



How should a Catholic live? How do I know right from wrong?

GOSPEL



ANSWERS

I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?
– **Matthew 5: 43-48**

Saints & inspirational stories

Julia Greely

Julia Greely knew how to live as a catholic example of charity – which earned her the nickname “Angel of Charity” or “One Person St Vincent de Paul” She could neither read, write nor count. Her constant charity made her the friend of everyone.



Blessed Guiseppe Tovini

Blessed Guiseppe was an example of how to be a Catholic husband, father, lawyer and politician. As John Pail II said when he beatified Guiseppe, “His constant concern was to defend the faith, convinced that without faith our children will never be rich; with faith they will never be poor.”



Team discussion

After reading over the YOUCAT numbers on the following pages, how do you think the Youth Catechism answers the question of the week? Were there any words or ideas that you did not fully understand that you would like to understand better?

Answer in your own words:



YouCat numbers for this week



#291 How can a person tell whether his action is good or bad?

A person is capable of distinguishing good actions from bad ones because he possesses reason and a conscience, which enable him to make clear judgments. The following guidelines make it easier to distinguish good actions from bad ones: (1) What I do must be good; a good intention alone is not enough. Bank robbery is always bad, even if I commit that crime with the good intention of giving the money to poor people. (2) Even when what I do is truly good, if I perform the good action with a bad intention, it makes the whole action bad. If I walk an elderly woman home and help her around the house, that is good. But if I do it while planning a later break-in, that makes the whole action something bad. (3) The circumstances in which someone acts can diminish his responsibility, but they cannot change at all the good or bad character of an action. Hitting one's mother is always bad, even if the mother has previously shown little love to the child.

#292 May we do something bad so that good can result from it?

No, we may never deliberately do something evil or tolerate an evil so that good can result from it. Sometimes there is no other course of action but to tolerate a lesser evil in order to prevent a greater evil. The end does not justify the means. It cannot be right to commit infidelity so as to stabilize one's marriage. It is just as wrong to use embryos for stem cell research, even if one could thereby make medical breakthroughs.

#330 To what extent are all men equal in God's sight?

All men are equal in God's sight insofar as all have the same Creator, all were created in the same image of God with a rational soul, and all have the same Redeemer. Because all men are equal in God's sight, every person possesses the same dignity and has a claim to the same human rights. Hence every kind of social, racist, sexist, cultural, or religious discrimination against a person is an unacceptable injustice.

#321 Can a Christian be a radical individualist?

No, a Christian can never be a radical individualist, because man is by nature designed for fellowship. Every person has a mother and a father; he receives help from others and is obliged to help others and to develop his talents for the benefit of all. Since man is God's "image", in a certain way he reflects God, who in his depths is not alone but triune (and thus life, love, dialogue, and exchange). Finally, love is the central commandment for all Christians; through it we profoundly belong together and are fundamentally dependent on one another. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:39).

#437 How should we treat animals?

Animals are our fellow creatures, which we should care for and in which we should delight, just as God delights in their existence. Animals, too, are sentient creatures of God. It is a sin to torture them, to allow them to suffer, or to kill them uselessly. Nevertheless, man may not place love of animals above love of man.



CONQUEST WEEKLY ACTIVITY GUIDE

#347 Why is “not practicing what you preach” such a serious deficiency in a Christian? Agreement between one’s life and one’s witness is the first requirement for proclaiming the Gospel. Not practicing what you profess is therefore hypocrisy, a betrayal of the Christian duty to be “salt of the earth” and “light of the world”. Paul was the one who reminded the Church in Corinth: “You show that you are a letter from Christ . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor 3:3). Christians themselves, not the things they say, are Christ’s “letters of recommendation” (2 Cor 3:2) to the world.

#377 When must we refuse to obey the State? No one may follow orders from the State that violate God’s laws. It was Peter who called us to practice only a relative obedience toward the State when he said, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). If a State should establish laws and procedures that are racist, sexist, or destructive of human life, a Christian is obliged in conscience to refuse to obey, to refrain from participation, and to offer resistance.

#440 Are Christians obliged to become involved in politics and society? It is a special duty of the Christian laity people to become involved in politics, society, and commerce in the spirit of the Gospel: in charity, truth, and justice. Catholic Social teaching offers them clear guidance in this endeavor. Partisan political activity is, however, incompatible with the ministry of bishops, priests, and religious, who must be of service to everyone.

#331 Why is there nevertheless injustice among men? All men have the same dignity, but not all of them meet with the same living conditions. In cases where injustice is man-made, it contradicts the Gospel. In cases where men have been endowed by God with different gifts and talents, God is asking us to rely on one another: in charity one should make up for what the other lacks. There is a kind of inequality among men that does not come from God but rather originates in societal conditions, especially in the unjust distribution of raw materials, land, and capital worldwide. God expects us to remove from the world everything that is plainly contrary to the Gospel and disregards human dignity. Yet there is another sort of inequality among men that is quite in keeping with God’s will: inequality in talents, initial conditions, and opportunities. These are an indication that being human means being there for others in charity so as to share and to promote life.

#375 How is authority exercised correctly? Authority is exercised properly when it is understood according to Jesus’ example as service. It must never be arbitrary. Jesus showed us once and for all how authority should be exercised. He, the greatest authority, served others and took the last place. Jesus even washed the feet of his disciples (Jn 13:1-20). The authority of parents, teachers, educators, and superiors is given to them by God, not so that they can lord it over those who are entrusted to their care, but rather so that they might understand and exercise their duty of guiding and training as service.

#376 What duties do citizens have toward the State? Every citizen has the duty to cooperate loyally with the civil authorities and to contribute to the common good in truth, justice, freedom, and solidarity. A Christian, too, should love his homeland, defend it in various ways in times of need, and gladly offer to serve civil institutions. He should exercise the right to vote and even run for office and not shirk the duty to pay just taxes. Nevertheless, within the State the individual citizen remains a free man with fundamental rights; he has the right to offer constructive criticism of the State and its organs. The State is there for the people, not the individual for the State.



#395 What is peace? Peace is the consequence of justice and the sign of love put into action. Where there is peace, “every creature can come to rest in good order” (Thomas Aquinas). Earthly peace is the image of the peace of Christ, who reconciled heaven and earth. Peace is more than the absence of war, more than a carefully maintained balance of powers (“balance of terror”). In a state of peace, people can live securely with their legitimately earned property and freely exchange goods with one another. In peace the dignity and the right of self-determination of individuals and of peoples are respected. In peace human coexistence is characterized by brotherly solidarity.

#397 What does Jesus think about nonviolence? Jesus places a high value on nonviolent action. He commands his disciples: “Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Mt 5:39). He rebukes Peter, who wants to defend him with force: “Put your sword into its sheath” (Jn 18:11). Jesus does not call his disciples to take up weapons. He remains silent before Pilate. His way is to take the part of the victims, to go to the Cross, to redeem the world through love, and to call the peacemakers blessed. Therefore the Church, too, respects people who for reasons of conscience refuse to be part of the armed services but place themselves at the service of society in some other way.

#398 Must Christians be pacifists? The Church strives for peace but does not preach radical pacifism. Indeed, no one can deny either the individual citizen or particular governments and alliances the fundamental right of armed self-defense. War is morally justifiable only as a last resort. The Church unmistakably says No to war. Christians should do everything possible to avoid war before it starts: They oppose the stockpiling of arms and trafficking in weapons; they fight against racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination; they work to put an end to economic and social injustice and thus promote peace.

#371 How does a child respect his parents? A child respects and honors his parents by showing them love and gratitude. Children should be grateful to their parents in the first place because they received their life from the love of their parents. This gratitude establishes a lifelong relationship of love, respect, responsibility, and obedience, rightly understood. Especially in times of need, sickness, and old age, children should lovingly be there for their parents and care for them faithfully.

#399 When is the use of military force allowed?

The use of military force is possible only in an extreme emergency. There are several criteria for a “just war”:

- (1) Authorization by the competent authority;
- (2) a just cause;
- (3) a just purpose;
- (4) war must be the last resort;
- (5) the methods used must be proportionate;
- (6) there must be a prospect of success.

#396 How does a Christian deal with anger?

Paul says, “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph 4:26). Anger is initially a natural emotion, a reaction to perceived injustice. If anger becomes hatred, however, and someone has ill-will toward his neighbor, this normal feeling becomes a serious offense against charity. All uncontrolled anger, especially thoughts of revenge, are detrimental to peace and destroy “the tranquility of order”.



#438 Why does the Catholic Church have her own social teaching? Because all men, as children of God, possess a unique dignity, the Church with her social teaching is committed to defending and promoting this human dignity for all men in the social sphere. She is not trying to preempt the legitimate freedom of politics or of the economy. When human dignity is violated in politics or economic practices, however, the Church must intervene. "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well" (Second Vatican Council, GS). In her social teaching, the Church makes this statement specific. And she asks: How can we take responsibility for the well-being and the just treatment of all, even of non-Christians? What is a just organization of human society, of political, economic, and social institutions supposed to look like? In her commitment to justice, the Church is guided by a love that emulates Christ's love for mankind.

#439 How did the Church's social doctrine develop? The Church's social doctrine was a response to the economic problems of the nineteenth century. Whereas industrialization had led to an increase in prosperity, the ones who profited from it were primarily factory owners, while many people sank into poverty as laborers with practically no rights. From this experience Communism drew the conclusion that there was an irreconcilable opposition between labor and capital, which must be decided by class war. The Church, in contrast, advocated a just balance between the interests of the laborers and those of the factory owners. The Church recommended that not only a few but everyone should benefit from the prosperity recently made possible by industrialization and competition. She therefore supported the development of labor unions and advocated protecting laborers from exploitation through legislation and government assurances and insuring them and their families against sickness and emergencies.

#448 Are poverty and underdevelopment an inescapable fate? God has entrusted to us a rich earth that could offer all men sufficient food and living space. Yet there are whole regions, countries, and continents in which many people have scarcely the bare necessities for living. There are complex historical causes for this division in the world, but it is not irreformable. The rich countries have the moral obligation to help the underdeveloped nations out of poverty through developmental aid and the establishment of just economic and commercial conditions. There are more than a billion people living on this earth who must make do with less than one dollar per day. They suffer from a lack of food and clean drinking water; most of them have no access to education or medical care. It is estimated that more than 25,000 people die every day from malnutrition. Many of them are children.

#445 What is meant by the principle "labor before capital"? The Church has always taught "the principle of the priority of labor over capital". Man owns money or capital as a thing. Labor, in contrast, is inseparable from the person who performs it. That is why the basic needs of laborers have priority over the interests of capital. The owners of capital and investors have legitimate interests, too, which must be protected. It is a serious injustice, however, when entrepreneurs and investors try to increase their own profits at the expense of the basic rights of their laborers and employees.



#441 What does the Church say about democracy? The Church supports democracy, because of all political systems it offers the best conditions for achieving equality before the law and safeguarding human rights. In order to do that, however, democracy must be more than mere majority rule. True democracy is possible only in a State ruled by law that recognizes the fundamental God given rights of all and defends them, if necessary, even against the will of the majority. History teaches that even democracy offers no absolute protection from violations of human dignity and human rights. It always runs the risk of becoming a tyranny of the majority over a minority. Democracy depends on preconditions that it cannot guarantee in and of itself. That is why Christians in particular must make sure that the values indispensable to a democracy are not undermined.

#434 May a Christian make bets and play games of chance? Betting and gambling are immoral and dangerous when the gambler risks his livelihood. It becomes even worse if he risks the livelihood of other people, especially of those who are entrusted to his care. Morally speaking, it is a highly dubious practice to wager large sums on a game of chance while others lack the bare necessities of life. Betting and gambling, furthermore, can be addictive and enslave people.

#374 Why is God more important than the family? Without relationship a person cannot live. Man's most important relationship is the one he has with God. This has priority over all human relationships, even family relationships. Children do not belong to the parents, nor do parents belong to their children. Every person belongs directly to God. Only to God is man bound absolutely and always. This is how we understand what Jesus said to those who are called: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:37). Therefore parents should place their children confidently into God's hands if the Lord calls them to the consecrated life in a religious order or to be a priest.

#436 How should we treat the environment? We fulfill God's commission with regard to creation when we care for the earth, with its biological laws, its variety of species, its natural beauty, and its dwindling resources, as a living space and preserve it, so that future generations also can live well on earth. In the book of Genesis, God says, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:28). Having "dominion over the earth" does not mean having an absolute right to dispose arbitrarily of animate and inanimate nature, animals, and plants. Because man is created in God's image, he should care for God's creation as a shepherd and steward. For the first book of the Bible also says, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (Gen 2:15).

#419 How many children should a Christian married couple have? A Christian married couple has as many children as God gives them and as they can take responsibility for. All children whom God sends are a grace and a great blessing. That does not mean that a Christian couple is not supposed to consider how many children they can raise responsibly, given the health of each spouse and their economic or social situation. When a child comes "nevertheless", that child should be welcomed with joy and willingness and accepted with great love. By trusting in God, many Christian couples find the courage to have a large family.



DISCRETION (from Latin *discernere* = distinguish): the ability to determine what one can say to whom and when.

#372 How do parents respect their children?

God entrusted children to parents so that they might be steady, righteous examples for those children, that they might love and respect them and do everything possible so that their children can develop physically and spiritually. Children are a gift from God and not the property of the parents. Before they are their parents' children, they are God's children. The primary duty of parents is to present to their children the Good News and to communicate the Christian faith to them.

#456 What should you do if you have lied to, deceived, or betrayed someone?

Every offense against truth and justice, even if it has been forgiven, demands reparation. If one cannot make amends publicly for a lie or false testimony, one must at least do whatever one can secretly. If one cannot compensate the injured party directly for the wrong, one is obliged in conscience to give him moral satisfaction, in other words, one must do his best so as to make at least symbolic reparation.

#455 What does it mean to be truthful?

Truthfulness means that one acts sincerely and speaks honestly. The truthful individual guards against double-dealing, misrepresentation, malicious deception, and hypocrisy. The worst form of untruthfulness is perjury. A great evil in all communities is slander of other people and malicious gossip: A tells B "confidentially" something derogatory that C said about B.

#457 Why does telling the truth require discretion?

Communicating truth must be done prudently within the context of charity. Often the truth is wielded as a weapon and thus has a destructive rather than a constructive effect. When conveying information, we should think of the "three sieves" of Socrates: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it helpful? Discretion is called for also in dealing with professional secrets. They should always be kept, except in special cases defined by strict criteria. Likewise, anyone who publicizes confidential communications that were made under the seal of secrecy commits a sin. Everything we say must be true, but we need not say everything that is true.

#446 What does the Church say about globalization? Globalization is in itself neither good nor bad; it is, rather, the description of a reality that must be shaped. "Originating within economically developed countries, this process by its nature has spread to include all economies. It has been the principal driving force behind the emergence from underdevelopment of whole regions, and in itself it represents a great opportunity. Nevertheless, without the guidance of charity in truth, this global force could cause unprecedented damage and create new divisions within the human family" (Pope Benedict XVI, *CiV*). When we buy inexpensive jeans, we should not be indifferent to the conditions in which they were manufactured, to the question of whether or not the workers received a just wage. Everyone's fortune matters. No one's poverty should leave us indifferent. On the political level, there is a need for "a true world political authority" (Pope Benedict XVI, *CiV* [citing Bl. John XXIII, *Encyclical Pacem in terris*]) to help reach a compromise between the people in the rich nations and those in underdeveloped countries. Far too often the latter are still excluded from the advantages of economic globalization and have only burdens to bear.



#460 What dangers result from the media?

Many people, especially children, think that whatever they see in the media is real. If in the name of entertainment violence is glorified, anti-social behavior is approved of, and human sexuality is trivialized, this is a sin both of those in the media who are responsible and also of those supervisory authorities that ought to put a stop to it. People who work in the media should always be aware of the fact that their productions have an educational effect. Young people must constantly examine themselves to determine whether they are able to use the media freely, with critical distance, or whether they have become addicted to particular media. Every person is responsible for his soul. Those who consume violence, hatred, and pornography in the media become spiritually deadened and do themselves harm.

#447 Is globalization exclusively a matter of politics and economics? There used to be the idea of a division of labor: economics should be concerned about increasing wealth, and politics should be concerned about distributing it justly. In the age of globalization, however, profits are obtained globally, while politics to a great extent is still limited within national boundaries. Therefore, what is needed today is not just the strengthening of transnational political institutions, but also the initiatives of individuals and social groups that are active economically in the poorer regions of the world, not primarily for the sake of profit, but rather out of a spirit of solidarity and love. The market and the State are necessary, but so is a strong civil society. In a market, products and services are exchanged for goods having the same value. In many regions of this world, however, the people are so poor that they cannot offer anything in exchange and therefore continue to be left behind. So there is a need for economic initiatives that are defined, not by the "logic of exchange", but rather by the "logic of the unconditional gift" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Civ*). This means, not merely giving alms to the poor, but rather helping them to help themselves by opening up paths to economic freedom. There are Christian initiatives, for instance the "Economy of Communion" project of the Focolare Movement, which today involves more than 750 businesses worldwide. There are also non-Christian social entrepreneurs who, though profit-oriented, nevertheless work in the spirit of a "culture of giving" with the goal of alleviating poverty and marginalization.

#459 What ethical responsibilities are connected with the communications media?

Media producers have a responsibility toward media consumers. Above all they must truthfully inform. In both the gathering and the publication of real news, the rights and dignity of individuals must be observed. The means of social communication should contribute to the establishment of justice, freedom, and solidarity in the world. In actual fact, the media are not uncommonly used as weapons in ideological conflict, or else, in a quest for higher ratings, all ethical regulation of the content is abandoned and the media are turned into instruments for seducing people and making them dependent.

#461 How does art mediate between beauty and truth?

The true and the beautiful belong together, for God is the source of beauty and also the source of truth. Art, which is dedicated to the beautiful, is therefore a special path to the whole and to God. What cannot be said in words or expressed in thought is brought to light in art. It is "a freely given superabundance of the human being's inner riches" (CCC 2501). In a way that closely approximates God's creativity, inspiration and human skill are combined in the artist so as to give a valid form to something new, a previously unseen aspect of reality. Art is not an end in itself. It should uplift people, move them, improve them, and ultimately lead them to worship and thank God.