

Session 6



A CATHOLIC MORAL VISION

VIRTUE, GRACE,
& THE PATH TO HAPPINESS



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

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INTRODUCTION

The dictionary defines *morality* as “a system of ideas of right and wrong conduct.” The problem today is that our culture doesn’t accept that there is an absolute standard for right and wrong. Instead, much of what the world believes is based on moral relativism: the idea that there isn’t really right or wrong, truth or falsehood—all that matters is what you think and feel is right. Any moral law that applies to everyone is viewed as a restriction of your freedom.

This stands in stark contrast to Catholic teaching, which says that living a moral life according to the guidance God has given us is the key to true happiness and freedom. According to Catholic thought, morality is the map that helps us build a life that allows us to become all that God has created us to be. Rather than being restrictive, morality liberates us from sin and enslavement to our own selfish desires.

We will look at God’s moral vision for our lives and how by following it, we become authentically whole and holy.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **What leads to true happiness**
- **The difference between the modern view of freedom and the biblical view of freedom**
- **Virtue and why we need it to live life well**
- **The three things that make an act moral**
- **Why we can never do evil so that good may result—in other words, why the end never justifies the means**
- **Sin and how it hinders our pursuit of happiness**
- **What we need to have a correctly formed conscience**



OPENING PRAYER

Christ Jesus, Sweet Lord,
why have I ever loved,
why in my whole life
have I ever desired anything except you,
Jesus my God?
Where was I when I was not in spirit with you?
Now, from this time forth,
do you, all my desires, grow hot,
and flow out upon the Lord Jesus...
O, Sweet Jesus,
may every good feeling that is fitted
for your praise,
love you, delight in you, adore you!
God of my heart,
and my Portion, Christ Jesus,
may my heart faint away in spirit,
and may you be my Life within me!

—St. Augustine of Hippo

*“O my dear
parishioners, let
us endeavor to get
to heaven! There
we shall see God.
How happy we shall
feel! We must get to
heaven! What a pity
it would be if some
of you were to find
yourselves on the
other side!”*
—St. John Vianney



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What, according to the presenter, is the hallmark of true freedom? What do we need to be truly free?
2. How do we know whether our choices are morally good? What are the three elements of a good moral act?
3. American novelist Mark Twain said: “It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.” What is your interpretation of this quote?

CALL TO CONVERSION

After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:



#1 In the video, the presenters talked about how our relativistic culture says there are no moral truths for everyone to follow. Prayerfully consider some of the ways in which the relativistic culture affects you. Are you sometimes afraid or hesitant to say there are some things that are morally wrong for everyone? Are there some areas of your life where you rationalize certain immoral choices, preferring to “make up your own morality” instead of allowing the teaching of Christ and the Church to guide you?

#2 Today’s session discussed virtue as a habitual disposition to do the good. Prayerfully consider how well your life reflects the cardinal virtues.

a. How well do I live a prudent life, making wise decisions based on what is truly most important in life?

b. How well do I live a temperate life, exhibiting self-control especially in attraction to pleasures of food, drink, and sex?

c. How well do I live out courage, exhibiting a consistent willingness to endure pain and suffering for what is good?

d. How well do I exhibit justice in my daily life, fulfilling my responsibilities toward God and others in my family, friendships, workplace, and society?

#3 Which of these virtues do you think you need to grow in most? What is one thing you can do this week to help you grow in this area? Turn to God each day in prayer, asking for his divine assistance.



CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.



SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:



“Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

—Psalm 34:14

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Where you'll find helpful videos, audio presentations, ebooks, and feature films from the most trustworthy presenters in the Catholic world.

For Further Reading:

For more in-depth reading about a Catholic moral vision, see the following *Catechism* passages:

- *Freedom and Responsibility: CCC 1731–1734*
- *Freedom as a Right: CCC 1747*
- *Sources of Morality: CCC 1750–1754*
- *Good and Evil Acts: CCC 1755*
- *Formation of Conscience: CCC 1783–1785*
- *Necessity to Obey Conscience: CCC 1800*

Other Resources:

- *The United States Catechism for Adults, Chapters 23–34*
- *An Introduction to Moral Theology* by William May
- *A Refutation of Moral Relativism: Interviews with an Absolutist* by Peter Kreeft
- *Making Choices: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Moral Decisions* by Peter Kreeft
- Encyclical Letter, *Veritatis Splendor* by Pope St. John Paul II
- *The Heart of Virtue* by Donald DeMarco