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# PRESENTER'S GUIDE

## Our Moral Life in Christ



**Publisher: Rev. James Socias**



**MIDWEST THEOLOGICAL FORUM**

Downers Grove, Illinois

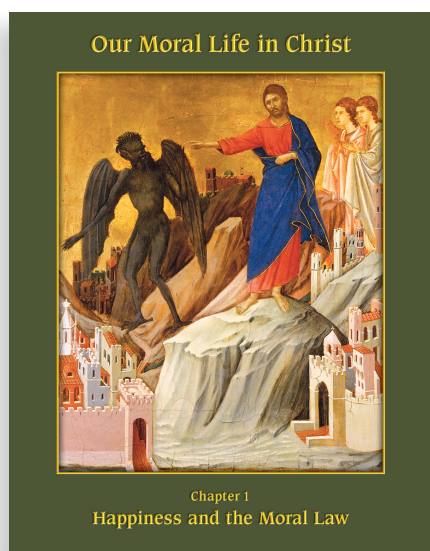


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*The Supper at Emmaus by Titian.*



## Chapter 1: HAPPINESS AND THE MORAL LAW

### Key Ideas

*These are reprinted from the textbook for your reference:*

- Humans are rational beings, comprised of body and soul, who are designed for happiness.
- Happiness is to be found in the fulfillment of human nature according to correct human desires.
- The natural law is the rule of right conduct or behavior for human beings. It is obscured by Original Sin.
- Divine Revelation confirms that we have reason and free will; that we find our true selves by following Christ (which includes sharing in his suffering); and that we are made to achieve Beatitude in communion with God in Heaven.

### Vocabulary List

*These are reprinted from the textbook for your reference:*

- **Third orders**—Third Order Seculars, or Tertiaries, are lay members of religious orders, who do not make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, although they are called to live these virtues according to their state in life. These members live in the midst of the world, retaining their ordinary professions and family lives. They receive formation from the religious order to

which they are attached, aiding them in living a life of holiness. Each member lives according to the charism of his or her religious order and assists in the fulfillment of its mission. Examples of Third Order Seculars include Lay Dominicans, Lay Carmelites, Secular Franciscans, and Secular Augustinians. (p. 11)

- **Stigmata**—(Greek *stigma*: mark) Wounds or abrasions of the skin that correspond to the wounds that Christ suffered in his Passion and Crucifixion. The person who bears these wounds is referred to as a stigmatist or stigmatic. The stigmata are normally visible and cause great suffering to the individual, although, as in the case of St. Catherine of Siena, they may appear visibly only after death. Receiving the stigmata is seen as a sign of great favor from the Lord, who allows the individual to participate in his own suffering. Among those bearing the stigmata were St. Francis of Assisi and St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio). (p. 11)

### AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SESSION

#### Opening Prayer

*Begin the session with an opening prayer such as the following:*

*O happy man, Saint Joseph, to you it was given to see and hear the God whom many kings longed to see but did not see, and longed to hear but did not hear.*

*Not only that, but you were privileged even to bear God in your hands, to kiss him, to dress him, and to watch over him.*

*Pray for us, Saint Joseph, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.*

(From the *Prayer to St. Joseph*)

#### Overview of the Chapter

*If you did not have the registrar distribute the summary to the participants, read the summary (p. 66 in this guide) to them.*

#### Opening Activity

*Have the participants complete the Opening Activity (p. 2).*

## Key Ideas

*Have a participant read aloud the Key Ideas (p. 2).*

## HUMAN NATURE?

(pp. 2-4)

### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

### Focus Questions

*Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:*

1. What is the basic call God gives to each person? God calls us to be holy.
2. What are the two sources of religious truth? The two sources of religious truth are human reason and Divine Revelation.
3. What does Revelation do in regard to our natural knowledge of morality? Revelation confirms, corrects, and extends our knowledge of natural morality.
4. What is the nature of a human being? A human person is a rational being, comprised of body and soul, who is designed for happiness.

### Additional Activities

*If there is time, have the participants complete the Guided Exercise (p. 4).*

## WHERE IS HAPPINESS TO BE FOUND?

(pp. 4-5)

### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

### Additional Activities

*If there is time, have the participants complete the Guided Exercise (p. 5).*

## WISE DESIRES

(pp. 6-7)

### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

### Focus Questions

*Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:*

5. Why are our natural desires good indicators of what is actually good for us? The wisdom by which God has designed humans is that for every true human need there exists a drive to motivate us toward it and a pleasure in getting it. For example, the natural desire to eat and drink ensures that we keep ourselves nourished.
6. According to our bodily nature, what is the purpose of hunger and pleasure in eating? For sustenance, we need to eat. The drive of hunger coupled with the enjoyment of a good meal helps us to get the sustenance we need.

## THE NATURAL LAW

(pp. 7-9)

### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

### Focus Questions

*Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:*

7. How can you naturally test whether an action is good or evil? An action can be tested naturally based on whether or not it helps a human being to reach his or her true fulfillment.
8. What is the natural law? Natural law is the rule of right conduct or behavior for human beings based on the whole of human nature.
9. What does the word “natural” mean in the term natural law? “Natural” refers to human nature.
10. What does it mean to say that the natural law is not arbitrary? An action is not good or bad because an authority—either God or a human power—decrees it so; rather, it is good or bad because it agrees or does not agree with the whole of human nature.



- 11. Why can interpreting the natural law be complex?** The rule of conduct concerns the whole of human nature, which includes soul and body, our social nature, and our vocation to be with God.
- 12. What effect does Original Sin have on our desires?** Original Sin can make us desire things that are not good for us due to concupiscence.

## REVELATION ABOUT HUMAN NATURE AND DESTINY

(pp. 9-11)

### Vocabulary

*Have a participant read aloud the definitions of the vocabulary words on page 11.*

### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

### Focus Questions

*Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:*

- 13. Are reason and free will natural or revealed truths?** Reason and free will are both natural and revealed.
- 14. What is the highest motive for doing good and avoiding evil?** The highest motive to do good and avoid evil is out of love for God, who desires this.
- 15. Based on Divine Revelation, what is the model for human nature?** The Person of Jesus Christ is our model for human nature.
- 16. How does being made in the image of God relate to the idea of communion?** God has made us to be in communion with him and other human beings just as in the likeness of the unity of the Blessed Trinity.
- 17. What is our highest end as human beings?** Eternal beatitude, or perfect happiness with God in Heaven, is a human being's highest end.
- 18. What are the Beatitudes?** The Beatitudes are the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount on the meaning and way to true happiness (cf. Mt 5:3-12).
- 19. From the perspective of Divine Revelation, how do we best achieve our highest end?** By being a disciple of Christ, that is, by following or imitating him, we best achieve our highest end.

## CLOSING ACTIVITIES

### Closing Activities

*Have the participants complete the Closure or Alternative Assessment (p. 12).*

*Ask the participants to answer the Discussion Questions (p. 12; answers below). These can be given as a quiz or used to lead a class discussion.*

### Discussion Questions (p. 12)

- 1. What is the nature of a human being?** A human person is a rational being, comprised of body and soul, who is designed for happiness.
- 2. Why are our natural desires good indicators of what is actually good for us?** The wisdom by which God has designed humans is that for every true human need there exists a drive to motivate us toward it and a pleasure in getting it. For example, the natural desire to eat and drink ensures that we keep ourselves nourished.
- 3. How can you naturally test whether an action is good or evil?** An action can be tested naturally based on whether or not it helps a human being to reach his or her true fulfillment.
- 4. What is the natural law?** Natural law is the rule of right conduct or behavior for human beings based on the whole of human nature.
- 5. What does it mean to say that the natural law is not arbitrary?** It means that something is not good or bad because an authority—either God or a human power—decrees it so; rather, it is good or bad because it agrees or does not agree with the whole of human nature.
- 6. What effect does Original Sin have on our desires?** Original Sin can make us desire things that are not actually good for us due to concupiscence.
- 7. Based on Divine Revelation, what is the model for human nature?** The Person of Jesus Christ is our model for human nature.
- 8. What is our highest end as human beings?** Eternal beatitude, or perfect happiness with God in Heaven, is a human being's highest end.

### NOTES

## Overview of the Next Chapter

*Read this summary to the participants:*

Chapter 2 looks at the moral virtues. This chapter presents the meaning of life, the natural virtues and their related vices, how to acquire natural virtues, and the moral virtues: justice, fortitude, and temperance.

## Key Ideas of the Next Chapter

*Have a participant read aloud the Key Ideas (p. 15). These are reprinted from the textbook for your reference:*

- A philosophical statement of the meaning of life is, "Pursuing authentic human goods through one's actions to reach the ideal of integral human fulfillment."
- Natural virtues are good habits that make performing good actions easy, quick, and pleasant.
- The four cardinal or principal virtues are Prudence, or sound decision-making; Justice, or giving others what you owe them; Fortitude, or courage; and Temperance, or self-control.
- Vices are bad habits, usually either a defect or an excess of a virtue.
- Three ways of attaining natural virtues are by example, guided practice, and self-learning.
- Supernatural moral virtues are natural virtues lived in light of Divine Revelation and assisted by grace.

## AT THE END OF THE SESSION

### Read the Next Chapter

*Have the participants read Chapter 2 before the next session.*

### Closing Prayer

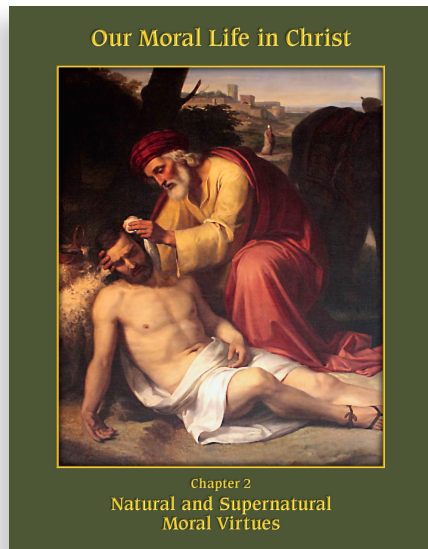
*End the session with a closing prayer.*

Examples include the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Hail Mary*, or the *Glory Be*.

## NOTES

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## Chapter 2: NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL MORAL VIRTUES

### Vocabulary List

*There are no vocabulary words for this chapter.*

### AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SESSION

#### Opening Prayer

*Begin the session with an opening prayer such as the following or incorporate the Scripture passage that is referenced in the Opening Activity (Lk 10:30-35; see below):*

*Lord God, ...  
let your Spirit guide our days on earth  
in the ways of holiness and justice,  
that we may serve you  
in union with the whole Church,  
sure in faith, strong in hope, perfected in love.  
And when our earthly journey is ended,  
lead us rejoicing into your kingdom,  
where you live for ever and ever. Amen.*  
(From the *Prayers at the Graveside*)

#### Opening Activity

*Have the participants complete the Opening Activity (p. 14).*

### DEFINED: THE MEANING OF LIFE

*(pp. 14-15)*

#### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

#### Focus Questions

*Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:*

1. What is the meaning of life in philosophical language? The meaning of life is pursuing authentic human goods through one's human acts to reach the ideal of integral human fulfillment.
2. What does "pursuing authentic human goods" mean? "Pursuing authentic human goods" means trying to get things that are truly good for us like truth, goodness, and beauty.
3. What does "through one's actions" mean? "Through one's actions" means using our powers of reason and freedom to direct ourselves.
4. What does "to reach the ideal of integral human fulfillment" mean? "To reach the ideal of integral human fulfillment" means to possess fully every human good integrated properly into our life.

#### Additional Activities

*If there is time, have the participants complete the Guided Exercise (p. 15).*

### NATURAL VIRTUES

*(pp. 15-18)*

#### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

#### Focus Questions

*Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:*

5. What are natural virtues? Natural virtues are good habits that make performing good actions easy, quick, and pleasant.
6. Do virtues make it harder to do evil? Yes; virtues arouse a kind of disgust in performing bad actions.

**7. What is the meaning of “cardinal” in cardinal virtues?** The word cardinal comes from the Latin word for “hinge.” If we think of virtues as doors to happiness, then the cardinal virtues are like hinges that hold that door in place. They are the key virtues on which all other virtues rely.

**8. What are the four cardinal virtues?** The cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

**9. What is a vice?** A vice is a bad habit that makes it easier to perform a bad act and harder to do what is good.

**10. What are vices of defect and excess?** In regard to a virtue, a vice of defect is the *lack* of that virtue; a vice of *excess* is an unhealthy or destructive excess of the virtue. For example, in regard to the virtue of *courage*, its defect is *cowardice* and its *excess* is recklessness.

**11. Why are natural virtues important?** Natural virtues are important because they incline the mind, the will, and the body to a habitual good course of action more or less automatically and make a person averse to doing the opposite.

### Additional Activities

*If there is time, have the participants complete the Guided Exercise (p. 18).*

## ACQUIRING NATURAL VIRTUES

(pp. 18-19)

### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

### Focus Questions

*Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:*

**12. What are the three basic ways people develop habits?** People can develop habits by imitating someone's example, being coached by *guided practice*, or by increasing in self-knowledge and will power.

**13. What is the best way that people can develop virtues?** People can best develop virtues by embracing their duties; this can help them slowly develop many virtues.

## SUPERNATURAL MORAL VIRTUES

(p. 19)

### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

### Focus Questions

*Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:*

**14. What is the aim of supernatural virtues?** Supernatural virtues have the same aim as natural virtues: the pursuit of true goods to reach the fulfillment of our best, truest selves. However, instead of aiming for simply a good life on earth, our ultimate aim is the Beatific Vision in Heaven.

**15. How do we get supernatural virtues?** God infuses us with supernatural virtues at our Baptism.

**16. How can we remove obstacles to our exercise of supernatural virtues?** We can remove obstacles by living the natural moral virtues, knowing Jesus Christ and the Faith better, praying, and frequenting the Sacraments.

**17. What directs natural and supernatural virtues?** Natural virtues are directed by reason, while supernatural virtues are directed by reason enlightened by faith.

## VIRTUES AT WORK

(pp. 19-22)

### Review

*Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.*

### Focus Questions

*Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:*

**18. What is natural prudence?** Natural prudence is wise decision-making.

**19. What is supernatural prudence?** Supernatural prudence is evaluating every moral decision in light of Divine Revelation, especially in view of eternal salvation.

**20. What is natural justice?** The natural virtue of justice is the habit of giving others what one owes them.