

The Institute for Catechesis and Formation

Course Outline for Students



ICF 105 – Christian Morality

This course provides a basic introduction to the fundamental teachings of Catholic morality and its foundations in Sacred Scripture, Tradition and Natural Law. Participants will examine virtue, conscience formation and apply moral theology to contemporary moral issues in the areas of health care and human sexuality.

Texts: Introduction to Catholicism for Adults, Rev. James Socias (ICA)

Supplemental Reading/Additional Resources:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):

<http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm>

The Bible: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>

Week 1: Dignity of the Human Person

– Man created in the Image and likeness of God

Weekly Reading Before Class: ICA Chapter 17; CCC Part III, Section 1

What does it mean to live the *moral life*?

***Imago Dei* – image of God** (CCC 355-359)

God created man and woman to *have a share in His creative power* (cf. Gen 1:28) and *in His kingship* by giving them dominion over the earth (cf. Gn. 1:26).

Freedom (CCC 1731)

Freedom properly understood is to use one's ability and will to choose what is good and what God wills for our lives and act accordingly. Free will is at the very heart of the human person's place in creation. Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought. Bl. John Paul II

Authentic freedom is oriented toward the Good and Truth

We determine ourselves through our **freely chosen acts**. We freely choose actions, but *we, ourselves, do not determine if these acts are good or bad*

God reveals what is good and what is bad

Concupiscence is the inclination to sin (1 John 2: 16-17)

Eternal Law, Natural Law, Divine Law

St. Thomas Aquinas:

Eternal law – “The plan of divine wisdom as directing all acts and movements.”

Natural law – “The rational creature's participation in the eternal law.”

Divine law – “The natural law as explicitly revealed by God in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. “

Natural law: do what is good and avoid evil.

The Moral Act (CCC 1750-1756)

The moral act is comprised of three elements:

- **Object:** the act freely chosen here and now
- **Intention:** the motive behind the act freely chosen
- **Circumstance:** the situation in which the act is done; the factors *surrounding* the act

Difficulties in making good, moral decisions:

- **Temptation**
- **Errors of Conscience**

Cultivating virtue helps us in the moral life

- The **theological virtues** are Faith, Hope and Charity. These refer to God and are given us by Him through grace. (CCC 1812-13)
- The **Cardinal Virtues** are the four principle moral virtues.

Week 2: Conscience, Action and God's Grace

Weekly Reading Before Class: ICA Chapter 18; CCC Part III, Section 2

What is Conscience?

Conscience (CCC1778)

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. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law.

- **Right conscience** – makes a correct judgment based on the moral law
- **Erroneous conscience** – Makes an incorrect judgment. A person judges an evil act to be good
- **Doubtful conscience** – One is not sure of the morality of a choice. The person has an obligation to search out the truth before making a choice

By God's *grace*, our *free response* to His self-offering, and by following Him we can begin to overcome sin and learn to make choices that lead to our fulfillment

Our *appetites* can steer us from making good choices (Rom 7: 18-23) if we do not avail ourselves of God's grace and cultivate *self-mastery*

Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good.

The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love. CCC 1804

The Decalogue, the Beatitudes, the cultivating virtue, and the teachings of the Church together reveal how Christ wants us to live and set us on the path to eternal happiness

- **The Ten Commandments** – Christ elevated the Old Law in the New Law.
- **The Beatitudes** – Perfection of Moral Law (Matthew 5: 3-12)

Week 3: Morality and Issues of Health and Life

Weekly Reading Before Class: ICA Chapter 21

Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end.

(CCC 2258)

Biblical Basis for respecting life

Genesis 4:1

Psalms 139:13

Jeremiah 1:5

1 Cor 6:19-20

All human life has dignity from conception to natural death

Personhood is not contingent upon another's criteria; it is not subjective. Personhood is not based upon one's productivity, or the ability to "contribute" to society

Some issues impacting the life and dignity of the human person

- **Abortion**
 - Direct abortion is never morally permissible
 - Indirect abortion and the principle of double-effect
- **Embryonic stem-cell research**
 - Using "parts" of human persons is depersonalizing and views them *not* as persons, but as objects of use
- **Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia**
 - It is never permissible to cause the death of another person – directly or by passive means – even if the intention is a so-called "mercy"
- **Medical ethics and decision-making**
 - Advanced Directives
 - Ordinary vs. extraordinary treatment
 - What you should know about Advance Health Care Directives

Week 4: Chastity in Relationships

Weekly Reading Before Class: ICA Chapter 22

The Virtue of Chastity

Chastity is a moral virtue that empowers a person to have a loving relationship with God and to see Christ in every human person. It is to see others as complete human persons rather than viewing them as objects. The Catechism describes the virtue of Chastity as “the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. CCC 2337

The Christian vision of human sexuality, as expressed in the virtue of chastity, is one which takes into account the human person as a whole, seeking what is good, true and beautiful in every person

- **Chastity for *Unmarried Persons***
- **Chastity within the *vocation of Marriage***

Marital Love

Marriage is the privileged place for sexual expression

The goods of marriage

- Unity
- Indissolubility
- Openness to children

Issues in Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality

- The importance of the family
- Human life and its absolute dignity
- Artificial Reproductive Technologies – ARTs
- Contraception, Sterilization, and NFP