

Restoring Moral Order

**There is a natural moral order written on every human heart.
At Baptism, *the love of God,...* poured into our hearts (Rom 5, 5)
empowers us to live out the *New Law* of Christ's Gospel,
summarized in the beatitudes,
perfected in love of God and neighbour
and expressed in the Catholic Church's moral teaching.**

Your Experience

Name a time when your words or actions helped clarify a morally troubling situation in your home, community or workplace.

Name someone who has benefited from your moral guidance.

What Vatican II Says

Lay[persons] should also know that it is generally the function of their well-formed Christian conscience to see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city.

Pastoral Council on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes, No. 43.

Since, in our own times, new problems are arising and very serious errors are circulating which tend to undermine the foundations of religion, the moral order, and human society itself, this sacred synod earnestly exhorts lay[persons]-each according to [their] own gifts of intelligence and learning-to be more diligent in doing what they can to explain, defend, and properly apply Christian principles to the problems of our era in accordance with the mind of the Church.

Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicam Actuositatem), No. 6.

What The Catechism Says

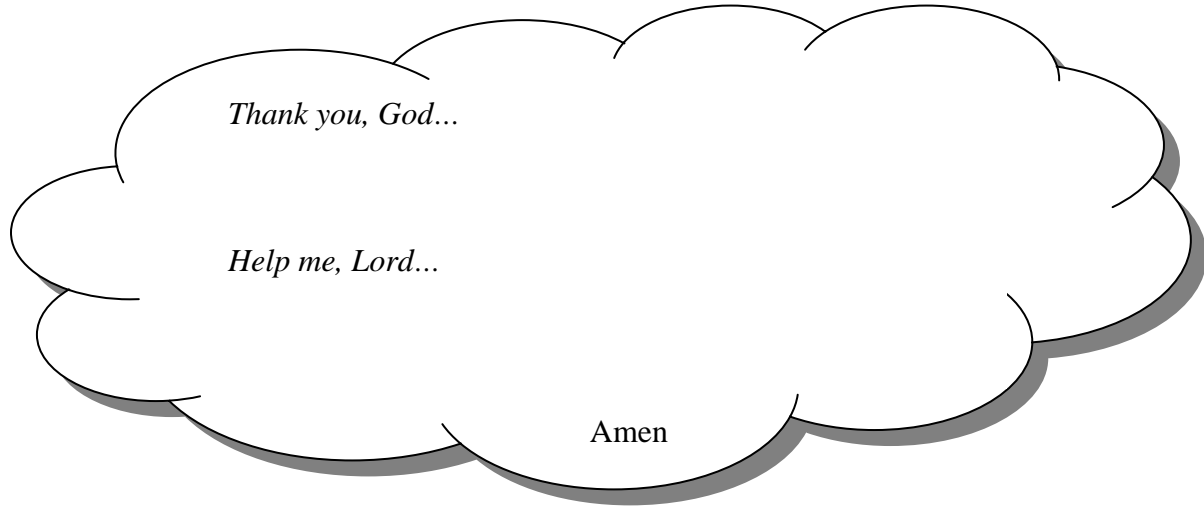
Moreover, by uniting their forces let the laity so remedy the institutions and conditions of the world when the latter are an inducement to sin, that these may be conformed to the norms of justice, favoring rather than hindering the practice of virtue. By so doing they will impregnate culture and human works with a moral value. (CCC, 909)

Your Experience

What can we do to help our young people make good moral choices?

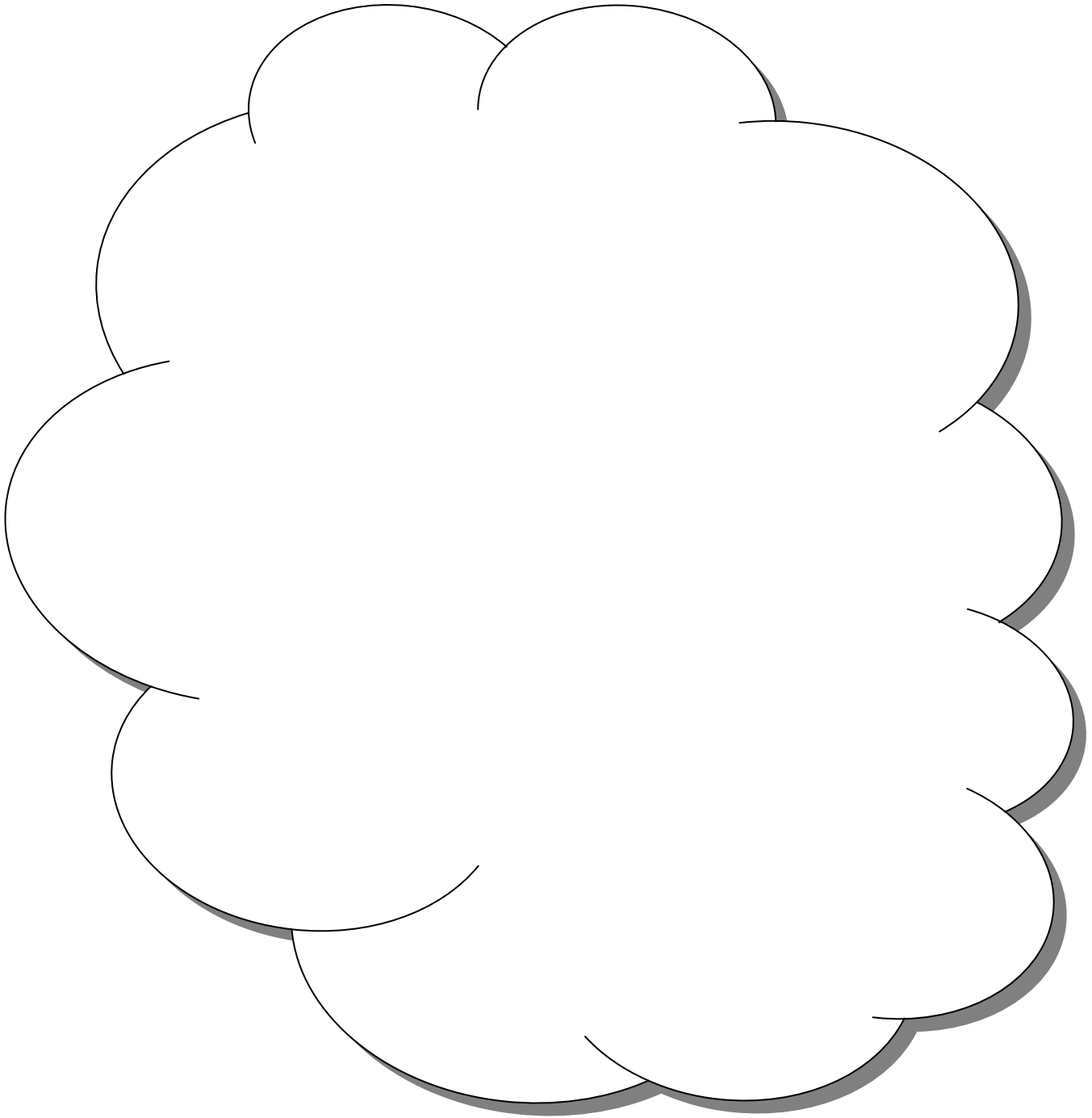
Praying Your Experience

You have been reflecting on your baptismal call
to bring moral guidance to persons entrusted to your influence and care.
Please use the space below to bring to God what is in your heart.



Integrating Activity

Draw an image or write a poem, word or phrase
that reflects what it means for you
to be called at baptism
to help shape the moral vision of society.



Further Reading

The Synod Fathers rightly stressed that “the fundamental rights of the human person are inscribed in human nature itself, they are willed by God and therefore call for universal observance and acceptance. No human authority can infringe upon them by appealing to majority opinion or political consensus, on the pretext of respect for pluralism and democracy. Therefore, the Church must be committed to the task of educating and supporting lay people involved in law-making, government and the administration of justice, so that legislation will always reflect those principles and moral values which are conformity with a sound anthropology [understanding of the human person] and advance the common good”.

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Americ.*, 1999. No. 19.

And how can we remain indifferent to the prospect of an ecological crisis which is making vast areas of our planet uninhabitable and hostile to humanity? Or by the problems of peace, so often threatened by the spectre of catastrophic wars? Or by contempt for the fundamental human right of so many people, especially children? Countless are the emergencies to which every Christian heart must be sensitive.

A special commitment is needed with regard to certain aspects of the Gospel’s radical message which must be a part of her mission of charity. I am speaking of the duty to be committed to *respect for the life of every human being*, from conception until natural death. Likewise, the service of humanity leads us to insist, ... that those using *the latest advances of science*, especially in the field of biotechnology, must never disregard fundamental ethical requirements by invoking a questionable solidarity which eventually leads to discriminating between one life and another and ignoring the dignity which belongs to every human being.

For Christian witness to be effective, especially in these delicate and controversial areas, it is important that special efforts be made to explain properly the reasons for the Church’s position, stressing that it is not a case of imposing on non-believers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person. In this way charity will necessarily become service to culture, politics, the economy and the family, so that the fundamental principles upon which depend of human being and the future of civilization will be everywhere respected.

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2001. No. 51.

In view of the oral challenges presented by enormous new technological power, endangering not only fundamental human rights but the very biological essence of the human species, it is of utmost importance that lay Christians with the help of the universal Church take up the task of calling culture back to the principles of an authentic humanism, giving a dynamic and sure foundation to the promotion and defence of the rights of the human being in one’s very essence, an essence which the preaching of the Gospel reveals to all.

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *On the Mission and Vocation of the Lay Faithful (Christifideles Laici)*, 1988. No. 38.

Here once more we see the need for an engaged, articulate and well-formed Catholic laity endowed with a strong critical sense vis-à-vis the dominant culture and with the courage to counter a reductive secularism which would delegitimize the Church's participation in public debate about the issues which are determining the future of American society," he said. "The

preparation of committed lay leaders and the presentation of a convincing articulation of the Christian vision of man and society remain a primary task of the Church in your country; as essential components of the new evangelization, these concerns must shape the vision and goals of catechetical programs at every level.

Pope Benedict XVI *Address to Bishops of the United States of America on their Ad Limina Visit.* Jan, 2012.

In our own time, the price to be paid for fidelity to the Gospel is no longer being hanged, drawn and quartered but it often involves being dismissed out of hand, ridiculed or parodied. And yet, the Church cannot withdraw from the task of proclaiming Christ and his Gospel as saving truth, the source of our ultimate happiness as individuals and as the foundation of a just and humane society.

Finally, Newman teaches us that if we have accepted the truth of Christ and committed our lives to him, there can be no separation between what we believe and the way we live our lives. Our every thought, word and action must be directed to the glory of God and the spread of his Kingdom. Newman understood this, and was the great champion of the prophetic office of the Christian laity.

Pope Benedict XVI *Address during Prayer Vigil on the Eve of the Beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman,* Hyde Park, London. Saturday September 18, 2010.