

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

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From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 415 – 421

God's salvation: Law and Grace

THE MORAL LAW

What is the moral law?

The moral law is a work of divine Wisdom. It prescribes the ways and the rules of conduct that lead to the promised beatitude and it forbids the ways that turn away from God.

In what does the natural moral law consist?

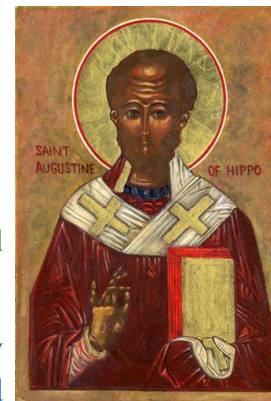
The natural law which is inscribed by the Creator on the heart of every person consists in a participation in the wisdom and the goodness of God. It expresses that original moral sense which enables one to discern by reason the good and the bad. It is universal and immutable and determines the basis of the duties and fundamental rights of the person as well as those of the human community and civil law.

Is such a law perceived by everyone?

Because of sin the natural law is not always perceived nor is it recognised by everyone with equal clarity and immediacy.

For this reason God "wrote on the tables of the Law what men did not read in their hearts"

Saint Augustine of Hippo



What is the relationship between the natural law and the Old Law?

The Old Law is the first stage of revealed Law. It expresses many truths naturally accessible to reason and which are thus affirmed and authenticated in the covenant of salvation. Its moral prescriptions, which are summed up in the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue, lay the foundations of the human vocation, prohibit what is contrary to the love of God and neighbour, and prescribe what is essential to it.

What place does the Old Law have in the plan of salvation?

The Old Law permitted one to know many truths which are accessible to reason, showed what must or must not be done and, above all, like a wise tutor, prepared and disposed one for conversion and for the acceptance of the Gospel. However, while being holy, spiritual, and good, the Old Law was still imperfect because in itself it did not give the strength and the grace of the Spirit for its observance.

What is the New Law or the Law of the Gospel?

The New Law or the Law of the Gospel, proclaimed and fulfilled by Christ, is the fullness and completion of the divine law, natural and revealed. It is summed up in the commandment to love God and neighbour and to love one another as Christ loved us. It is also an interior reality: the grace of the Holy Spirit which makes possible such love. It is “the law of freedom” (Galatians 1:25) because it inclines us to act spontaneously by the prompting of charity.

Saint Thomas Aquinas



The New Law is mainly the same grace of the Holy Spirit which is given to believers in Christ.

Where does one find the New Law?

The New Law is found in the entire life and preaching of Christ and in the moral catechesis (teaching) of the Apostles. The Sermon on the Mount is its principal expression. (Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7).

It is essential that every Catholic has access to good Catechesis to be able to deepen their faith. The Diocese of Plymouth recommends the many Catechetical Workshops from 'Franciscan at Home,' for more information on access to these and online or real group sessions contact deborah.vankroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk