

Perfect Christian Love

Q. 276. What is the summary of all of the commandments?

The commandments, summed up, deal specifically with the love of God and the love of neighbor.

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31). Other words and examples of Jesus tell us how these two commandments are to be practiced.

Sacred Scripture

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. *John 13:34-35*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1824 Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the *commandments* of God and his Christ: “Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.”⁷¹

Splendor of Truth

This certainly does not mean that Christ wishes to put the love of neighbor higher than, or even to set it apart from, the love of God... Both the Old and the New Testaments explicitly affirm that without love of neighbor, made concrete in keeping the commandments, genuine love for God is not possible. (*section 14*)

Vatican Council II

The greatest commandment of the law is to love God with one’s whole heart and one’s neighbor as oneself (cf. Mt. 22:37-39). Christ has made this love of the neighbor his personal commandment and has enriched it with a new meaning when he willed himself, along with his brothers, to be the object of this charity saying: “When you showed it to one of the least of my brothers here, you showed it to me” (Mt. 25:40). In assuming human nature he has united to himself all humanity in a supernatural solidarity which makes of it one single family. He has made charity the distinguishing mark of his disciples, in the words: “By this will all men know you for my disciples, by the love you bear one another” (Jn. 13:35). *Lay People, 8*

In his fatherly care for all of us, God desired that all men should form one family and deal with each other in a spirit of brotherhood. All, in fact, are destined to the very same end, namely God himself, since they have been created in the likeness of God who “made from one every nation of men who live on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Love of God and of one’s neighbor, then, is the first and greatest commandment. *Modern World, 24*

Summary Prayer

Jesus, You teach us that the law of charity demands that we love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind, that is, with our whole being. Yet, our love

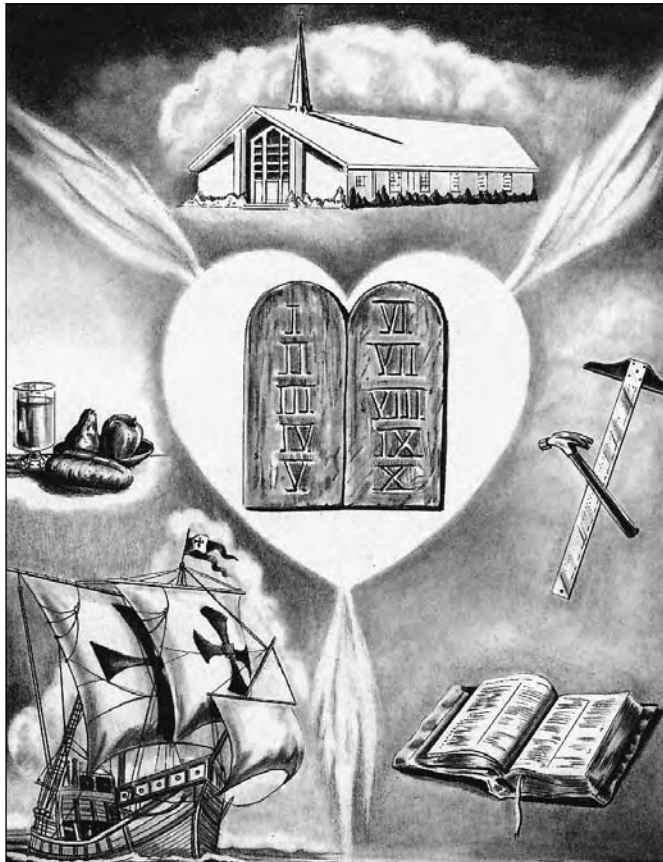
For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

for God need not be a love that we can feel, for essentially, true love consists not in any sensible feeling, but in acts of the mind and will. Since You are truth and goodness themselves, and since You have loved us with an everlasting love, we ought to love You above all creatures and with our entire beings. May this always be so.

Lord, we wish to love You for Your own sake. Let our love for You not be selfish. May we not love You to advance our own interests, but rather let us love You with our whole heart in a free and generous gift of ourselves. If beauty, truth, goodness, and love attract and claim our admiration, love, and devotion, we should not find it difficult to love You, our God, in Whom all these qualities reside to the highest degree. May we love You above all things now and forever. Amen.

Catechism by Diagram

#C16-7



Moral Teaching Summed Up in Love. The special characteristic of Christian moral teaching is its total relationship to the love of God. All commandments and norms for this moral teaching (two tablets) are summed up in faith working through love (heart with flames). The love of God is the soul of morality, and our first duty is to God (church). Then are the duties toward ourselves, i.e., the duties of our state in life, which include prayer (book) and work (hammer and ruler). We also have duties toward our neighbor which include corporal works of mercy (food and drink) and spiritual works of mercy (boat—missionaries going to teach the gospel of love).

Q. 277. Why is the love of God called the soul of morality?

The love of God is called the soul of morality because: (1) God is love, and (2) in God's plan that love reaches out to men in Jesus Christ, so that men might be united by their love for God and for one another.

1. The love of God is called the soul of morality because God is love.

God loves us. He always has and always will love us. He has loved us from the moment He thought of creating us and will love us for all eternity. St. John tells us of the depth of God's love for each person. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Because God loves each of us with an undying, deep love, St. John goes so far as to call God "love" or "charity." "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).

God watches over us every moment of our lives. Every beat of our hearts depends on Him. He gave us every good thing in life which we have: our life, our health, our family and friends, and our possessions. In Baptism, God made us His children and promised to grant us eternal life with Him in heaven, if we remain faithful to Him.

He gives us the privilege of sharing His divine life by giving us sanctifying grace through the sacraments. He continues to grant us the blessings of the Catholic Church, especially through the sacraments and God's truth. Because of His immense love for us, God forgives our sins if we are repentant. Jesus said, "For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father" (John 16:27).

Whenever we think of God's great love for us, we should desire to love Him in return. Our one aim in life should be union with God—through a love which expresses itself in faithful service. Our lives should be joyous since God is with us.

2. The love of God is called the soul of morality because in God's plan that love reaches out to men in Jesus Christ, so that men might be united by their love for God and for one another.

Jesus Christ, in His perfect love for us, died on the Cross to atone for, or make up for, our sins and to regain for us the life of grace and eternal life with God. Jesus is our Mediator with God the Father. God's love comes to us through Jesus Christ, the God-man.

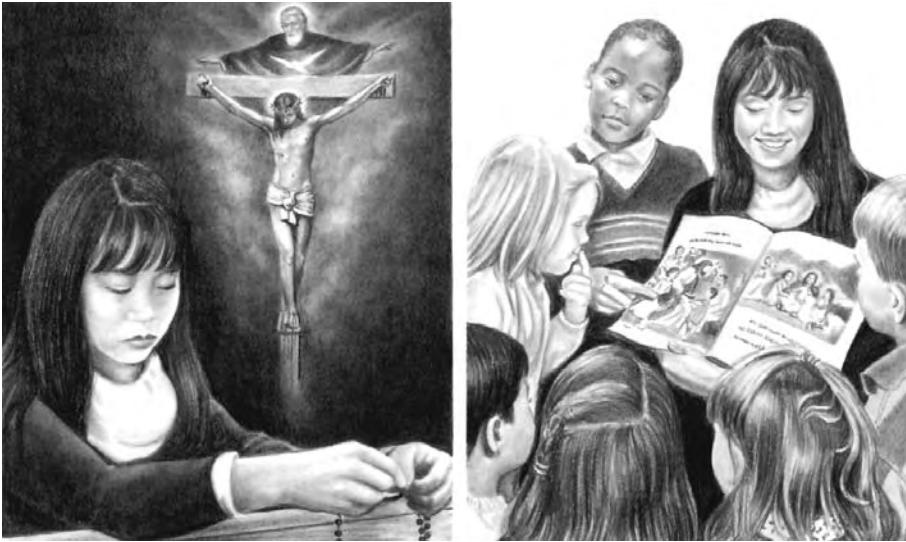
Jesus and His Father sent God the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit, Who is the love of God in the Trinity, is God's supreme gift to the Church. The great work of the Spirit is to unite men into a community of love.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

The Holy Spirit's chief gift is His personal presence in those who believe in and follow Jesus. Through His personal presence and His gift of sanctifying grace, the Holy Spirit makes us pleasing to God and sets us apart for Him. Through sanctifying grace, He makes us children in God's family and unites us in faith and love to Christ and to each other. As a community of believers, we become heirs of God's Kingdom. This is God's loving plan for us.

All of Christianity is based on love, i.e., charity, or unselfish love. Man is created to love, grows by loving, and finally, finds himself by loving. St. Paul said: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1).

#P26-69



Sacred Scripture

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." *Romans 13:8-10*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1828 The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who "first loved us":¹ "If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages, ... we resemble mercenaries. Finally if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him who commands ... we are in the position of children."²

Vatican Council II

"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 Jn. 4:16). God has poured out his love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (cf. Rm. 5:5); therefore the first and most necessary gift is charity, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of him." *The Church, 42*

Summary Prayer

Lord, we want to love You perfectly by consecrating ourselves to Your service with all our powers of body and soul, so that we may present our bodies in chastity as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. May all the powers of our souls be turned towards You; may our minds think of You, our affections delight in You, and our wills conform themselves to Your will.

All is vanity, except loving You and serving You. If we love You with our whole heart, we shall fear neither death nor punishment, neither judgment nor hell, because perfect love will prepare our souls for a more intimate union with You.

Love moved You to create us and to redeem us. Innumerable are the graces and blessings that You have given us in Your love. All that we see, hear, or feel which is good and beautiful is a gift from You. May all creatures be so many mirrors wherein we may behold You, and so many steps whereby we may ascend to You, the God of our love. Amen.

#F1-146

**Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise** (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. God's Ten Commandments are fulfilled by love of God and neighbor. Why can we say that all of Christianity is based on love?
2. Look for ways to strengthen your love for one another in your family. Explain in writing how you can manifest this love to others, by word and deed, in your neighborhood, parish community, school, or workplace. As Mother Teresa often said, daily look for the lonely ones in your family or community and strive to show your love for them.
3. Meditate on the many ways that God has shown His great love for you. Thank Him for His loving concern and care for you and your family. Tell Him you're sorry for the times you have taken His love for granted and ask Him to deepen your love for Him and for others.

Q. 278. What is man’s greatest responsibility?

Man’s greatest responsibility in life is to do God’s will by living in His love and to practice the “new commandment” of love of neighbor.

Jesus said: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love” (John 15:9-10).

The action of the Holy Spirit is made clear when the distinctive characteristic of Catholic moral teaching—love—is brought to light. All precepts and counsels of this moral teaching are summarized as faith working through love. Love (charity) is, as it were, faith’s soul.

Jesus taught us about God’s way of life, that is, one of total and complete sacrificial love. God is forever giving Himself. To belong to His Kingdom means to imitate Christ, i.e., to live by love. We must be willing to live for others and become a person for others, as Jesus did.

We are called to embrace, in faith, a life of charity towards God and towards our neighbor; in this lies our greatest responsibility and our exalted moral dignity.

We show our love for God, ourselves, and our neighbors by embracing the state in life and the vocation to which God calls us. When we accept what it is God wants for us, He unites us to Himself and to each other in an orderly, concrete way.

One of the most important ways we prove our love for God and neighbor is by helping others discern, discover, embrace, and live the vocation and state in life to which God calls them. Parents, especially, need to respect, encourage, and assist their children in this regard. At the same time, parents must not impose their own dreams and preferences on their children.



#T9_2_3-2

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Sacred Scripture

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another... If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. *1 John 4:9-15*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1823 Jesus makes charity the *new commandment*.¹ By loving his own “to the end,”² he makes manifest the Father’s love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.” And again: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”³

#T9_2_3-3

***Splendor of Truth***

Jesus brings God’s commandments to fulfillment, particularly the commandment of love of neighbor, by interiorizing their demands and by bringing out their fullest meaning. Love of neighbor springs from a loving heart which, precisely because it loves, is ready to live out the loftiest challenges. Jesus shows that the commandments must not be understood as a minimum limit not to be gone beyond, but rather as a path involving a moral and spiritual journey towards perfection, at the heart of which is love (cf. Col 3:14). (*section 15*)

Vatican Council II

Love, as the bond of perfection and fullness of the law (cf. Col. 3:14; Rom. 13:10) governs, gives meaning to, and perfects all the means of sanctification. Hence the true disciple of Christ is marked by love both of God and of his neighbor. *The Church, 42*

But if charity is to grow and fructify in the soul like a good seed, each of the faithful must willingly hear the word of God and carry out his will with deeds, with the help of his grace; he must frequently partake of the sacraments, chiefly the Eucharist, and take part in the liturgy; he must constantly apply himself to prayer, self-denial, active brotherly service and the practice of all virtues. *The Church, 42*

A life like this [in union with Christ] calls for a continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity. *Lay People, 4*

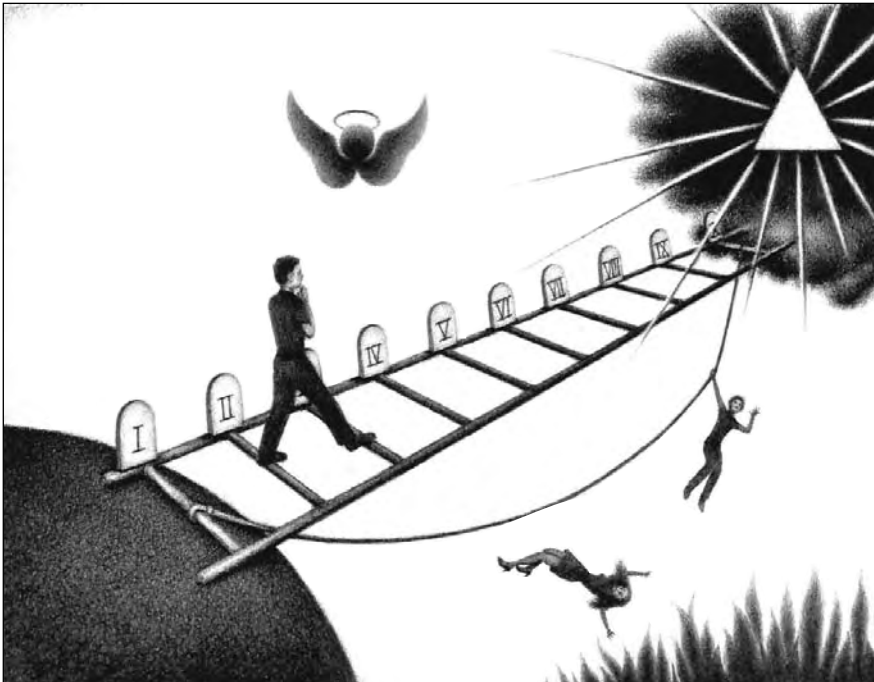
If this exercise of charity is to be above all criticism, and seen to be so, one should see in one's neighbor the image of God to which he has been created, and Christ the Lord to whom is really offered all that is given to the needy. The liberty and dignity of the person helped must be respected with the greatest sensitivity. Purity of intention should not be stained by any self-seeking or desire to dominate. The demands of justice must first of all be satisfied; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity. The cause of evils, and not merely their effects, ought to disappear. The aid contributed should be organized in such a way that beneficiaries are gradually freed from their dependence on others and become self-supporting. *Lay People, 8*

Wishing to come down to topics that are practical and of some urgency, the Council lays stress on respect for the human person: everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as another self, bearing in mind above all his life and the means necessary for living it in a dignified way lest he follow the example of the rich man who ignored Lazarus, the poor man.

Today there is an inescapable duty to make ourselves the neighbor of every man, no matter who he is, and if we meet him, to come to his aid in a positive way, whether he is an aged person abandoned by all, a foreign worker despised without reason, a refugee, an illegitimate child wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a starving human being who awakens our conscience by calling to mind the words of Christ: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). *Modern World, 27*

Catechism by Diagram

#C16-5



Commandments Are a Ladder to God. Man's greatest responsibility and dignity is to live a life of love of God and his fellow men. The commandments of God (number on each step) are like a ladder that joins earth with heaven and on which we reach God (triangle). The grace of God (rays) and our guardian angels will help us along the way. If a man should disobey God's commandments in a serious way, he can still be saved from eternal punishment (fire) by the sacrament of Penance (cable from earth to heaven).

#R13-2



Q. 279. How does a person obtain holiness?

A person obtains holiness, whatever his state of life may be, by loving God above all else.

God's life is holy because it is lived with love. The Father and the Son forever give Themselves to each other in one eternal infinite act of love. From this mutual love proceeds the Holy Spirit, their infinite, eternal union; the total sharing of their one divine Being and nature.

Jesus teaches us that holiness consists in being "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). We achieve this perfection by means of both the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and the infused virtues. The gifts of the Holy Spirit fill us with the light of Christ's truth. The infused virtues, especially the theological and cardinal virtues, fill our hearts with the power of Christ's grace.

In prayer (cf. Mt 7:7), we must continually ask for the light of Christ's truth and the power of His grace. Then, empowered from above, we must imitate Christ in prayer, in the ascetic* life, and through our involvement in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. We must reproduce in our lives the mysteries of Christ's life, especially those presented to us in the mysteries of the Holy Rosary. Imitation of Christ includes our efforts to promote the true development of our whole human person and the whole human person of our neighbor as well. It includes increasing everyone's ability to respond to his vocation and call from God.

When we cooperate with God's plan for our lives and for the lives of others, God can complete the good work that He began in us through His grace in Baptism. For it was in Baptism, our birth from above by water and the Holy Spirit, that God conferred on us His first gift of the Holy Spirit, the infused virtues, and our vocation in life. Through these we became God's adopted children (cf. Gal 4:5),

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

sharers of His very own divine nature and life (cf. 2 Peter 1:4) and of the fellowship of divine Persons (cf. 1 Jn 1:3).

Sacred Scripture

Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” *1 Peter 1:13-16*

Be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. *2 Peter 3:14*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2015 The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle.¹ Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes: “He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows.”²

Splendor of Truth

The Church, instructed by the Teacher’s words, believes that man, made in the image of the Creator, redeemed by the Blood of Christ and made holy in the presence of the Holy Spirit, has as the ultimate purpose of his life to live “for the praise of God’s glory” (cf. Eph 1:12), striving to make each of his actions reflect the splendor of that glory. (*section 10*)

Vatican Council II

All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love, and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society. In order to reach this perfection the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ’s gift, so that, following in his footsteps and conformed to his image, doing the will of God in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor. *The Church, 40*

The forms and tasks of life are many but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God’s Spirit and, obeying the Father’s voice and adoring God the Father in spirit and in truth, follow Christ, poor, humble and cross-bearing, that they may deserve to be partakers of his glory. Each one, however, according to his own gifts and duties must steadfastly advance along the way of a living faith, which arouses hope and works through love. *The Church, 41*

Q. 280. Why do men and women enter into consecrated vocations?

Men and women enter into consecrated vocations to show, in a special and necessary way, their love of God by giving themselves in service to mankind.

There are many different forms of consecrated life, such as religious brothers and sisters, and apostolic celibates. The consecrated life is a special state to which our Lord God calls some people. Like all states of Christian life, the consecrated life is a way to perfection. The seeds of this special vocation are found in the Gospels where Jesus speaks of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Those who enter the consecrated life accept what are called the “evangelical counsels” of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They bind themselves to these counsels by public or private vows.

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Besides the profession of these three vows, the observance of a rule of common life is an essential aspect of the consecrated life.

Perfect love of God is the aim and ideal of the consecrated state. This state is a permanent condition of life officially recognized as such by the Church wherein a person binds him or herself to strive after perfection.

The perfection of Christian life essentially consists in love—first and foremost in the love of God, then in the love of neighbor. The consecrated life is to be one continuous act of love in the service of God and the Church. Hence, consecrated vocations are important to humanity and to the Church.

Sacred Scripture

And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. *Matthew 19:29*

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. *1 Corinthians 7:32-34*

E4-82



Catechism of the Catholic Church

916 The state of consecrated life is thus one way of experiencing a “more intimate” consecration, rooted in Baptism and dedicated totally to God.¹ In the consecrated life, Christ’s faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come.²

2253 Parents should respect and encourage their children’s vocations. They should remember and teach that the first calling of the Christian is to follow Jesus.

Vatican Council II

The teaching and example of Christ provide the foundation for the evangelical counsels of chaste self-dedication to God, of poverty and of obedience. The Apostles and Fathers of the Church commend them, and so do her doctors and pastors. They therefore constitute a gift of God which the Church has received from her Lord and which by his grace she always safeguards.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Church authority has been at pains to give a right interpretation of the counsels, to regulate their practice, and also to set up stable forms of living embodying them. *The Church*, 43

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. What does it mean to be holy?
2. In your role as a mother or father, son or daughter, brother or sister, student or worker, how do you strive to be holy as you fulfill your responsibilities?
3. In your daily prayer time, thank God for the graces He has given you to help you live a holy life. Ask the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, that He may deepen your love for God and help you to become more and more Christ-like.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Jesus, You said to Your followers, "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men" (Matthew 5:13).

We are the salt of the earth in the measure that we are holy. Like true salt, we are to be real agents of preservation in a world filled with corruption. Help us to be the salt of the earth by leading holy lives through frequent Holy Communion and fervent prayer; for how can we influence others to be good if we ourselves have lost Your Spirit? Never permit us to lose the desire for holiness by letting ourselves be infected by a worldly spirit or by not living according to our holy faith in self-denial and detachment.

Jesus, You said: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14, 16).

Most Sacred Heart, as You are the Light of the world, by putting into practice Your holy doctrine and example, may we be the light of the world, that the brightness of our good example may scatter the darkness of the spirit of the world and radiate true and lasting happiness which comes from You alone.

Jesus, purify our hearts with Your truth and guide us in the way of holiness, so that we may always do what is pleasing in Your sight. Help us always to do what is good, right, and true in Your sight. Jesus, our Light shining in the darkness, lead us to life and give our mortal nature the gift of holiness. May we spend our lives in praise of Your glory. Help us to seek You always with all the love of our hearts.

Good Master, show us the way You have chosen for us in this life. May we walk in it and so find fulfillment and happiness. Give us the grace we need to enter more deeply into the mystery of Your life, so that our lives may always reveal You more effectively.

In Your mercy, Jesus, send the Holy Spirit to shine on us, so that our lives may radiate holiness, love, and faith. Healer of body and soul, cure the sickness of our spirits, so that we may grow in holiness through Your constant care. We ask this in Your most holy Name. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 77

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 276. What is the summary of all of the commandments?

On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 7, 29.

Q. 277. Why is the love of God called the soul of morality?

Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Vatican II, sect. 7; The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, John Paul II, sect. 34; The Relationship Between Faith and Reason, John Paul II, sect. 25.

Q. 278. What is man's greatest responsibility?

On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 49, 57-58.

Q. 279. How does a person obtain holiness?

The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 16-17, 55; On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 27.

Q. 280. Why do men and women enter into consecrated vocations?

The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 55; To the Youth of the World, John Paul II, sect. 9.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 276: What does the Church mean when it refers to the natural law? (Please note that this question does not concern what are referred to as physical laws, which are also called laws of nature.)
- Q. 277: What is the love of God like?
- Q. 278: Is it always possible to do God's will?
- Q. 279: God calls everyone to the fullness of holiness as we learn from Vatican II. "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of Christian love" (*The Church*, 40). This being true, why are most canonized saints taken from the ranks of the clergy and Religious?
- Q. 280: Some maintain that the celibate or single state is contrary to God's will. Often cited in support of this position is Genesis 2:18: "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone.'" Is celibacy, therefore, wrong?