

BECOMING BLESSED

How Catholics Think About Morality

INSTRUCTOR

Fr. Peter Totleben, O.P.
(330) 720-6891
peter.totleben@opeast.org

WEBSITE

<http://petertotleben.github.io/becoming-blessed/>

LOCATION, DATE, AND TIME

The sessions will be held in the **Parish Center at the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel** (343 Via Mt. Carmel Ave., Youngstown, OH 44505).

The course will meet on **Wednesdays from 7:00-8:30pm**. We will meet for eight sessions: February 7, 21, 28; March 7, 14, 21; April 4, 11. Note that there is no session on February 14 (Ash Wednesday) or March 28 (Holy Wednesday).

Those who are taking the course for religious education credit will have to attend all eight sessions. However the sessions are designed to be relatively independent from one another, so that if a person misses any of the sessions, he or she can still profitably come to later sessions.

DESCRIPTION

This course investigates the principles of the moral life as these are understood in the Catholic tradition.¹ We will show how the Christian moral life attains authentic happiness by developing the strengths of character (i.e. the virtues) which lead to true freedom, and ultimately to a deifying conformity to Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit, which culminates with the loving vision of God the Trinity together with all of God's family in heaven.

¹ This is roughly paragraphs 1691-2051 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, participants should be able to . . .

1. Explain what moral theology is and its relationship to the Christian story as this is explained by the Catholic dogma.
2. Understand the central ideas in Christian anthropology.
3. Critically evaluate the proposals for human happiness that are current in our culture.
4. Know the natural and supernatural ends of the human person, and how they are related.
5. Explain the psychology of voluntary human action.
6. Analyze human actions and their goodness or evil by considering their objects, ends, and circumstances.
7. Refute moral relativism and defend the existence of absolute moral norms.
8. Explain the role of nurturing the virtues to become truly free and ultimately happy.
9. Explain the psychology of moral weakness.
10. Understand how the different types of law provide different types of guidance for human action.
11. Explain the Catholic conception of the common good.
12. Understand the nature of practical wisdom (prudence) and the correct role that the judgment of conscience plays in it.
13. Explain the relationship between grace, the virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and the beatitudes.
14. Explain how spirituality is an integral part of our moral life.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: What is Moral Theology About?

- What Moral Theology Studies
- Moral Theology, Dogma, and the Christian Story
- Philosophical Ethics and Moral Theology
- The Sources of Moral Theology in Revelation and Reason
- Our Meta-ethical Perspective: “Eudaemonistic Virtue Ethics”
- Key Themes in Moral Theology

Session 2: The Human Person

- Creation
- The Image and Likeness of God

- Body and Soul
- The Faculties of the Human Person
- Knowledge, Desires, and Emotions
- A Political Animal
- Deified in Christ by the Holy Spirit

Session 3: True Happiness

- Does Man Have a Last End?
- Objective Beatitude: What Makes a Person Happy
- Subjective Beatitude: The Accoutrements of Happiness
- Is This Happiness Possible?
- Our Natural End Is Taken Up Into Our Supernatural End

Session 4: Human Action

- Human Acts and Acts of a Human
- The Voluntary
- The Stages of Human Action
- The Specification of Human Action
- Good and Evil Human Actions
- The Principle of Double Effect

Session 5: Virtues and Vices

- *Habitus*
- What are Virtues and Vices?
- Cardinal and Theological Virtues
- *Akrasia*
- Sin

Session 6: Law and Grace

- What Is Law?
- God's Providence and the Eternal Law
- Participating in the Eternal Law: Natural Law and Evangelical Law
- Ordering the Common Good: Human Positive Law

Session 7: Prudence

- What Is Prudence?
- Prudence and the Other Cardinal Virtues
- Components of Prudence
- Domains of Prudence
- Imprudence, Negligence, and False Prudence
- Conscience and Prudence

Session 8: The Spiritual Life

- The Missions of the Son and the Spirit

- Grace: God's Life Healing and Elevating Us
- The Supernatural Organism
- The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit Makes Us Happy