

My Catholic Morals! Study Group

Session 2 - The Law, Society, Grace and Salvation

Pre-meeting Prep

Participants should be asked to read Chapter Two of the *My Catholic Morals!* book prior to this meeting.

5 minutes - Gather

Snacks and informal social time as people arrive. Try to be punctual and gather everyone together no longer than 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time.

5-10 minutes - Opening prayer and Scripture

Everyone sits quietly as the leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and then invites a period of silence in the following way:

"Let us quiet ourselves as we begin this study of our glorious Catholic morals together. 'Lord, as we sit here for a minute in silence, help each one of us to bring our own questions, concerns, fears, and joys to You. Help us, in this moment of silence, to be attentive to Your gentle voice speaking to us, directing us, and calling us to a deeper faith.'"

Take about a minute in silence with eyes closed so that each person can speak to our Lord about their own particular cares and concerns.

Leader reads the following invitation:

Let us ponder the Word of God. Let us reflect upon our own faith journey with the following questions: Do I believe? How deep is my faith? Am I open to letting God speak to me? Am I open to the Word of God and willing to let God's truth sink in more deeply? Am I willing to let this new faith change my life?

The leader of the session prayerfully reads the following Scriptures, one at a time, pausing for about 30 seconds between each verse:

Psalm 1:1-3: Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the way* of sinners, nor sit in company with scoffers Rather, the law of the LORD* is his joy; and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted near streams of water, that yields its fruit in season; Its leaves never wither; whatever he does prospers.

Psalm 19: 8-12: The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right,

rejoicing the heart. The command of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eye. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The statutes of the LORD are true, all of them just; More desirable than gold, than a hoard of purest gold, Sweeter also than honey or drippings from the comb. By them your servant is warned, obeying them brings much reward.

Matthew 6:19-20: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal.

Romans 8:29-30: For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10: Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Leader then says: ***Let us take a moment in silence to reflect upon these words.*** (a minute of silence)

The Leader invites everyone to pray silently as the following prayer is prayed out loud:

Lord, help me to love Your law and all that You command. Help me to see that Your law is for my good and for the good of all. Your wisdom and decrees are good and right. May they guide my life now and always.

Lord, at times I am weak. Help me in my weakness. Help me to know that I am called to holiness of life and to take an abundance of delight in You and Your perfect plan. When I turn from You in sin, help me to always return to You in repentance seeking Your mercy.

Lord, You are my merciful Father and God. You are perfect in all things. Give me grace to live as You desire and to take true delight in all that You command.

Jesus, I trust in You.

The prayer time concludes with everyone professing the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

45-50 minutes - Discussion questions

Each person should be invited to share something or ask a question if he/she chooses regarding the questions/discussion starters below. Go through one question at a time, and give each person an opportunity to say something if he/she chooses. Avoid having one or two persons dominate the discussion. Go around the circle and do not be afraid to share! Your insights might assist someone else in their understanding of the topics. Your question might very well be the same question someone else has. Some of the questions below will invite a personal sharing; other questions will invite you to share with others what you read in the chapter for this discussion. The goal is to share personally and to make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

1. What is the “moral law” or the “divine law” of God? How is it similar to laws of nature, such as gravity? Discuss the parallel.
2. The natural law is engraved on the soul of every human being. We all know it. The divine law is understood and obtainable only through grace and revelation. Discuss the difference between these two laws.
3. Ecclesial laws are laws of the Church. Discuss the various ecclesial laws you are familiar with. Share thoughts on why they are instituted by the Church and are helpful for salvation.
4. Society is basically the gathering on Earth of humanity. It's ideally a reflection of Heaven. However, very often sin reigns in human society and does much damage to solidarity, communion, peace, etc. Discuss the culture in which you live. How is it a reflection of the life of the Trinity? And how does it also fail to imitate the life of the Trinity?
5. Legitimate civil authorities must enact laws that protect and foster the common good. However, sometimes these laws overreach and actually are not for the good. Discuss the current political situation in which you live and how current laws either help or hinder the common good.

6. Grace refers to all that God pours forth on us as a help to holiness. Discuss the meaning of these various types of grace:
 1. Actual Grace
 2. Sanctifying Grace
 3. Sacramental Grace
 4. Special Graces
7. How do you “Store up treasure in Heaven?” Discuss this teaching on merit. Sometimes Catholics are criticized for thinking that we earn salvation and grace. This is not our teaching. What do we believe about merit?
8. Holiness is not only for the saint; it’s for all of us. We all must strive to be holy and saintly. Discuss your personal journey toward holiness. What makes it difficult? What have you found has helped you the most on this journey?

20 minutes - Final Reflections and sharing - Go around and give each person an opportunity to share what might have stood out the most to them from the discussion or what left them the most confused, so as to gain further clarity or insight from others.

5 minutes - Closing prayer:

Leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and invites a minute of silence with all eyes closed. Each person should reflect upon what was discussed, especially what stood out to him/her the most.

Leader then prays the following prayer:

Lord, we read in the Psalms: “The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.” ***May each of us see Your Law as a blessing and gift. Help us each to embrace Your Law wholeheartedly with joy and refreshment.***

Lord, Your Law is given to us in many ways. It comes through nature, through revelation, through Your Church, and even through civil society at times. Help us to always discern Your Law and, in it, to discover Your will for our lives.

Lord, when Your Law is contrary to our own feelings and impulses, help us to choose Your Law and Your will over all else. Help us to let go of all that is contrary to Your truth and to keep our eyes and will fixed on You. Help us in our weakness, and give us wisdom and courage to always seek You out.

Jesus, I trust in You.

Leader then invites everyone present to offer their own prayer in the following way (Note: This can be done out loud, but it might be preferable if it's done in silence at the discretion of the leader):

Let us now each bring our own personal concerns before our Lord, trusting that He hears us and knows all we need. Let us entrust these prayers to Him with full confidence that He desires to take control.

(Take a minute of silence for each person to speak to God about their own personal needs).

Leader then invites everyone to close with the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.