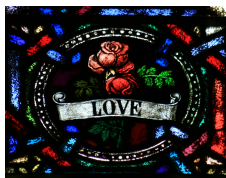




The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: What Does God Ask of Us?
Part III: Christian Conduct



Public Domain

Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Sister Sara Draney is a Dominican Nun from the Monastery of the Infant Jesus in Lufkin, Texas. Helen is a lay-Dominican and has a love for music ministry. The Dominicans, I should mention, are known as the Order of Preachers. Sharon is our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone knows by now, I am simply here to ask questions and mangle names. To answer my questions and correct my pronunciation is why we have our panelists, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

Discussion:

As we discussed last time, God asks us to follow His commandments, not so we cannot enjoy life as the evil one would tempt us to believe, but so we may live free from the slavery and pain of selfishness and harmful behaviors. On the surface, it all sounds so simple, but as we continue the journey of our lives, we find some very complex situations, but if we understand what God asks of us, is it really that complex?

As we mentioned, if there is one guiding light which God gives us, it is love. To guide our decisions, then, we must ask ourselves what does it truly mean to love? The operative word here is, “truly,” for if we do not comprehend God's truth, we will not comprehend His love. If we do not comprehend His love, then, how will we ever find a path to peace?

We are blessed God gave us the gift of freewill, but we must understand that such a gift also comes with responsibility. If we examine the meaning and purpose of His commandments, we will find that we are better off through our obedience to them.

While we may face persecution in this world for our belief and our obedience to the Lord, we must remember two things. The first is that through our obedience, we become part of the tide which carries us to sharing the blessings of love. The second is, no matter the pain we receive in this world, through our efforts to live by His commandments, through the contriteness of our hearts should we fail, through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, through His mercy and grace, we have the opportunity to be forgiven of our sins and cleansed of our iniquities so we may receive His embrace and walk with Him in His kingdom where love is shared by all, where there is no pain or affliction, and where evil is not allowed to follow.

Today, we are going to go a little deeper than the “thou shalt not.” If we look at the Ten Commandments, eight tell us what we are called not do. The two which tell us what we are called to do are to keep the Sabbath Day holy and to honor our father and mother. The other side of the coin of “thou shalt not,” though, is “thou shall.”

We should reflect that when we are called to Christian conduct, the phrase implies action, for conduct is a verb. If we reflect upon the two greatest commandments, Jesus teaches us that we are called to action; to love God as well as one another. (cf Matthew 22:36-40) He tells us that all the law and the prophets depend on these two. We must also reflect that love is both a noun and a verb; therefore it is something we can give as well as something we can do.

(Question 1: As we reflect on the term “Christian Conduct,” we can rephrase the term to “Conduct of Christians.” What does the word “Christian” imply as it relates to the word “conduct?” From whom might we learn the nature of this conduct?)

Of course, we are all aware of the Ten Commandments, but sometimes we struggle to comprehend the actions to which they call us. For the commandments which begin, “Thou shalt not...,” we are tempted to believe we are called to inaction. To a degree, that is true, but do we consider that as we “do not,” we must also look in the direction of what “we do?”

(Question 2: Let's consider the example of the commandment, “Thou shalt not steal.” Simple enough, we do not take what is not ours. We earn what we need, but what of the person who is unable to earn the necessities of life? Do we just say, too bad? What if we have the means to help, but keep that help to ourselves? Have we fulfilled the intent of God's commandments?)

(CCC: 2446)

St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: “Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life.” The goods we possess are not ours,

but theirs.” “The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity”

When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.

(Luke 3:7-14)

7 He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance; and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 9 Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

10 And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” 11 He said to them in reply, “Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.” 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?” 13 He answered them, “Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.” 14 Soldiers also asked him, “And what is it that we should do?” He told them, “Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages.”

(Question 3: Here, we observe John the Baptist preaching to those who were responding to the call to repent from their sins, but were unsure as to how. What examples does John the Baptist give and can we discern a common theme within his answer?)

(Matthew 25:31-46)

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, 32 and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ 40 And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ 41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’ 44 Then they will answer and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’ 45 He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not

do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' 46 And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

(Question 4: As we reflect upon this scripture, we see an analysis of action. What are the actions and what are the consequences of those actions?)

(CCC: 2447)

The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God:

He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food must do likewise. But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you. If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?

(Question 5: As we examine this paragraph of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we see reference to spiritual and corporal works of mercy. We might recognize them from reading various parts of scripture. What is the difference between these types of mercy? How do they relate to one another?)

(James 2:14-17)

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? 17 So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- Admonish the sinner
- Instruct the ignorant
- Counsel the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Forgive injuries
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Pray for the living and the dead

Corporal Works of Mercy:

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Shelter the homeless

- Clothe the naked
 - Visit the sick
 - Visit prisoners
 - Bury the dead
 - Give alms to the poor
-

(Matthew 18:15-18)

15 "If your brother sins [against you], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. 16 If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. 18 Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

(Question 6: As we examine this passage of scripture, we observe a model of reconciliation. What are the steps it gives and what might we observe from these instructions as to how we should reconcile perceived wrongs with one another?)

(Matthew 5:43-48)

[Jesus said:] 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? 48 So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

(Question 7: Perhaps, no more are we put to the test than when we must face those who do not like us very much or who may even desire to do us harm. Why is this such a test and why is doing what God asks of us such a demonstration of Christian conduct?)

(1 Peter 3:8-12)

8 Finally, all of you, be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble. 9 Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing.

10 For:

"Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep the tongue from evil
and the lips from speaking deceit,
11 must turn from evil and do good,
seek peace and follow after it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears turned to their prayer;
but **the face of the Lord is against evildoers.**”

(Question 8: The cues from our society are that a happy life comes from things and doing what feels good. As we consider this scripture, what does it tell us about the true meaning of a good life and Christian conduct?)

(1 Peter 3:13-17)

13 Now who is going to harm you if you are enthusiastic for what is good? 14 But **even if you should suffer because of righteousness, blessed are you.** Do not be afraid or terrified with fear of them, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. **Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope,** 16 but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to **shame.** 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

(Question 9: When we give reason for our hope, we defend our faith. As it is related here, how are we called to defend our faith? For what reason are we called to this type of behavior?)

Quotes:

– *Saint Mother Teresa*

I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.

– *Archbishop Fulton Sheen*

You will never be happy if your happiness depends on getting solely what you want. Change the focus. Get a new center. Will what God wills, and your joy no man shall take from you.

– *St. Alphonsus Liguori*

True charity consists in doing good to those who do us evil, and in thus winning them over.

– *Jesus (According to St. Faustina)*

A single act of pure love pleases me more than a thousand imperfect prayers.

Final Thoughts:

Obviously, during the course of this past hour, we barely scratched the surface of the purpose and meaning of Christian conduct. As we examine and reflect upon what God asks of us, we find we must look beyond the “thou shalt nots,” and consider the action to which we are called. It is not only a matter of the study of His Word, but how we put His Word into action, for if we do not put His Word into action, its meaning becomes merely academic and a curiosity at best.

Jesus told us the two greatest commandments are to love God as well as one another. As I mentioned during the lead into our first question, love is both a noun and a verb, therefore, it is

both something we can give and something we can do. If we comprehend the meaning and purpose of the greatest commandments, then, everything else should fall into place for us as we consider the meaning and purpose of our choices.

The Word of the Lord guides us with great wisdom. As we study it, we should also consider the opportunities to put it into action. As we do, we become part of the force within the world that turns the tide against evil and brings forth the blessings God intends for us all.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we discuss the vocations to which we are called.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: What Does God Ask of Us? - Part IV: Vocations

References:

Catechism of the Catholic Church; (1994); 2nd Edition; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; <http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/catechism/index.html>

The New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE); (9 Mar 2011); United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; <http://usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm>

Love of God:

1. I am the Lord your God, you shall have no strange gods besides me
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day

Love of Neighbor as Yourself:

4. Honor your father and your mother
5. You shall not kill
6. You shall not commit adultery
7. You shall not steal
8. You shall not bear false witness
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods

(Matthew 5:3-11)

3 *“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

4 *Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

5 *Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.*

6 *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.*

7 *Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

8 *Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.*

9 *Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

10 *Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11 *Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil
against you [falsely] because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be
great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*