

From the PASTOR'S DESK



Reflection

The Catholic Church, we say, has the authority to teach on faith and morals. What are these morals we are bound to live specifically as Catholic Christians? The world we live in distinguishes Catholics from other Christians in a negative way: No contraception, no divorce, no abortion, no purely secular education for their children. These things are not, in fact, distinctively Catholic things at all. Decisions about sex, family, and education is a matter of getting things into perspective simply as a human being.

The Church refers to these issues as truths of the natural law. Any sound human society would come to the same conclusions even if they had never heard about Jesus Christ or His followers.

If anyone asks what is distinctive about the Catholic understanding of life, today's gospel passage answers. St. Luke's summary of the ethical teaching of Jesus Christ is not about being an ordinary, decent, good-living member of natural society.

This passage is so different from the usual advice to be fair to other people and do no harm that it sounds wild and maybe, downright foolish. This teaching demands love of people who hate you and work against you so that you become vulnerable to them. It commands that you refrain from condemning anyone who does you harm and that you give, give until it hurts. Any society that tried to put this code into practice would probably collapse overnight.

Gospel ethics are impractical because they are for humanity as it ought to be – humanity in the image of Christ as the Father intended it. Catholic Christianity is not primarily a teaching. It's a way of salvation. It is sharing in the power and freedom of God, going into the life of God Himself. God entered the world in the person of His Son to make Himself vulnerable in the weakness of Jesus Christ. Through Him, we touch the extravagant generosity of God required by today's Gospel – at least, occasionally.

Holiness comes when we respond to the non-calculating goodness of God in Jesus Christ. The Catholic understanding of life is to live with such ridiculous generosity as to be a fool in the eyes of a fallen world.

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