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Grace: A Most Precious and Loving Gift from God

God's Law and Grace (part two)

What is Natural Moral Law?

"The natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid." St Thomas Aquinas¹

1.) Moral Law establishes, by God's wise design, the ways of justice and eternal happiness, as well as what to avoid and not turn from God. So then, what is "*Natural Moral Law?*" Sounds like a theological word salad, but it's not that complicated.

2.) God created man in His image and likeness to share in His blessed life.² Sharing in God's life implies sharing the wisdom, goodness, and holiness of God. The early Church Fathers referred to this sharing as being "*divinized or God-like.*" God created every human being with a ***natural*** sense of good and evil.³ Using the power of reason that God gave us, we can discern what is right and wrong, or good and evil. That natural sense of good and evil is what we understand as "***natural moral law.***"

3.) Natural law directs man towards the two great commandments, the love of God and neighbor. Moral sense unites individuals and communities in the pursuit of what is true and good. Natural law is where civil law finds its foundation, in the common pursuit of good for humanity. For example, if you gathered several people of different backgrounds and beliefs, there would be a common agreement on certain moral norms. An atheist, a Christian, an agnostic, and a Jew would all naturally agree that murder and theft are wrong and punishable by law. Just the same, all four would agree, to a point, that people should be treated with respect and dignity. That's an example of "*natural moral law.*"

¹ CCC #1955

² Genesis 1:26-27, CCC #1

³ CCC #1954

What does Moral Law have to do with grace?

4.) Although every man and woman has natural law or a natural moral sense written in their heart and soul, sin prevents them from perceiving and understanding it clearly⁴. Imagine for a moment standing in front of a shattered mirror. You can still see your reflection somewhat, but it's very distorted and out of place. Looking into that cracked mirror reflects our moral sense of right and wrong, good and evil. Our souls need guidance that they cannot give themselves. Look at the world we live in today. Society is morally confused, and truth has become whatever I want it to be. People are too easily triggered and offended. That picture is society's shattered reflection, leaving us with a distorted view of the truth and good.

5.) To bring all men and women back to Himself, Our Lord chose to intervene on our behalf. As a Father teaches his children, God uses natural law as a foundation to build on. Perfecting and strengthening our moral sense (*natural law*), the Holy Spirit applies revealed law and grace. *"In the present situation, **sinful man needs grace and revelation** so moral and religious truths **may be known** by everyone with facility, with **firm certainty**, and **with no admixture of error**."*⁵

6.) When a person follows their conscience, this interior sense (*natural moral law*) is the voice we listen to. Our interior voice or sense of moral goodness is informed, perfected, and strengthened by God's revealed law and grace. We need to remember that in the heart and soul of every human being, this interior dialogue is taking place.

7.) The basic precepts of natural law are summed up in the Decalogue or Ten Commandments.⁶ Those ten precepts or laws lay the foundation on which God's precious and loving gift of grace builds the Temple of the Holy Spirit in your heart and soul.

"Law and grace are where man and God meet in the heart, mind and soul."

Timothy Andries
Catechist
St Joseph and Rose of Lima Parishes

⁴ CCC #1960

⁵ CCC #1960

⁶ CCC #1955