

Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil

Answer Key

Group 1

1. The “goodness and perfection” of Creation is discussed in paragraph 302. If God created everything good, why aren’t things “perfect”?
 - Creation did not spring forth in complete perfection from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created “in a state of journeying” toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained.
2. Paraphrase paragraph 302. What does *Divine Providence* mean?
 - The disposition by which God guides his creation toward the “ultimate perfection yet to be attained.”
3. Read paragraph 302. What does *Divine Providence* NOT mean?
 - Saying that God *guides* his creation is not the same thing as saying that God *controls* creation.

Group 2

4. According to paragraph 304, what does the Holy Spirit often do in Sacred Scripture?
 - The Holy Spirit often attributes actions to God “without mentioning any secondary causes.”
5. Read paragraphs 304–306. Who or what are “secondary causes”? Why are they a sign of God’s “greatness and goodness” and not “weakness”?
 - We (human beings) are “secondary causes.” God makes use of human cooperation.
 - This is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God’s greatness and goodness, because God grants us the dignity of acting on our own, of cooperating in the accomplishment of his plan.
6. Read paragraphs 306–308. Identify three specific actions that you or people you know have done recently that could be considered “secondary causes.”
 - Answers might include: reuse things—if you no longer wear it or need it, give it to someone who does need it; recycle what can’t be reused; buy recycled products; use canvas bags, or recycle paper or plastic bags when shopping; compost food scraps and leaves or grass clipping; use less electricity; waste less food; use less water; plant things; be good to others; respect wildlife; use cloth napkins instead of paper napkins; car pool; don’t support companies that pollute or engage in environmentally damaging practices or exploit people; use natural fertilizer on your lawn; don’t buy exotic pets; let your elected officials know that the environment matters to you, telling them that you want clean air, clean water, national parks, and wildlife and habitat protection.



Group 3

7. Paraphrase the question at the beginning of paragraph 309, and explain where we can find the answer to that question.
- If God created an orderly and good world and truly cares for his creation, then why does evil exist? Only Christian faith as a whole constitutes the answer to this question. There is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil.
8. Paraphrase the question at the beginning of paragraph 310.
- Some examples:
- Why didn't God create a world so perfect that no evil could exist in it?
 - With infinite power couldn't God create something better?
9. How does the rest of paragraph 310 answer this question?
- God created the world "in a state of journeying" towards its ultimate perfection. With physical good, there exists also physical evil as long as creation has not reached perfection.
 - What are some ways you can help creation move toward perfection?
- See answer to question 6.

Group 4

10. What does paragraph 311 say about God and the "cause of moral evil"¹?
- God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil.
11. What are the two reasons evil is *permitted*, according to paragraph 311?
- God permits evil because he respects the freedom of his creatures.
 - God permits evil because he mysteriously knows how to derive good from the consequences of evil.
12. Read paragraph 312. If the Passion and death of Jesus Christ brought about our redemption, does that mean that the rejection and murder of God's only Son was a *good* thing? Why or why not?
- The Passion and death of Jesus Christ (the rejection and murder of God's only Son, caused by the sins of all men) is "the greatest moral evil ever committed."
 - God's goodness and grace in the Resurrection and Ascension "brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption."
 - "But for all that, evil never becomes a good."



Final Reflection Question: Do you think the saying “everything happens for a reason” reflects the Church’s teaching expressed in these paragraphs from the *Catechism*? Explain.

No, it doesn’t reflect the Church’s teaching. Through Divine Providence, God *guides* his creation toward the “ultimate perfection yet to be attained,” but he does not control it. We (human beings) are “secondary causes.” God makes use of human cooperation. God grants us the dignity of acting on our own, of cooperating in the accomplishment of his plan.

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Endnote Cited in a Quotation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition

1. Cf. St. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, 1, 1, 2; J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris, 1857–1866) 32, 1223; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I–II, 79, 1.

