

Introduction to Christian Morality

Lesson 23 Summary

Lesson Learning Objectives

- The participants will be introduced to the Church's teaching on morality.
- The participants will apply the three elements for determining the morality of individual human actions: the action itself, the intent, and the circumstances.

Content Summary

1. Morality deals with the goodness or evil of human acts, attitudes, and values. It involves matters such as right judgment, decision-making skills, personal freedom, and responsibility.
2. The foundation of morality is found in Scripture and Tradition. We are made in God's image and are first and foremost essentially good. When we choose wisely, we are acting in accordance with our true nature. This is why doing the right thing ultimately makes us happy.
3. Our source of happiness is not material success, fame, or unending hours of leisure and pleasure. Rather, our ultimate destiny is to be eternally happy with God in Heaven.
4. Being made in God's image does not make us perfect; God gave us a soul, intellect, and free will to make our own choices. Free will means that we have the freedom to accept or reject God's will and that we are responsible for the choices we make.
5. God created us in his image with a natural desire to follow the moral law, to do good and avoid evil. At the same time, because of Original Sin, we are inclined toward sin.
6. The ability to use reason to distinguish between right and wrong is the work of our conscience. Our conscience is the interior voice that helps us to know right from wrong and then to act on that knowledge.
7. Three elements determine the morality of any human action: (1) whether the action itself (the object) is inherently good or evil, (2) the intention of the person doing the action, and (3) the circumstances of the action. All three of these elements help to determine whether a particular act is good or bad.
8. When we choose to do wrong instead of doing good, we commit sin, and we hurt our relationship with our self, with others, and with God. Sin is any word that we speak, action that we perform, or desire that we have that is contrary to God's Law.
9. Christian morality, then, is being the person God created you to be—a person who chooses to be good. You grow into a moral person by choosing good acts, carefully examining your motives to be sure your intentions are good, and avoiding circumstances that lessen your ability to choose freely.

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