tendencies can really cause us problems though...



Morality and Ethics

So what is morality really about then?





Morality and Ethics

- The first and most fundamental principle of all morality is:

“Do Good, Avoid Evil”



Morality and Ethics

- Morality is really about learning to choose that which is truly good and avoiding that which is evil...
 - Why? Because choosing the good leads us to the good... our moral choices move us in one direction or another... they shape us.
 - In the end, we become what we've chosen to become...
- 



Morality and Ethics

A few definitions...



Morality and Ethics

- **Morality:** The goodness or evil of human acts.
- **Ethics:** The Philosophical reflection on the goodness or evil of human acts.



Morality and Ethics

- What's the difference?



Morality and Ethics

- Morality deals more with “what” is considered good/evil.
- Ethics deals more with “why” something might be called good/evil.

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- The term “**morality**” comes from the Latin root words, “mores” and “moralitas.” These essentially mean “norms”, “customs”, “expected behavior.”
 - The term “**ethics**” comes from the Greek root words, “ethos” and “ethikos.” These also essentially mean “norms” & “customs” as well as the idea of “defining behavior”



- But there's a little more to this definition
– namely the difference between what is good and what is evil...



Morality and Ethics

- Good: “That which is as it should be”
- Evil: “That which is not as it should be”



- Where does our knowledge of good and evil come from?
 - God...
 - Divine Revelation, Natural Law... (CCC 1955)



- But when it comes to morality/ethics specifically what are we concerned with being either good or evil?
- Our “acts”...



Morality and Ethics

- **What constitutes an “act”?**
 - **We could perhaps also say, “action” or “choice”**
 - **Thoughts, Words and Deeds all can be considered “acts”**
 - **Likewise, choosing to *not* do something could be considered an act**
 - **In the Mass we have the penitential rite which can include the words: “In my thoughts and in my words...”**
 - **Not all choices/acts are moral choices/acts**

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- But... there's a little more to it – to understanding how we examine our “acts” and determine if they are good or evil or the degree to which they are good or evil.

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- There are classically three parts of a human act that must be looked at.
 - These are sometimes referred to as the “**sources of morality**”

Sources of Morality

- 1. Action/Object
- 2. Intention
- 3. Circumstances

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- **Action/Object** = what is being done – what is being chosen
 - **Intention** = why it is being done – what is the desired result
 - **Circumstances** = all the other information about the act/choice (who, when, how, where...)



- What role do each play in our assessment?
- Which ones determine the goodness or evil of our act?
- What are some examples?





- **Keep in mind:**
- The Object/Action and the Intention are what can make a given act either good or evil.
- The circumstances cannot make an act good or evil, but they can help to clarify what the object is and they can increase/decrease the amount of good/evil involved.





- But there's **STILL** more to this definition... morality/ethics is something that pertains to... humans...





- What makes us human?
 - Physical Body
 - Rational Intellect
 - Free Will



- When all of these things exist together in an individual we have a human “person”
- What other kinds of persons might we encounter besides human ones?

Morality and Ethics

- Human beings are the only creatures on earth that have morality. Why?
 - *Rational Intellect* (we can understand)
 - *Free Will* (we can choose)

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- **Rationality** – our ability to think the way we do – we can use logic – we can solve complex problems – we can be creative – we can use language - we can laugh...
 - This capacity is a part of our human nature – but it takes development to manifest itself... like other abilities/powers
 - The age of reason is about 7 years old...



- **Free Will** – this is the ability to be self-determining – to make choices
- *Without freedom there can be no morality*
(CCC 1749)

Morality and Ethics

- Our responsibility only exists to the extent that we are both acting with knowledge and freely...
- Therefore, there can be obstacles to our moral responsibility.



- Classically, there are four basic obstacles that can affect our freedom (or knowledge) and which may, therefore, impact our responsibility.



Morality and Ethics

FORCE

FEAR

PASSION

IGNORANCE

Morality and Ethics

- **Force:**
 - Internal or external
 - Artificial or natural

Morality and Ethics

- **Fear:**
 - Internal or External
 - Real or Imagined
 - It can be an example of a “Force”
 - Different levels of severity



Morality and Ethics

- **Passion**
 - **Overwhelming emotion**
 - **No longer thinking rationally**

Morality and Ethics

- **Ignorance:**
 - **Vincible or invincible**
 - **Not the same as negligence**
 - **It is not “bliss”**

Morality and Ethics

- This is not to say that we can't also overcome some of these...
- In fact, the more we do, the more we benefit.

Morality and Ethics

- Ultimately, living morally means living in as human a fashion as possible.
- For the Christian, living morally becomes living according to God's design.
- It means living a life that is a true reflection of God, the source of all good.



- Having been made the way we are, we have been given the ability to use a very special and unique tool – something that God has given us to help us in our pursuit of the good and our efforts to avoid evil...





- Conscience



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- The word itself comes from two root words: “cum” (with) and “scientia” (knowledge or knowing)

- How do we tend to think of conscience?
 - Angel and devil on our shoulders
 - Jiminey cricket in pinocchio
 - Small internal voice

- How would we define it?
 - “a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he/she is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed.” (CCC 1778)

1. A judgment
2. of reason
3. Recognizes the moral quality
4. Concrete act
5. Going to perform
6. Is performing
7. Has already performed

- **We can speak of it in three ways:**
 - **1. An awareness**
 - **2. a process**
 - **3. judgment**

- A conscience that is working well is typically called an **“informed”** conscience.
- This means that it has everything it needs to do its job well – to rightly see what is good and what is evil so that one can choose the good.
- If good and evil are clear to us in a given situation, then we can say that our conscience is **“certain.”**
- An informed conscience leads to a certain conscience...
- However, it doesn't mean that we'll actually choose the good...

- A conscience that is not working well (unable to distinguish between what is really good and evil) is usually referred to as a “**lax**” conscience.
- A lax conscience can lead to choosing evil as though it was good or vice versa.
- If a conscience sees as good that which is actually evil (or vice versa) then it is typically called an “**erroneous (Mistaken)**” conscience.
- A lax conscience tends to lead to having an erroneous conscience.

- And then there is the middle ground...
- An “**uncertain**” or “**doubtful**” conscience
- This happens when, despite our best information, we can’t clearly see what is good and what is evil in a given situation.
- This often happens when:
 - we face a new situation we’ve never faced before
 - A situation is very complex
 - There are competing values – one choice seems as good (or as bad) as the other

- What do we do in these situations?
 - Seek more information
 - Strive for moral certainty

- Conscience must be formed... reformed... and continually updated.
- Reflection on actual choices is important... as is continual learning.

- There is much more that we could continue to talk about, but for the time being we will have to end our discussion today with these topics.
- If we were to continue, we would next be looking at topics like: virtue, vice, sin, and cooperation with evil to name a few.

- As a way to end class today, I will leave you with a quote (which the Catechism uses) and which is a good reminder for us all as we look at the topic of morality in our Christian lives.

Morality and Ethics

- **"Christian, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God's own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the Kingdom of God."**

St. Leo the Great