

My Catholic Morals! Study Group

Session 5 - Murder, Anger, and Human Dignity

Pre-meeting Prep

Participants should be asked to read Chapter Five 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:

Exodus 20:13: You shall not kill.

Matthew 5:21-22: You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, “You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.” But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

1 Peter 3:8-11: Finally, all of you, be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble. Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on

the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing. For: “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking deceit, must turn from evil and do good, seek peace and follow after it.

Matthew 7:1-5: “Stop judging, that you may not be judged. For as you judge, so will you be judged, and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove that splinter from your eye,’ while the wooden beam is in your eye? You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother’s eye.”

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

The Leader invites everyone to listen quietly as the following prayer is prayed:

Lord of all Mercy, we thank You for Your perfect love for us and for Your burning Heart of Mercy. Help us, first and foremost, to be open to the love in Your Heart so that it may transform our lives. Help us also to become an instrument of that love for others.

Lord, please remove all anger, harshness, and bitterness in our hearts. Please forgive us and help us to forgive others who have hurt us. May the Mercy of Your Heart so consume us that we quickly and easily offer mercy and forgiveness to others.

Lord, help us also to see the incredible dignity alive in each person we encounter. Help us to begin by seeing the dignity of our own hearts and then to see You present in each and every person. May we have a profound respect for every person and love them as we love You.

Jesus, we 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 Chapter Five. The goal is to share personally and to make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

1. Direct and intentional homicide - Begin with an easy discussion. Why is intentional murder wrong? What are the motivating factors in such a murder?
2. Though the taking of another's life unjustly is always wrong, there are some factors that may diminish a person's guilt in their actions. Discuss these factors and discuss how they may diminish guilt. Especially try to discuss the difference between the *action* being gravely wrong while the *subjective guilt* may be diminished at the same time.
3. Abortion - This is a very controversial topic in our day and age, but it should be quite clear. Abortion is always contrary to the Will of God because it is the intentional taking of another innocent human life in its most vulnerable stage. With that said, there are many factors to consider regarding abortion. Most importantly, we must look at how we help those who have participated in abortion to heal from what they did. Discuss abortion openly and honestly, identifying the many factors that make this a difficult topic to discuss.
4. Suicide - Among the most painful aspects of human life is suicide. Though taking one's life is objectively wrong, there are often many psychological and emotional factors that lead up to it. Discuss those factors that can lead to despair, especially offering thoughts on how to reach out to those who have fallen into despair.
5. Euthanasia - Again, it is always wrong to take another's life, even under the guise of mercy killing. This can be difficult for many to accept because it can appear that, in some cases of great suffering, it's preferable to end one's life rather than to live an exceptionally "poor quality" of life. Discuss especially the value of one's life, even when there is much suffering present.
6. Related to euthanasia are many questions that come at the end of life. Here are two topics to discuss: ordinary care vs. treatment, and nutrition and hydration.

7. Justified killing - At times it is justified to take another's life. Some occasions are legitimate self-defense, the defense of another, just war, and the protection of society. Discuss these various factors that allow for, at times, the taking of another's life.
8. If you have time, discuss these topics using the teaching outlined in the book: in-vitro insemination, cloning, and organ transplant.

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 our God, I thank You for the profound love You have for me and for loving me in all things. I thank You for Your willingness to forgive and to heal the wounds caused by my sin. Help me, dear Jesus, to forgive as You forgive and to let go of all forms of anger in my life.

Jesus, help me to especially love my family and those close to me. Where there is hurt, bring healing. Where there is division, please bring unity.

Lord, please bring Your Mercy into the lives of those who struggle with anger and hate the most. Please forgive those who have taken the life of another and help them to truly repent so as to receive Your forgiveness and healing. Be with mothers who are considering abortions and with children who care for aged and infirm parents. Help me to see the value and dignity of every human life and to treat all people with the love and respect they deserve.

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.