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Unit 1 Reading Guide Answer Key

Foundational Principles for Christian Morality

Chapter 1: Moral Choices and God's Plan

Article 1: Created for Love and Happiness

1. God's Revelation made known to us through Scripture and Tradition is based on one core truth: God created human beings to live in loving relationship with him.
2. Even when we know the truth, the effects of Original Sin make it difficult to live as God calls us to live.
3. When we make choices to follow Christ, we participate in God's saving plan and will know true peace and happiness.
4. Having a soul means that God has given us the ability to be in communion with him in a way that is not limited by time or space.
5. Our intellect allows us to distinguish between what is truly good and what only appears to be good.
6. The gift of free will makes it possible for us to choose the good that our reason enables us to understand.

Article 2: Genesis, Chapter 3: Freedom and Original Sin

1. Although God wants each of us to live in perfect communion with him, he doesn't force us to do so.
2. Although circumstances may weaken our ability to choose good over evil, our free will—and the responsibility that comes with it—cannot be taken away.
3. Do not expect biblical etiologies to be scientific explanations about the causes of things. Rather, they creatively illustrate spiritual truths, rooted in the deep faith of the ancient Israelites.
4. With the loss of Adam and Eve's friendship with God, we lost the grace of original justice, which was the harmony within ourselves, with one another, and with all creation.
5. Because of concupiscence, our will is weakened, and we have an inclination to sin.



Article 3: The Beatitudes: New Life in Christ

1. The inspiring stories of the Old Testament reveal to us that after Adam and Eve's sin, God was at work to get human beings to turn away from sin and to turn toward him.
2. In calling us to place our faith in him, Christ calls us to an entirely new vision of life. This vision is expressed in the Beatitudes.
3. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, / for they will be satisfied" (Matthew 5:3–12).
4. A life of beatitude purifies our hearts and prepares us for the eternal happiness and joy that will come when we enter into perfect communion with the Holy Trinity in Heaven.
5. Called by God the Father, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and guided by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we constantly grow closer to the Holy Trinity through our moral choices.

Article 4: Justification and Sanctification

1. We are saved through God's work, not our own efforts. Our primary goal in Christian morality is to collaborate with God's grace, not to try to earn our way into Heaven.
2. The process by which God's grace frees us from sin and sanctifies us (makes us holy) is called justification.
3. The Holy Spirit is the one who prompts us and moves us toward conversion of heart. His grace justifies us in Baptism, freeing us from Original Sin and personal sins, and his grace continues to make us holy, or sanctifies us, as we cooperate with him to do good and avoid evil.
4. Ignatius came to believe that modeling one's life on the example of Christ was a worthy goal and eventually became convinced that such a life would be more satisfying than life in a royal court.
5. In the theological sense, having merit means that God sees us as justified persons, free from sin and sanctified by his grace.

Chapter 2: The Law of God

Article 5: God's Eternal Law

1. Our loving Creator placed in his creation an order that reflects himself. We sometimes call this order Divine Law or Eternal Law.
2. Moral law comes from God and is a rational expression of Eternal Law. Moral law governs the relationships human beings have with God and with one another.
3. If we listen to our conscience and follow moral law, we will live in loving communion with God now and forever. This is why every person is obliged to follow moral law.



Article 6: Natural Moral Law

1. Natural Law is the moral law that can be understood through the use of human reason. It is our God-given ability to understand what it means to be in right relationship with God, other people, the world, and ourselves.
2. The Golden Rule is a good example of a natural moral law. Call it common sense or basic moral sense, but natural law dictates that we should treat people the way we want to be treated.
3. Greek philosophy, particularly the teachings of the philosopher Aristotle, was one of the earliest expressions of natural law.
4. In the first chapter of the Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul explains why every person is responsible for the consequences of their sins.
5. Centuries later, Saint Augustine also appeals to the natural moral law to explain how all people, Christian or not, know in their hearts what is right.
6. Unfortunately, our ability to know the natural law is weakened because of Original Sin. Original Sin weakens our human nature, and we are subject to ignorance, suffering, and death.

Article 7: Law and the Old Testament

1. The Law of Moses, also called the Old Law, is the first stage of God's Revelation to us about how we are to live as people made in his image.
2. The Old Law is summarized in the Ten Commandments that God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments are also referred to as the Decalogue.
3. The Jewish name for the first five books of the Bible is the Torah. The Hebrew word torah is sometimes translated as "law," but it is better translated as "instruction."
4. Through the covenant, God sought to restore the loving communion that was lost through Original Sin. As part of the covenant, the Ten Commandments taught the Israelites how to live in loving relationship with God and with one another.
5. The Ten Commandments show what must be done, but they do not give us the strength, or the grace of the Holy Spirit, to do it.

Article 8: Law and the New Testament

1. When Jesus established the New Covenant he also taught a New Law, which fulfilled and completed the Old Law. This New Law, also called the Law of the Gospel, is the perfection of God's moral law, both natural and revealed.
2. Although Jesus' New Law is found in many different places throughout the Gospels, he taught the core of it in his Sermon on the Mount.



3. Many of the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount begin with Jesus saying, “You have heard that it was said . . .” after which he quotes a law from the Old Testament. Jesus then teaches the true meaning of that law. With this formula, Jesus is showing us that his New Law does not abolish or devalue the Old Law but instead releases its full potential.
4. The two Great Commandments emphasize that the heart of the New Law is love. These two commandments were not new; they were part of the Old Law.
5. Jesus calls us to a deeper love because he wants to give us the grace of the Holy Spirit, the very love of God in our hearts, to carry out his commandments. That is why the New Law is called the Law of Love.
6. It is truly amazing that God wrote the natural law into the hearts and minds of all people, made it even clearer in the Ten Commandments, and when we still didn’t get it, the Father sent his Son, who became one of us to reveal the Law of Love, the perfection of the Divine Law.

Article 9: Moral Law and the Church

1. Christ has given the Church the responsibility of being a light to the world and a model of his New Law. The Church does this through the witness of her members and by teaching the world Christ’s Law of Love.
2. The Precepts of the Church provide us with general guidance in living a Christian life, and the Church’s Canon Law provides specific rules to maintain good order within the visible society of the Church.
3. God has given the Magisterium—the bishops of the world united with the Pope—the responsibility for passing on and teaching his revealed truth. Revelation includes moral truth, and so the Magisterium has the responsibility for teaching the fullness of the New Law of Christ first to the Church and to the entire world.
4. When the Pope and the bishops agree on a matter of faith and morals, they speak with infallibility. This means that the Holy Spirit guides them to teach the truths, or doctrines, of our faith without error.

Chapter 3: Sin and Its Consequences

Article 10: Sin in the Old Testament

1. Sin and death were not part of God’s plan for human beings. Throughout history, God has worked to save us from our slavery to sin and death.
2. One key idea about sin, especially in the Old Testament, is that sin is rebellious against God.
3. The Hebrew word in the Old Testament most commonly translated as sin is *chatâ*, a word that means “to miss,” as in an archer missing his target. This concept points to another key understanding of sin, that sin is missing the goal of living a life in harmony with God’s Eternal Law.
4. Under the Old Covenant, there was a tendency for the Israelites to think you would be punished for sin or rewarded for virtue in this life, rather than the next.



5. Contrary to these misunderstandings about the consequences for sin, the Church teaches us that we should not think of punishment for sin as some kind of vengeance inflicted on us by God; rather, punishment for sin flows directly from the nature of sin.
6. Further, our sins don't just harm us though; they injure others (including family members) but not as a punishment from God. By its very nature, our sin affects the entire community, just as our acts of virtue build up the entire community.

Article 11: Sin in the New Testament

1. Other Greek words associated with sin in the New Testament are *paraptoma* and *parabasis*, which can be translated as "transgression," and *anomia*, which is usually translated as "lawlessness."
2. Jesus is revealing an important insight about sin: every sin is a lie against the truth, a lie about what truly brings God's saving love and joy into the world.
3. Sinful acts are done in darkness—not literal darkness, of course, but metaphorical darkness. Most people keep their sins secret because they are ashamed of them, because deep in their hearts they know that their actions are lies against God's truth and are wrong.
4. In his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul speaks at length about sin, its effects, and how we are freed from it. He teaches that Jews and Greeks (meaning all non-Jews) are "all under the domination of sin" (3:9). A few verses later, he says, "All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God" (verse 23).
5. The emphasis on forgiving sin is the heart of the New Law, the Law of Love. Christ teaches us that God is primarily waiting to forgive us, not to condemn us.
6. Paul confirms the teaching of the Old Testament—sin leads to death. We have all sinned and we all will die. But Paul adds something new: Death is not the end! Because of his obedient, loving sacrifice, Jesus Christ opened the doors to life after death, eternal life in Heaven for all who believe in him.

Article 12: Requirements for Sin

1. Sin is primarily an offense against God; it is rebellion against God's will and his desire that we live in loving communion with him and with one another. It is a rejection of God's love for us.
2. Sin can be a deed or act, of course. But sin can also be a word. Words can be used to reject God, to tell lies, or to hurt other people through gossip, libel, or cruel remarks. Thoughts can also be sins—not the thoughts that enter our heads unbidden and we quickly dismiss, but the thoughts of revenge, lust, envy, or domination that we dwell on and keep alive.
3. Three elements determine the morality of any human act: (1) the object, that is, the specific thing the person is choosing to do, (2) the intention of the person doing the action, and (3) the circumstances surrounding the act.
4. For an act to be morally good, the object, intention, and circumstances must all be good.
5. The circumstances surrounding a situation can affect how good or bad an act is.



Article 13: Types of Sin

1. A sin of commission is a sin that is the direct result of a freely chosen thought, word, or deed.
2. A sin of omission is a sin that is the result of a failure to do something required by God's moral law.
3. A mortal sin is a serious offense against God, one that destroys within us the virtue of charity, which helps us to love God and our neighbor. A mortal sin involves serious immoral acts, or what the Church calls "grave matter."
4. Venial sins are less serious than mortal sins because they do not destroy our relationship with God and our ability to love. But they do damage these things.
5. Venial sins are closely associated with vices. Vices are the opposite of virtues, which are habits of good actions. When we keep repeating sins, even venial ones, we are in danger of forming bad habits, called vices.
6. Church doctrine identifies and cautions against seven particularly harmful sins. They are sometimes referred to as capital sins—meaning "most serious or influential"—because they lead to and reinforce all sorts of other sinful actions, thoughts, and omissions.

Article 14: Social Sin

1. Social sin is the impact that every personal sin has on other people; sin that directly attacks others' life, freedom, dignity, or rights; and the collective effect of many people's sins over time, which corrupts society and its institutions by creating "structures of sin."
2. Social justice is the defense of human dignity by ensuring that essential human needs are met and that essential human rights are protected for all people.
3. Every group, every culture, every nation—if it wants to be just—must make preserving the dignity of each person the highest priority in its planning, its laws, and its organizational structure.
4. We ensure the common good by making sure that all persons' basic needs are met and their human rights are respected.
5. States have the authority and responsibility to defend and promote the common good; it is the primary reason they exist. This authority comes from God.
6. Social sin happens when a sinful attitude or action becomes so commonly accepted that it goes unchallenged by most people. Social sin can actually become a part of society's law.

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