

Life in Christ - Part II
Chapters 23 & 24
(RCIA Feb 2, 2016 – Mary Ann)

BEATITUDES (Sermon on the Mount) (Mk 5:3-12)

- The Beatitudes serve as the key to understanding the new life of grace proclaimed by Jesus.
- They answer the deepest questions of our existence - what is human happiness and where can it be found. We all have a natural desire for happiness. This desire draws us toward God, for He alone can fulfill it. (CCC-1718) *"The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire of the divine origin; God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it."*
- Beatitudes – means "supreme blessedness and happiness". They are "blessed attitudes."

**"The Beatitudes are a perfect synthesis of Christ's own life; they are, if you wish, a summary of Christ's own practice of virtue. When we say that perfection consists in following Christ and ask what that means, we can answer that it means practicing the Beatitudes, which Christ first practiced and then preached" Fr. John Hardon*

- Jesus teaches the virtues that give us fullness of life and happiness.
- These are the foundations for a life of authentic Christian discipleship and the attainment of ultimate happiness.
- The Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount (the Beatitudes), and the teaching given to us by the apostles provide us the path to happiness here and in eternity.

ELEMENTS OF MORALITY THAT WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND

I. MADE IN HIS IMAGE (CCC 1701, 1705) (Col 1:15, 2 Cor 4:4)

- Every person bears the **dignity of being made in the image of God**
- SO in us is the powerful surge toward God and a desire to be with Him,
- But because of Original Sin, the other thing surging in us in Concupiscence – **the desire/inclination to sin.**
- So as we go through our faith journey, we have to continue to ask ourselves **"Whose Image is on Me?"** (remember the coin, Who's image is on the coin?)

II. NATURAL LAW (CCC 1954, 2070)

- God plants in our hearts the **understanding of good vs. evil.**
- You can use your own reason. You don't have to leave reason at the door.
- Natural law is confirmed by **Divine Revelation** (Scripture/Tradition) – Divine Law. The creation of man and woman in His image was revealed in the very beginning of Genesis. (Gn 1:27) "He made them male and female" (look this up)

- The Ten Commandments are part of the Natural Law

III. HUMAN FREEDOM (CCC 1744, 1747) (Rom 6:17) (Gen 3:13, 4:10) (2 Sam 2:7-15)

- Freedom is the God given power to become who He created us to be. (Gal 5:1)
- We need to practice our freedom responsibly.
- We have an *awesome* power and responsibility in our freedom. We are free to choose God. We are also free to reject Him. (What's the most powerful thing a human can do? [BK] Realize that you choose your eternal destiny. You choose Heaven or Hell. That's a LOT of freedom!)
- ****Christ's Laws are not given to us arbitrarily, but are specifically given to us for a life of happiness with him.**

IV. REALITY OF SIN AND GOD'S MERCY: (Lk 15:11-32) We can't speak about a life In Christ or morality without understanding our sin and the mercy of God to forgive.

(Lk 15, Mt 1:21, Mt 26:28, 1 Jn 8-9, Rom 5:20, Rom 5:21, Ps 51:4, Gen 3:5, Phil 2:6-9, Jn 14:30; Gal 5:19-29, Rom 1:28-32, 1 Cor 9-10, Eph 5:3-5, Col 3:5-8, 1 Tim 9-10, 2 Tim 2-5, Mt 15:19-20, 1 Jn 16:17, Mk 10:19, Mk 3:5-6)

- **SIN:** (CCC 1850) Sin is defined in the catechism as an offense against God; refusal to accept God's will; affects our relationship **with God, and with others**. "Clouds our intellect, and darkens our will." **CCC 1850 Sin is an offense against God: "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight."¹²² Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it. Like the first sin, it is disobedience, a revolt against God through the will to become "like gods,"¹²³ knowing and determining good and evil. Sin is thus "love of oneself even to contempt of God."¹²⁴ In this proud self-exaltation, sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience of Jesus, which achieves our salvation.¹²⁵*
 - Original and Actual (2 types)
 - Actual: **Mortal or Venial** (2 degrees) I'm not going to cover this in as much depth since the Sisters and Father did such a great job talking about it on Saturday. But I do want to make sure you understand the 3 elements that determine the severity of sin.

**CCC1854-1855: IV. THE GRAVITY OF SIN: MORTAL AND VENIAL SIN*

1854 Sins are rightly evaluated according to their gravity. The distinction between mortal and venial sin, already evident in Scripture,¹²⁹ became part of the tradition of the Church. It is corroborated by human experience. **1855** Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him. Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it.

- (skip this) Mortal Sin – Grievous offenses against God; Destroys charity in our hearts; removes us from a state of grace.
- **To be Mortal Sin, 3 elements must exist:**
 - Grievous or grave matter**; *directly against one of the commandments.

Full Knowledge *that act is gravely wrong; AND **Full Consent**

-If not confessed, we are cut off from our state of grace.

- **Venial Sins** – Less serious; weakens charity, allows it to subsist though it wounds it; can lead to more serious sin.
- **Habitual Sin** – Tendencies towards evil.
- **Seven Capital Sins** – Lead to other sins and other vices: *Pride, Avarice (extreme greed or wealth for material gain), Envy, Wrath, Lust, Gluttony, Sloth*. See the **handout with the Deadly Sins and the opposite Heavenly Virtues**. *Instead of struggling to remove a habitual sin, or weakness, we should work on cultivating the opposite virtue.

** Always want to be in a state of grace. There really is a Hell.

V. **WHAT DO MORAL ACTS CONSIST OF?** Every Moral Act consists of (Mt 6:2-4) (Ps 4:2)

- Objective act (what we do)
- Subjective act (why we do it)
- Concrete situation (where, how, with whom...)
- All 3 elements of the acts must **be good** to have **a morally good act**
 - the objective act has to be good, the subjective act has to be good, and the circumstance has to be good

EXAMPLE:

IVF - A little of my personal story. As you all know, and is very obvious, our daughters are adopted. In our fertility struggle... we tried IVF. At the time, I really didn't want to look into the Church's teaching on it. Our desire for a child was good. The child we were trying to create is good. IVF is not morally good. The ends don't justify the means. God had a plan for us. We were getting in the way. The way we tried to do it was selfish. We are SO grateful that God didn't allow *our* plan to work. We never would have met Megan and Allie otherwise. I can't even imagine not having them in our lives. He went to a lot of trouble to make us a family.

VI. **FORMATION OF CONSCIENCE:** (Mt 7:12, Lk 6:31, Tob 4:15, 1 Cor 8:12, Rom 14:21, 1 Tim 5, 2 Tim 3, 1 Pet 3:21, Acts 24:16)

(CCC 1796) We are responsible for correctly forming a right conscience. Like I said in my example, I didn't want to look into the Church's teaching on IVF. I wanted to do things my way. But I did not have peace.

- "Conscience is a judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act" (CCC 1796)
- We need help to discover God's laws.
- Conscience already recognizes right and wrong from observing creation – the 10 Commandments flow from that.

- They are already written on our hearts, but sin makes us unable to perceive it with accuracy.
- Each baptized follower of Christ is obliged to form his or her conscience according to objective moral standards.
- A good conscience requires lifelong formation. Done through reading scripture, study, prayer, and practice.
- Both prudent advice and good example of others and the authoritative teaching of the Church are essential elements in our conscience formation.
- We must always try to acknowledge and fix a flawed conscience.
- The gifts of the Holy Spirit combined with regular examination of our conscience, will help us develop a morally sensitive conscience.

HELP FROM GOD NEEDED

- I. **GRACE** (Jn 1:12-18, Jn 17:13, Rom 8:14-17, 2 Pet 1:3-4, 1 or 1 Cor 2:7-9, Jn 4:14, Jn 7: 38-39; 2 Cor 5:17-18, 1 Cor 12, Rom 12:6-8)
- **SANCTIFYING GRACE** (CCC 1266) “The grace received at Baptism that produces in the soul a permanent disposition that enables the believer to live according to the Gospel.”
 - Abiding presence of God in our soul. – it is a free gift of God to sanctify our souls.
 - Sanctifying grace is a state in which God allows us to share in his life and love. When we speak of being in the state of grace, we mean the state of sanctifying grace. There is no mortal sin in us. This grace comes to us in baptism.
 - allows us to become children of God, to share in the divine nature, and to inherit eternal life. We need it to go to Heaven.
 - We can lose this state of grace with mortal sin, the life of Christ will not be active in us; but we can regain it through the Sacrament of Confession.
 - **SACRAMENTAL GRACE**
 - All the sacraments have particular effects according to their individual purpose. These graces flow from the Sacraments.
 - **ACTUAL GRACE**
 - “Actual grace is a supernatural intervention of God given to help the Christian in a particular circumstance or at a certain point in his vocation.”
 - Special help in a circumstance to do good and avoid evil, also initial prompting to be good.
 - The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are actual graces. They are given to build up the Church.
 - It is a supernatural push or encouragement.
 - It gets our will and intellect moving so we can seek out and keep sanctifying grace.

- **Horton note** - Cup analogy - open to grace, venial sin (side), mortal sin (upside down) - Confession opens it up again.

The point is not so much the terminology of grace but the reality behind these terms which is a real sharing in and communion with God in the Trinity. He is always the initiator in our relationship and so His gift of grace comes first.

SANCTIFYING GRACE

-GIVES US THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE (CCC 1840-1841)

-STRENGTHENS AND HELPS US DEVELOP THE HUMAN VIRTUES CALL MORAL VIRTUES

(CCC 1810; 1805)

-GIVES US THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (CCC 1831) (1 Jn 4:19, Isa 11:1-2, Ps 143:10, Rom 8:14, 17, Gal 5:22-23)

*helps those who receive them respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit

-HELPS US TO ACT ACCORDING TO THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (CCC 1832)*

*joy, peace, patience, kindness goodness, gentleness.....just a few

-HELPS US TO PERFORM SPIRITUAL AND CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY. (CCC 2447)

*specific spiritual and physical ways of helping others. Feeding the hungry; Comforting the sorrowful.

II. VIRTUES: (CCC 1833, 1834, 1841) - Need these to live a Christian life.

(Phil 4.8; Wis 8.7)

A VIRTUE is the habit of doing what is good.

*Just as a skilled pilot easily handles ordinary situations in a cockpit, so a virtuous person easily does what is good.

THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES: GOD GIVEN: **Faith, Hope and Love** (1 Cor 13:13)

*Theological Virtues are given to use through Sanctifying Grace

*Theological Virtues give us the grace to have a supernatural relationship with the Holy Spirit.

- *Virtue of Faith* – enables us to believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us including all that the Church teaches. (Rom 1:17; Gal 5:6, Mt 10:32-33)
- *Virtue of Hope* – enables us to desire eternal happiness and to trust in Christ and His promises to obtain it. (Heb 10:23, Titus 3:6-7, Rom 4:18, Rom 5:5, Heb 6:19-20, 1 Thess 5:8; Rom 12:12, Mt 7:21, Mt 10:22, 1 Tim 2:4)
- *Virtue of Love (Charity)* – enables us to love God above all things for His own sake and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. (Jn 13:34, Jn 13:1, Jn 15:9, 12, Rom 13:8-10, Rom 5:10, Lk 10:27-37, Mk 9:37, Mt 25:40, 45, 1 Cor 13: 4-7, 1 Cor 13:1-4, 1 Cor 13:13, Col 3:14, 1 Jn 4:19)

Summary – You can be naturally good (Gandhi was good), but that's different than what a saint is. Baptism changes you. It gives you the Theological Virtues. You have human virtues already, but Baptism gives you Divine virtues.

Baptism infuses your soul with grace. He gives you Faith, Hope and love – not the human version, but the Divine version. These are vertical virtues. It's how Christians are called to live.

What do you do to be a Christian in your every day? How do you begin your day?

Help me to love better. Help me to Trust You today. Help me to hope in Your promises.

Our Christian life is a life of believing, hoping and loving!

MORAL VIRTUES: And just so you've heard the term ~

- **CARDINAL VIRTUES** – All moral virtues are grouped around these.
- These virtues are further developed with the help of sanctifying grace
 - Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance
 - “Cardinal” comes from the word “hinged”; All other virtues hinge on these **Cardinal Virtues**. (Skip the rest unless questions come up.)
 - *Prudence* – helps us to know true good and choose the right means to achieving it
(Prov 14:15, 1 Pet 4-7)
 - *Justice* – helps us to give what is owed to God and others (Lev 19:15) (Col 4:1)
 - *Fortitude* – helps us resist temptations and overcome obstacles (moderates fear)
(Ps 118:14, Jn 16:33)
 - *Temperance* – helps us to moderate our desire for pleasurable goods; helps us control our enjoyment of sensual pleasures. (Sir 5:2, Sir 18:30, Titus 2:12)