

# CHRISTIAN MORALITY: The Way to Happiness

*Theology for the Laity Course*  
*St. Louis Bertrand Parish – Fall 2021*

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## CLASS 2: Law

- TWO FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS
  - If finite goods are to be ordered to the Supreme Good, *how do we know what constitutes a true good (which can be ordered to the Supreme Good) vs. an apparent good (which is not good, and cannot lead us to Perfect Happiness)?*
    - Answer: Law
  - When we know something to be a true good, *how do we pursue that good in the right way and for the right reason (so it can be ordered to the Supreme Good)?*
    - Answer: Good Moral Action
  
- THE MORALITY OF HUMAN ACTS
  - Three Causes of Morality:
    - The Object of the Act (*what is being done*)
    - The End of the Act (*why it is being done; intention*)
    - The Circumstances of the Act (*the relevant context of the act*)
  - Principle of Morality: **“The goodness of an action comes from all of the causes working together; evil comes from any single defect.”** (ST Iallae, q. 18, a. 4, ad 3)
  
- LAW
  - God *instructs* us by his law about the good
  - “Law is an ordinance of reason, for the common good, made by him who has care for the community, and promulgated.” (ST Iallae, q. 90, a. 4)
  - Kinds of Law:
    - ETERNAL LAW, NATURAL LAW, HUMAN LAW, DIVINE LAW (OLD LAW & NEW LAW)

- ETERNAL LAW
    - The Eternal Law is the *ratio* (plan; design) of Divine Wisdom which directs all actions and movements of things made by the Creator—the Mind of God
    - Every other law is derived from the Eternal Law: God’s wise design (his Mind) governs all of creation
  
  - NATURAL LAW
    - The Natural Law is *man’s participation in the Eternal Law*: how man knows God’s designs for creation
    - The Natural Law is “written” into man’s nature—his defining essence—at the level of man’s *natural inclinations*: the ways in which man is “directed” at the level of his nature to the natural ends of his inherent powers
    - Three Natural Inclinations (*ST I-II, q. 94, a. 2*):
      - All substances have *the inclination to preserve being*
      - All animals have *the inclination to sexual intercourse (reproduction)*
      - All rational animals have *the inclination to know the truth about God and to live in society*
    - These natural inclinations reveal to man the “instruction” which our Creator has “written” into man’s being, concerning his authentic good/his proper flourishing.
  
  - HUMAN LAW
    - From the general precepts of the Natural Law, human reason needs to proceed to *more particular determinations of certain matters*. Human law provides for determinations of particular cases that need to be sanctioned (“taught”) by law.
    - Just Laws – vs. – Unjust Laws
      - “Every human law has the nature of law insofar as it is derived from the natural law. But, if in any point, it deflects from the natural law, it is no longer a law but a perversion of law.” (*I-II, q. 95, a. 2*)
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- RESOURCE FOR FURTHER STUDY
  - **D.Q. McInerney, *A Course in Thomistic Ethics***  
 Elmhurst, PA: The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, 1997  
<https://fraternitypublications.com/product/a-course-in-thomistic-ethics/>