

# Article One : The Moral Law

**n. 1949-1986**

## Part Three : Life in Christ

### Section One : The human vocation – Life in the Spirit

#### Chapter Three : God's Salvation: Law & Grace

##### Article One : The Moral Law

##### Article Two : Grace & Justification

##### Article Three : The Church: Mother & Teacher

## I. The Natural Law **n. 1954-1960**

- It is not sufficient to examine human nature from a purely physical or biological perspective. There is more to us than physics. Human nature is the nature of a person.

‘The natural law expresses and lays down the purposes, rights and duties, which are based upon the bodily and spiritual nature of the human person. Therefore this law cannot be thought of as simply a set of norms on the biological level; rather it must be defined as the rational order whereby human beings are called by the Creator to direct and regulate their lives and actions’(JPII Splendour of Truth §50).

## Behaviour that is of its essence morally bad

‘There are kinds of behaviour which can never, in any situation, be a proper response – a response which is in conformity with the dignity of the person’(JPII Splendour of Truth §52).

‘Whatever is hostile to life itself, such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit; whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat labourers as mere instruments of profit, and not as free, responsible persons: all these and the like are a disgrace, and so long as they infect human civilisation they contaminate those who inflict them more than those who suffer injustice, and they are a negation of the honour due to the Creator’(JPII Splendour of Truth §80 quote from G&S §27).

- Reason does not create values, moral norms or truth; it discovers them. We must act according to the judgment of reason; reason must be open to divine enlightenment.

‘Some have posited a complete sovereignty of reason in the domain of moral norms regarding the right ordering of life in this world’(JPII Splendour of Truth §36). This ignores the effects of sin upon reason, and ignoring also the primary submission to God which is essential to the proper exercise of reason.

‘You will know the truth and the truth will set you free’(John 8:32).

‘Who will cause us to see good?

Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord’ (Psalm 4:6).

‘Blessed is the person who walks not in the counsel of the wicked ... but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night’(Psalm 1:1-2).

‘The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes’(Psalm 19:8-9).

‘Who can discern his errors? Cleanse me from hidden faults’(Psalm 19:12).

## II. God's will revealed in the Old Testament ('Torah', 'Law') n. 1961-1964

People's understanding of God's will prior to Jesus was necessarily imperfect. Paul insists that where observance of the Law comes into conflict with behaviour inspired by the Spirit of Jesus, it is the Law that must give way. In this he is following Jesus who said: 'It was said to you of old, but I say to you ...'(Matthew 5 – numerous times).

At its best the Law instructs us as to what God wants or does not want. This is good in that it demonstrates how sinful our behaviour is when we contradict the Law, and it can bring us to the point of crying out for mercy. But the Law does not give us the power to obey it. Jesus is God's answer to that cry, and we live a truly moral life by following his example and the prompting of his Spirit, strengthened by his grace.

When we act on faith in Jesus we will not contradict what is right in the Law. Rather we will fulfill it and go beyond it in love. The Law is 'holy, just and good'(Romans 7:12), but it is no substitute for being in communion with Jesus.

### III. God's will revealed in the New Testament

n. 1965-1974

Jesus is God's perfect Word. In Jesus we see who God is and what God wills for us. His disciples saw Jesus fulfilling the Law.

n. 1965 'The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant that I made with their ancestors, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I had no concern for them, says the Lord. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people'(Hebrews 8:8-10 = Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The 'law of Christ'(Galatians 6:2) is that the perfection for which we strive is the perfection we see in God = the perfection of love. We are called to 'love as Jesus loves'; to love with his love poured into our hearts by God's Spirit.



In the NT texts abound that reveal how we are to live as disciples of Jesus

**n. 1971** ‘Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.’  
(Romans 12:9-13)

Jesus commands certain behaviour (precepts). Other behaviour he suggests (counsels). These latter are invitations of grace.

**n. 1973** ‘The precepts are intended to remove whatever is incompatible with charity. The aim of the counsels is to remove whatever hinders the development of charity, even if it is not contrary to it.’

**n. 1974** ‘God does not want each person to keep all the counsels, but only those appropriate to the diversity of persons, times, opportunities, and strengths, as charity requires; for it is charity, as queen of all virtues, all commandments, all counsels, and, in short, of all laws and all Christian actions, that gives to all of them their rank, order, time and value’ (Francis de Sales Love of God 8.6).

‘Because of the supernatural existential, produced in the human soul by God’s real offer of his grace, the strivings of the human spirit which all people experience are the strivings of elevated nature. Even the non-Christian and the atheist have an experience of grace in the love, the longings, the emptiness, the loneliness, which accompany a genuine loving commitment to real human values. In their fidelity to true human values, despite discouragement and disillusionment, they are serving the “absent God”, whom they experience through his grace, although they cannot find him in the world with which they deal explicitly through their objective concepts’(McCool - summary of Rahner’s thought).

## Concupiscence

‘In the course of our self-determination, we undergo the resistance of the nature given prior to freedom, and we never wholly succeed in making all that we are into the reality and the expression of all that we comprehend ourselves to be in the core of our person. There is much in us which always remains in concrete fact somehow impersonal; impenetrable and unilluminated for our existential decision; merely endured and not freely acted out. It is this dualism between person and nature ... that we call concupiscence in the theological sense’(Rahner).

## Galatians 2:16

‘We know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through the faith of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.’

We know what ‘justify’ means when it comes to formatting a text. To do this we ‘ad-just’ it, so that the left and right edges are straight. The above text is not justified. This paragraph is. We set it straight. We set it right. When God ‘justifies’ a person, God does something to the person (God adjusts the person) to set him/her in a right relationship with God.

The verb ‘justify’ and the noun ‘justification’ are based on the Greek word *dikê* which refers to divine order – the will of God as revealed in nature, in history, and in divinely revealed law.

Paul’s point is that what we do cannot bring justification. We cannot ‘adjust’ ourselves. For that we must look to Jesus. What matters now is that we open our hearts to Jesus’ love, and share Jesus’ faith, not observe the Jewish law.



The picture can't be displayed.

n. 1992

‘Now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ for all who believe ...

They are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has the faith of Jesus’ (Romans 3:21-26).

n. 1993

We must open our hearts to welcome a share in Jesus’ faith, for God does not impose love. Rather, God offers love and awaits our welcome – the welcome that is faith.

‘The holiness of the Church ... is expressed in many ways by those who, each in his or her own state of life, tend to the perfection of love.’

(Vatican II LG 43).

n. 1995 ‘Just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life’(Romans 6:19, 22).

n. 2012 ‘We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he fore-ordained he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.’  
(Romans 8:28-30)

## Therese of Lisieux

**n. 2011** ‘After earth’s exile, I hope to go and enjoy you in the fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for love of you alone ... In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count what I have done. All our justice is blemished in your eyes. I wish to be clothed, then, in your justice and to receive from your love the eternal possession of yourself.’

‘Holiness does not consist in this or that practice. It consists in a disposition of the heart which makes us humble and little in the arms of God, well aware of our feebleness, but boldly confident in the Father's goodness.’



## n. 2030-2051 Article Three : The Church, Mother and Teacher

‘The Church can never renounce the principle of truth and consistency, whereby she does not agree to call good evil and evil good; she must always be careful not to break the bruised reed or to quench the dimly burning wick’(cf Isaiah 42:3) (JPII Splendour of Truth §95).

‘Appropriate allowance is made both for God's mercy towards the sin of the person who experiences conversion and for the understanding of human weakness. Such understanding never means compromising and falsifying the standard of good and evil in order to adapt it to particular circumstances. It is quite human for the sinner to acknowledge his weakness and to ask mercy for his failings; what is unacceptable is the attitude of one who makes his own weakness the criterion of the truth about the good, so that he can feel self-justified, without even the need to have recourse to God and his mercy’(JPII Splendour of Truth §104).

‘In the work of teaching and applying Christian morality, the Church needs the dedication of pastors, the knowledge of theologians, and the contribution of all Christians and people of good will. Faith and the practice of the Gospel provide each person with an experience of life “in Christ”, who enlightens us and makes us able to evaluate divine and human realities according to the Spirit of God. Thus the Holy Spirit can use the humblest to enlighten the learned and those in the highest positions.’

‘The life of holiness which is resplendent in so many members of the People of God, humble and often unseen, constitutes the simplest and most attractive way to perceive at once the beauty of truth, the liberating force of God's love, and the value of unconditional fidelity to all the demands of the Lord's law, even in the most difficult situations’(JPII Splendour of Truth §107).

## I. Obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labour

‘The first precept requires the faithful to sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord as well as the principle liturgical feasts\* honouring the mysteries of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints; in the first place, by participating in the Eucharistic celebration, in which the Christian community is gathered, and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days’ (The 2nd edition adds the idea of ‘rest’).

(\*In Australia only Christmas Day and the Assumption). The others are transferred to the Sunday

## 2. Obligation to confess grave sins at least once a year (Canon 989)

## 3. Obligation to receive Communion during the Paschal season.

(between Ash Wednesday and Trinity Sunday)

#### 4. Obligated to Fast on Ash Wednesday & Good Friday

(between ages of 18 and 59)

#### Obligated to Abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday & Good Friday

(over 14)

#### 5. Obligation to support the community in material ways

**n. 2044** ‘The fidelity of the baptised is a basic condition for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the Church’s mission in the world. In order that the message of salvation can show the power of its truth and radiance, it must be authenticated by the witness of the life of Christians.’



## Prayer of Abandonment

Based on a prayer by Blessed Charles de Foucauld, 1858-1916.

text and music Tom Booth.

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sung by Paul Gurr

from *The Lord Delights*

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Father, I give myself  
into your hands.  
Do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do  
I thank you.

I am ready for all.  
I accept all you ask.  
Let your will  
be done in me.  
I wish no more than this.



Father, I give myself  
into your hands.  
Do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do  
I thank you.

Into your loving hands  
I commend all my life.  
Give to you  
with all my heart.  
I love you only, Lord



Father, I give myself  
into your hands.  
Do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do  
I thank you.

So I need to give  
my own self  
without reserve,  
Give  
with boundless confidence,  
for You are God  
my Father.





Father, I give myself  
into your hands.  
Do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do  
I thank you.

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