



LESSON TWENTY-FIVE

The Christian Moral Life: Knowing Right from Wrong

Opening Prayer

*Lord,
Teach my heart to delight in your ways,
not the shifting paths of the world.
Give me the courage to choose what is right,
even when it is hard or unseen.
Form my conscience in truth and mercy
that I may walk humbly with you
and love as you love.*

Amen.



Lesson Objectives:

- ❖ Understand that morality is not subjective, that there are objective standards grounded in God's love, and that there are very real differences between right and wrong.
- ❖ Understand the role of conscience in moral decision-making, as the inner sanctuary where God's voice calls each person to truth and holiness.
- ❖ Learn the three sources that determine the morality of an act—the object, the intention, and the circumstances—and how all three must be good for an act to be morally good.
- ❖ Recognize the role of virtue and vice in the moral life.

BURNING QUESTIONS

- ❖ If God loves me no matter what, why does it matter how I live?

God's love is unconditional, and he forgives our sins. Why, then, do I need to be concerned with what the Church says is moral or immoral, sinful or not sinful?

- ❖ Is there even such a thing as morality?

What is right for me might seem wrong to someone else. Isn't that okay as long as no one is getting hurt? How can we know what is truly right or wrong?

St. Alphonsus Liguori

Feast Day: August 1

Lived: September 27, 1696 – August 1, 1787 · Marianella, Italy · Patron of Moral theologians, Vocations

A brilliant lawyer who became a doctor of canon and civil law at sixteen. After being devastated by losing a major case, Alphonsus abandoned law, became a priest, and worked among the poor in Naples. During that time, a rigid movement called Jansenism was distorting the Church's understanding of mercy, free will, and the sacraments, leaving many people fearful and shut out from the sacraments over scrupulosity. As a confessor, Alphonsus saw the damage this caused. He devoted himself to teaching priests a balanced moral theology, rooted more in pastoral situations rather than rigid abstraction, helping the Church recover a merciful understanding of conscience and sin. He founded the Redemptorist Order and was later named a Doctor of the Church.



“So great is God’s love for you that he seems to love no one but you.”

St. Alphonsus Liguori

Morality Is Not Subjective

Moral Relativism vs. Objective Truth

Our culture often operates on a “what's right for me” mentality; this is called moral relativism, the belief that truth shifts by person or situation. The Church instead proclaims a consistent moral teaching grounded not in opinion but in Christ’s teaching handed down through the apostles and authentically interpreted by the Magisterium of the Church. This is not restriction; it is a path toward true freedom and human flourishing.

Morality Is Rooted in Love

God has written deep within every human heart a law that calls us to choose the good and reject evil. This is a divine echo in our conscience that reveals who we are and what we were made for (see CCC 1776)—the imprint of God’s love on our very being. Morality is not about pleasure or convenience but the loving gift of oneself to God and others, even at personal cost.



“Love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Romans 13:10

Conscience and the Sources of Morality

The Duty to Form Our Conscience

“Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed” (CCC 1778). It is not simply a feeling; therefore, it must be formed, through Scripture, prayer, and the teaching of the Church, especially since Original Sin has clouded our natural ability to judge clearly. An unformed or poorly formed conscience can mislead us in good faith, which is why ongoing formation matters throughout life.

The Sources of a Moral Act

The morality of any human act depends on three elements working together: the object—what is actually done (is the action itself good, neutral, or evil?), the intention—the purpose for which it is done, and the circumstances—the situation surrounding the act, which can increase or diminish responsibility. For an act to be morally good, all three must align with the good; a good intention cannot make an objectively evil act good.

“In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience.”

Gaudium et Spes 16

Virtue, Vice, and Ongoing Conversion

Virtues and Vices

Virtues are good habits that strengthen our ability to choose what is right. The *cardinal virtues* (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance) are developed with practice (see CCC 1804-1805), while the *theological virtues* (faith, hope, love) are special gifts from God (see CCC 1812-1813). Vices are bad habits formed by repeated sin, including the seven *capital vices*, which cloud the conscience and turn us from God (see CCC 1865–1866).

Judging Sin, Not Souls

We can judge actions as right or wrong, but “we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God” (CCC 1861). Love and truth are not opposed; speaking the truth in love is how we help one another grow. The moral life is not easy; we all face temptation. For that reason, the Church calls us to continual conversion, returning again and again to the God who loves us.



“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 5:32



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The Moral Life:

Knowing Right from Wrong

INVITED

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How has your understanding of morality shifted during your OCIA journey? In what ways do you see Catholic moral teaching differently now compared with how you saw it before?
- ❖ Where do you think the moral instinct of right and wrong comes from? How do you reconcile this universal sense of fairness with the cultural message that “your truth is your truth and mine is mine”?
- ❖ What does moral excellence look like in your everyday life—at work, in relationships, in small daily decisions?

Faith and Fun

What are the seven virtues that help us battle the seven deadly sins? Name as many as possible.

a. Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord.

c. Humility, generosity, chastity, niceness, punctuality, patience, urgency.

b. Pride, greed, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, sloth.

d. Humility, generosity, chastity, kindness, temperance, patience, diligence.

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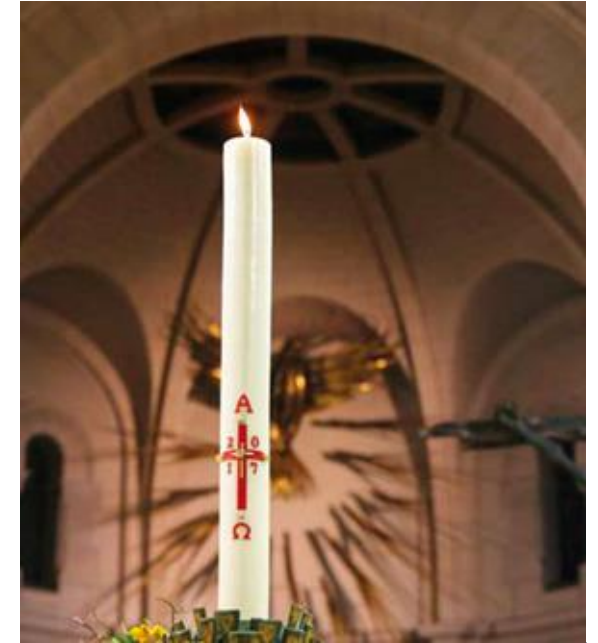
The Paschal Candle

Light from the Easter Vigil

The paschal candle is a tall white candle marked with a cross, the Greek letters alpha and omega, and the current year. It is lit each year at the Easter Vigil, when the Church gathers in darkness and the deacon proclaims, “The light of Christ,” as the flame spreads to the entire assembly, person to person.

A Symbol of the Moral Life

Beyond the Resurrection, the candle speaks to the moral life of every Christian: we are all called to pass from the darkness of sin into the light of grace. It burns again at baptisms, where a small candle is lit from it and given to the newly baptized, and at funerals, signifying hope in the Resurrection—marking the beginning and end of the Christian journey.



Living It Out:

This week, choose one of the seven deadly sins and reflect honestly on how it might show up in your own life. Then create a small, specific plan to avoid temptation toward this vice and instead grow in virtue.

Closing Prayer

*Lord,
pour out on us
the spirit of understanding, truth, and peace.
Help us to strive with all our hearts
to know what is pleasing to you,
and when we know your will
make us determined to do it.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.¹*

1. “Additional Prayers for Use at the Liturgy of the Hours,” Prayer 16, in *The Liturgy of the Hours*.

Announcements / Reminders — add notes here