

The Splendor of Objective Truth

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Pope John Paul II has issued two great encyclical letters on morality; that is, on ethical issues. One is entitled *The Gospel of Life*, which is a tremendous defense of the sanctity of human life from the moment of conception to the grave; and the other is on the *Splendor of Objective Truth*. We live in a malaise of moral relativism. Countless people do not believe in objective truth and morality, especially in the area of sexual ethics. And so our Holy Father states that Jesus Christ, who is the eternal truth of the Father, has come into the world to enlighten our minds with the splendor of God's truth. For God has revealed His ethical principles to every man and woman who comes into the world.

The Natural Law

First and above all, God places His truths into the conscience of every human being. He writes it upon their hearts in such a way that everyone intuitively knows that it is wrong to steal, to law, to swear, to commit adultery, and so forth. These truths are self-evident. C.S. Lewis was an atheist in his youth. Then, in 1929, alone in his room at Magdalene College, Oxford, he was "surprised by joy." God invaded his life. He stated, "I fell to my knees, the most reluctant in all England." Shortly thereafter, he came to faith in Jesus as the Son of God and devoted the rest of his life to explaining and defending Christianity, especially by showing how the moral life leads us to God.

Moral Life Is A Sure Road to God

God holds before our consciences two roads – a high road and a low road. If we obey His commandments and the dictates of our conscience, we will draw close to God and He will bless us especially with real joy, lasting peace and true love. If we sin by disobeying His commands, our lives are filled with guilt, sadness and frustration. St. Augustine said it so beautifully, "Our hearts are made for Thee, Oh Lord, and will not rest until they rest in Thee."

In Lewis' confession about the role of joy wooing him to God, he repeated the experience of St. Augustine who taught that the desire for absolute happiness opens us up to God and the moral life. "Everyone is drawn to another, not by necessity but by desire, not by compulsion, but by joy. We can say that one who finds happiness in truth and justice and everlasting life is drawn to Christ for Christ is all these things."

Morality deals with goodness, and God is total goodness. This encyclical on the beauty, goodness and benefits of a moral life is one of Pope John Paul II's greatest legacies. The Pope addresses the moral life by means of a parable of the rich young man who in a certain sense is each of us. Jesus compassionately tells us that the fleeting and superficial joys of the pleasures of this life can not fulfill our deepest longing for truth, beauty and goodness.

The Ten Commandments

God has given to all Jews and Christians the Mosaic Law, especially in the Ten Commandments that Moses brought down from the mountain. They are God's wisdom, His basic norms for holiness and His prescriptions for His new world order. They are not human inventions, multiple choice, man's subjective view of reality, suggestions that Moses brought down from the mountain, or only meant for Jews and Christians. They are God's infallible, basis commands for everyone, everywhere, always. They cannot be changed, altered or contradicted. And so,

- One, everyone must worship God.
- Two, everyone must reverence His name.
- Three, everyone must keep the Sabbath holy.
- Four, everyone must honor their parents.
- Five, no one is allowed to kill.
- Six, no one is allowed to commit adultery.
- Seven, no one is allowed to steal.
- Eight, no one is allowed to lie.
- Nine, no one is allowed to lust after another's wife.
- Ten, no one is allowed to be greedy.

The Sermon On The Mount

The heart of the moral teaching of Jesus is found in Matthew's gospel, chapters 5-7, commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus gives a description of a holy and happy life. He tells us that the blessed are those who are poor in spirit, who feel the pain for others, who are meek and humble, who hunger and thirst for holiness, and who are merciful and pure of heart.

Perhaps the most joyful people on earth are Mother Teresa's sisters. They spend three hours of Eucharist Adoration every day, then go out into the streets to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, minister to the imprisoned. Having experienced nothing, they experience everything. They have discovered that happiness lies in loving God and loving one another.

Life In The Spirit

Mother Teresa teaches what St. Paul taught before her: we must allow Christ to work in us and through us with His wisdom, His love, His power. It is only by the Holy Spirit that we can allow Christ's wisdom to enlighten our minds, and His love to inflame our hearts.

To Be Like Jesus

The whole aim of Christian morality is to think like Jesus thinks, to love as Jesus loves, and to act as Jesus acts so that we can be transformed into other Christ's and thus become lights to a dark and broken world. We are called to take His light into that world where wrong seems right. We are to be His ambassadors of truth, love and action. We are to be His eyes, His hands, His lips, His mystical body.