

Gifts of Finest Wheat

Fall 2010 – Fundamental Moral Theology

September 30th, 2010

Session 1 – Intro to Moral Theology; Morality and the Human Person

What is Moral Theology?

- Theology is the study of God, and all things as they are related to God.
- “Faith seeking understanding” (St. Anselm)
- Moral theology then is the study of our human acts in relation to God.
- Moral theology is the study or “endeavor... to come to know who we are and what we are to do if we are to be fully the beings we are meant to be” (William May, An Introduction to Moral Theology)
- Ethics undertaken when our intellects are informed by faith.
- These sessions: fundamental principles rather than specific areas of application

Sources of Moral Theology

- Reason
- Scripture
 - Covenant relationship
 - Christ as the model of human activity – Christ “fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling” (GS 22).
 - Certain moral regulations: Ten Commandments, The Sermon on the Mount, Pauline exhortations
 - Not a moral theology text book or systematic presentation
- Tradition
 - Certain moral obligations are, and always have been, part of the Church’s lived reality
 - The *Magisterium*...in moral matters is ordinarily exercised in catechesis and preaching, with the help of the works of theologians and spiritual authors. Thus from generation to generation, under the aegis and vigilance of the pastors, the "deposit" of Christian moral teaching has been handed on, a deposit composed of a characteristic body of rules, commandments, and virtues proceeding from faith in Christ and animated by charity... (CCC 2033)
- The Magisterium’s Competency in Moral Teaching
 - The Church, the "pillar and bulwark of the truth," "has received this solemn command of Christ from the apostles to announce the saving truth." "To the Church belongs the right always and everywhere to announce moral principles, including those pertaining to the social order, and to make judgments on any human affairs to

the extent that they are required by the fundamental rights of the human person or the salvation of souls." (CCC 2032)

- The Roman Pontiff and the bishops are "authentic teachers, that is, **teachers endowed with the authority of Christ**, who preach the faith to the people entrusted to them, the faith to be believed and put into practice." (CCC 2034)
- The supreme degree of participation in the authority of Christ is ensured by the charism of *infallibility*. This infallibility extends as far as does the deposit of divine Revelation; it also extends to all those elements of doctrine, **including morals**, without which the saving truths of the faith cannot be preserved, explained, or observed. (CCC 2035)
- The authority of the Magisterium extends also to the **specific precepts of the natural law**, because their observance, demanded by the Creator, is necessary for salvation. (CCC 2036)

The Human Person: Anthropology and Moral Theology

The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God (*article 1*); it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude (*article 2*). It is essential to a human being freely to direct himself to this fulfillment (*article 3*). By his deliberate actions (*article 4*), the human person does, or does not, conform to the good promised by God and attested by moral conscience (*article 5*)... (CCC 1700)

- Created in the image and likeness of God
 - The divine image is present in every man. It shines forth in **the communion of persons**, in the likeness of the unity of the divine persons among themselves (CCC 1702)
 - Endowed with "a spiritual and immortal" soul, the human person is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake." From his conception, he is **destined for eternal beatitude**. (CCC 1703)
 - The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By **his reason**, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By **free will**, he is capable of **directing himself toward his true good**. He finds his perfection "in seeking and loving what is true and good." (CCC 1704)
- Intellect, Will, Passions
 - Intellect → Knows the Truth
 - Will → Chooses the good
 - Passions → propel us to do the good and avoid evil
 - The human person is ordered to beatitude by his deliberate acts: the passions or feelings he experiences can dispose him to it and contribute to it. (CCC 1762)
 - The term "passions" belongs to the Christian patrimony. Feelings or passions are emotions...that incline us to act or not to act in regard to something felt or imagined to be good or evil. (CCC 1763)
 - There are many passions. The most fundamental passion is love, aroused by the attraction of the good. Love causes a desire for the absent good and the hope of obtaining it; this movement finds completion in the pleasure and joy

of the good possessed. The apprehension of evil causes hatred, aversion, and fear of the impending evil; this movement ends in sadness at some present evil, or in the anger that resists it. (CCC 1765)

- In themselves passions are neither good nor evil. They are morally qualified only to the extent that they effectively engage reason and will. Passions are said to be voluntary, "either because they are commanded by the will or because the will does not place obstacles in their way." **It belongs to the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions be governed by reason.** (CCC 1767)
- Strong feelings are not decisive for the morality or the holiness of persons; they are simply the inexhaustible reservoir of images and affections in which the moral life is expressed. Passions are morally good when they contribute to a good action, evil in the opposite case. The upright will orders the movements of the senses it appropriates to the good and to beatitude; an evil will succumbs to disordered passions and exacerbates them. (CCC 1768)
- **Moral perfection consists in man's being moved to the good not by his will alone, but also by his sensitive appetite,** as in the words of the psalm: "My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God." (CCC 1770)

○ **Thus, moral truth is determined by the intellect, by reason, not by emotion or sentiment**

- Intellect → Will → Passions
- Original Sin darkens the intellect and weakens the will
- Passions → Will → Intellect

- Acting for an end
 - What is our "end?" What is our greatest good? Our mission?
 - We begin at the end. This is the end that will define our means. If we don't know the end, we won't know the best means to get there.
 - Happiness (Blessedness/Beatitude)
 1. Everyone wants it
 2. Everyone wants it as an end, not a means to another end
 3. Everyone seeks it by means of everything else
 - More than mere feelings of contentedness. Objective, true, real blessedness.
 - Not only to feel happy, but to be happy.

What does happiness consist in? What is its content?

- Wealth
 - Couldn't possibly be our end, since it's only used as a means to other ends.
 - Natural wealth serves as a remedy to our natural wants: food, drink, clothing, etc.
 - Artificial wealth (money) is a convenience of exchange.
 - Both are means, not ends. Natural wealth is sought for the sake of support of human nature. Artificial wealth (money) is not sought except as a means to natural wealth. Money is not an end. It is a means to a means.

- Honors
 - Happiness is in the happy person, but honor is not in the honored person, but in the honor-er.
 - Honor is given on account of some excellence in him; so it is a sign or attestation of an excellence. It mistakes the sign for the thing it signified.
- Fame/Glory –
 - Happiness is man's true good, but fame or glory can be false.
 - "For glory consists "in being well known and praised"... Now the thing known is related to human knowledge otherwise than to God's knowledge: for human knowledge is caused by the things known, whereas God's knowledge is the cause of the things known. Wherefore the perfection of human good, which is called happiness, cannot be caused by human knowledge: but rather human knowledge of another's happiness proceeds from, and, in a fashion, is caused by, human happiness itself.... Consequently man's happiness cannot consist in fame or glory."
- Power (Freedom)
 - "It is impossible for happiness to consist in power; and this for two reasons. First because power has the nature of principle [beginning]...whereas happiness has the nature of last end."
 - "Secondly, because power has relation to [is open to] good and evil: whereas happiness is man's proper and perfect good. Wherefore some happiness might consist in the good use of power, which is by virtue, rather than in power itself."
- Bodily good/health
 - "Man surpasses all other animals in regard to happiness. But in bodily goods he is surpassed by many animals; for instance, by the elephant in longevity, by the lion in strength, by the stag in fleetness. Therefore man's happiness does not consist in goods of the body."
 - "...if a thing be ordained to another as to its end, its last end cannot consist in the preservation of its being. Hence a captain does not intend as a last end, the preservation of the ship entrusted to him, since a ship is ordained to something else as its end, viz. to navigation. Now just as the ship is entrusted to the captain that he may steer its course, so man is given over to his will and reason... Now it is evident that man is ordained to something as his end: since man is not the supreme good. Therefore the last end of man's reason and will cannot be the preservation of man's being."
 - "For man's being consists in soul and body; and though the being of the body depends on the soul, yet the being of the human soul depends not on the body...and the very body is for the soul...as the instruments for the man that puts them into motion, that by their means he may do his work. Wherefore all goods of the body are ordained to the goods of the soul, as to their end. Consequently happiness, which is man's last end, cannot consist in goods of the body."
- Pleasure
 - "...every delight is a proper accident resulting from happiness, or from some part of happiness; since the reason that a man is delighted is that he has some fitting good, either in reality, or in hope, or at least in memory... Therefore it is evident

that neither is delight, which results from the perfect good, the very essence of happiness, but something resulting from it...”

- Pleasure means being pleased. There has to be a reason for our being pleased. Pleasure is a byproduct or property of whatever makes us happy.
- You can't be delighted or pleased by nothing. It is from something. We need to search for that something.
- Good of the soul/virtue – intellectual or moral virtue
 - “If, then, we speak of man's last end, it is impossible for man's last end to be the soul itself or something belonging to it. Because the soul, considered in itself, is as something existing in potentiality: for it becomes knowing actually, from being potentially knowing; and actually virtuous, from being potentially virtuous. Now since potentiality is for the sake of act as for its fulfillment, that which in itself is in potentiality cannot be the last end. Therefore the soul itself cannot be its own last end.”
 - If the soul were its own last end, that would be like a moving bullet being its own target.
- Any created good (anything except God!)
 - “It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone... Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man... Therefore God alone constitutes man's happiness.”