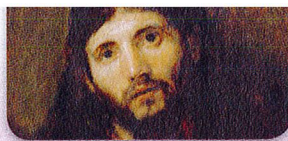


Looking Ahead

In this chapter, the Holy Spirit invites you to ►



EXPLORE the life of a person who loved others as Jesus taught.



DISCOVER that living as a child of God is to follow the Law of Love.



DECIDE how you can live according to the Golden Rule.

CHAPTER

19



The Law of Love

? How do friends treat one another? How do enemies tend to treat one another?

Read how Jesus challenges his disciples to be perfect as the Father is perfect, to love as God loves:

“But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you . . . For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? . . . And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that?”

MATTHEW 5:44, 46–47

? How did Jesus show love to his enemies?
Why should we love our enemies?



Disciple Power

Charity

To love as God loves is what we call charity, or *caritas* in Latin. This is the standard by which all of us are to live, and as Saint Paul says, charity is the greatest of the three Theological Virtues (read 1 Corinthians 13:13).

THE CHURCH FOLLOWS JESUS

Witness of Love

Josephine Bakhita was an African girl from Sudan. She was taken into slavery as a child and became a Saint of the Catholic Church. Read these selections from an imaginary diary about her life.

7:30 am October 15, 1878

I write my first journal entry . . . trying to remember my name. I am only nine years old. My friend, Elham, and I were walking around the fields. We noticed we were far from home. Suddenly two strangers appeared from behind a fence. One of them asked me to pick some fruit for him in the forest. I did so out of respect for those older than I. They did not respect me. While in the forest, he grabbed me and threatened me with a knife. He told me, "If you cry, you'll die! Follow us!" They call me "Bakhita." I am now their slave.

9:00 pm February 2, 1881

Escape seems impossible. I think tonight I will die. I do not know if I can take any more cuts. My masters tattooed on my body my age, 13. It still hurts from when they rubbed the salt into my wounds. Why do they do this to me? I feel humiliated.


5:00 am January 10, 1890

Heavenly Lord! I know that you have let me live because you have destined me for great things. I am free now. I live far away in Italy and have now learned about God and the Christian faith. My Master, what blessings you have bestowed upon me in my life! You have washed away all my sins, and I now take part in your heavenly banquet here on Earth. Yesterday was the beginning of my new life as your daughter as I was baptized. Loving Father, you have always been in my heart, but now I know your name. May I love everyone as you have always loved me. Perhaps I will become a sister like the ones who instructed me.

7:00 am February 7, 1947

Almighty Father, I am not afraid to see you. Please loosen these chains, they are so heavy! I realize that the pain and suffering all my life, even as I lay dying, has been like that of your Son, Jesus. I am truly your daughter in Christ. All that I am belongs to you. As you desire, my Master.

Saint Josephine was canonized in October 2000.

 How did God bless Josephine, in spite of her suffering?



Love Like God

Before Josephine learned about God, she tells us that she knew him in her heart. God created us in his image and likeness, calling us to love like him. In God's fatherly love for us, he has etched into our hearts and minds a law that guides us in living as his images in the world.

There is something about the way God has created us that moves us naturally to choose what is good for us and for others. The Church calls this the **natural law**. This law, a pattern or design, helps us to discover the way to the true happiness that God has promised us. This law also helps us to recognize evil, which leads us away from happiness and away from God. Here are three principles of the natural law:

- Do good and avoid evil.
- Tell the truth to each other.
- Be respectful toward one another.

The Ten Commandments

When God entered into the Covenant with Moses and the Israelites, he gave Moses the Ten Commandments. These Commandments reminded the people of the laws that God had written on their hearts. The Ten Commandments named the important ways by which God wants his people to live so that they can create a community of care and respect (read Exodus 20:1–17).

Jesus told his disciples they were to live the Commandments. He said that he came to fulfill the Commandments, and not to do away with them (see Matthew 5:17).

Activity

Which U.S. laws or customs appear to reflect the principles of the Natural Law listed above? Write your thoughts in the space below.

FAITH FOCUS

What rules or laws does Jesus ask us to live by?

FAITH VOCABULARY

Golden Rule

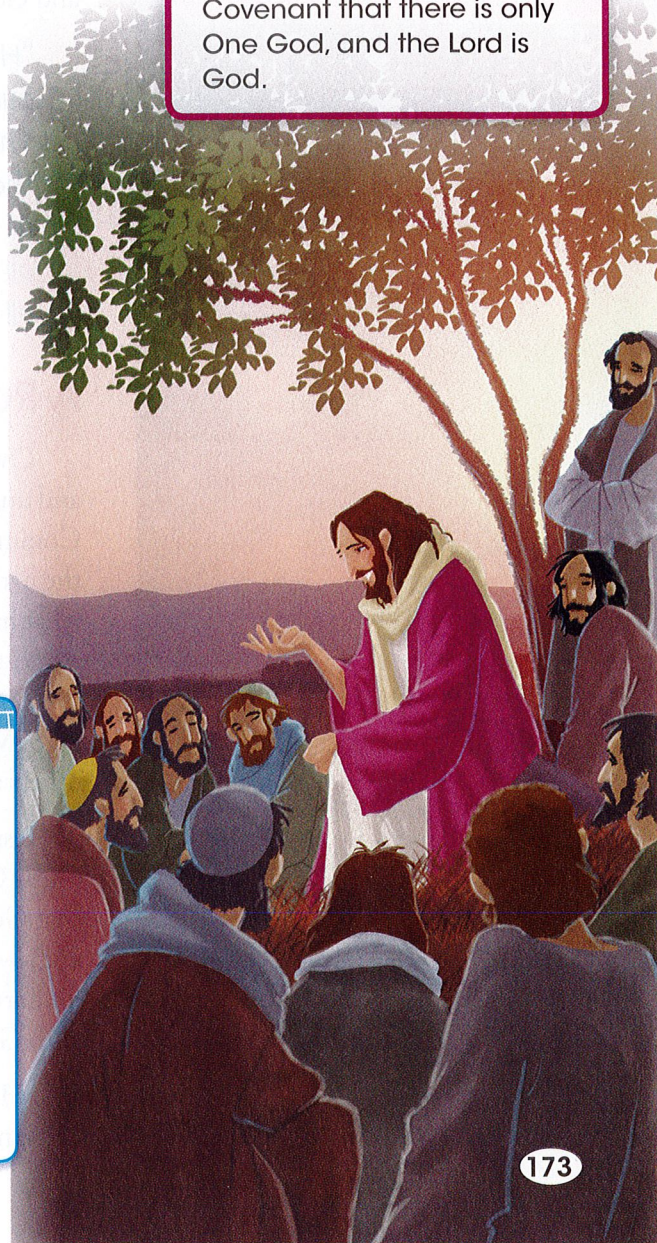
This is a rule to live by that is knowable by human reason. It is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

natural law

It is the foundation of the moral life for everyone. It enables us by human reason to know what is good and what is evil.

Shema

The Shema is a prayerful rule revealed by God in the Covenant that there is only One God, and the Lord is God.





Faith-Filled People

Canossian Sisters

Saint Bakhita was a member of this group founded by Saint Magdalene of Canossa in 1808. This religious group of Catholic women dedicate themselves to education, evangelization, pastoral care of the sick, and health services. The rule of their organization is based on the belief that the good we do for our neighbor comes from being good to ourselves.

The Great Commandment

Jesus told us to live the Commandments as he did. We are to love God and one another as he did. Jesus' way of love is the Christian way of life. When the Pharisees, scholars of the Law, gathered to hear Jesus speak, one of them asked him which of all the laws is the greatest. Jesus said:

"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbors as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

MATTHEW 22:37-40

In teaching the Great Commandment, Jesus revealed his authority on the Law. The Great Commandment is a combination of the **Shema** and the **Golden Rule**. The Shema, from the Jewish tradition, is a prayerful reminder of the First Commandment that God is the Lord and God is One.


"Hear O Israel! The LORD is our God, The LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength."

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5

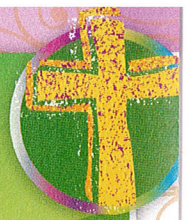
A Rule for Everyone

Over the centuries, people have lived by different laws, both just and unjust. Yet God has clearly given us his standard for living in the Commandments. Within the Great Commandment, we can detect the natural law at work. To love our neighbor as ourselves comes from what has been called the Golden Rule, a principle of the natural law. Almost every religion has taught and continues to teach some form of the Golden Rule. It is phrased in different ways in the Bible (read Tobit 4:15; Matthew 7:12). Essentially the rule states that we should "do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31).

Jesus teaches that those who faithfully follow him and live the Great Commandment will be invited to join him in the Kingdom that God has prepared since the beginning of creation (read Matthew 25:31-40). This is possible for everyone. God leads us to happiness here on Earth within the Church. Yet complete happiness is everlasting life with God, Mary, and all the Saints.

 How is the Great Commandment a combination of the Shema and the Golden Rule? Explain it to a partner.

Catholics Believe



The New Law is the grace of the Holy Spirit received by faith in Christ. This law works through charity. We find Jesus teaching this New Law in his Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5-7). It is also expressed through the celebrations of the Seven Sacraments, which impart the grace of love (see CCC 1983).

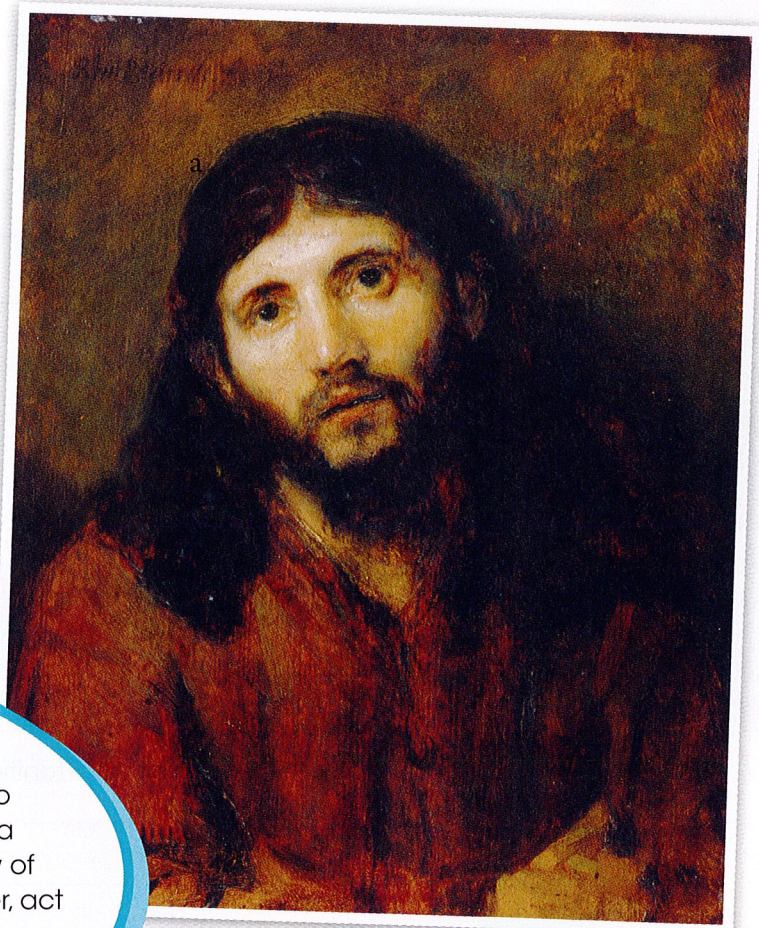
“Remain in My Love.”

Happiness with God comes through the grace of love and the freedom found in following God’s Law. This grace of love is the grace of the Holy Spirit given to us as members of the Church. When we act out of charity, we are using the grace of love. And we follow Jesus’ new commandment, to “love one another” (John 13:34). The New Commandment is the Law of Love. By following this law, we show others that we are Jesus’ disciples (read John 13:35).

The Holy Spirit gives us the grace to follow the Law of Love. Jesus taught, “As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love” (John 15:9-10). By following the Law of Love, we are not just being disciples of Jesus; we are his friends (read John 15:14). By loving God, we are able to love one another, even our enemies.

“I Have Called You Friends.”

Loving one another frees us to be who God created us to be—an image of God! This is why Jesus says, “I no longer call you slaves, because slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends” (John 15:15). Saint Josephine Bakhita understood Jesus’ New Commandment, the Law of Love. She understood her freedom came from her relationship with God. Despite her childhood experience of being a slave, Josephine remained in the love of Christ. She was able to see herself as a friend of Jesus and a daughter of God the Father.



Christ,
Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn,
c.1648/50 (oil on oak panel)

Activity Applying the Law of Love

When is it easy to apply the Law of Love to others, and when is it hard to do? Describe a situation in which someone applies the Law of Love when it is not easy to do. With a partner, act out the situation for your class.

I FOLLOW JESUS

Part of being a Christian means to love others as God loves you. Each day, you cooperate with the Holy Spirit to show love and respect to yourself and others. Making such decisions according to the Law of Love builds friendships.

LIVING THE GOLDEN RULE

Write several ways you would like others to treat you. Then think of a situation in your school, family, or neighborhood through which you could treat someone else in the way you like to be treated. Write the situation here.

MY FAITH CHOICE

This week, I will look for opportunities to live the Law of Love according to the Golden Rule. I will:



Pray, "Jesus, you call me friend. Help me to be a friend to others as you are to me. Amen."

Chapter Review

Match the term in the left column with the description on the right.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Ten Commandments | a. the laws God gave to Moses |
| 2. the Shema | b. the law written in our hearts |
| 3. natural law | c. Love God, and love your neighbor as yourself |
| 4. Great Commandment | d. a prayerful rule revealed through the Covenant |

TO HELP YOU REMEMBER

1. Do good and avoid evil is a principle of the natural law.
2. Love of God and love of neighbor is essentially the Great Commandment.
3. The Law of Love is the way we are called to be friends with Jesus and with one another.

The Shema

The Shema is prayed as a morning and evening prayer by Jewish people today. Praying the Shema is the ancient tradition found in the Old Testament. Below is an abbreviated version of the prayer written in English and Hebrew. Pray these words with your class in English.

Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Elohaynu Adonai Echad.

Blessed be the name of his glorious kingdom for ever and ever.

Barukh Shem k'vod malkhuto l'olam va-ed.

With My Family

This Week ...

In **Chapter 19**, "The Law of Love," your child learned:

- ▶ God etched in our hearts the Natural Law. This law helps us to do good and avoid evil.
- ▶ Jesus taught us that we are to love God and to love our neighbor. This is the Great Commandment.
- ▶ Jesus challenges us to be perfect as the Father is perfect. We can do this with the grace of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to love others as God loves us.
- ▶ Charity calls us to love others as God loves us.

For more about related teachings of the Church, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1949–2029, and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, pages 310–311, 315–318, 327–330.

Sharing God's Word

In **John 15:1–17** Jesus teaches the parable of the Vine and the Branches. Read this Scripture passage with your family, reflecting on how this imagery is relevant today. Discuss how your family remains in the love of Christ.

We Live as Disciples

The Christian home and family is a school of discipleship. Choose one of the following activities to do as a family, or design a similar activity of your own:

- ▶ Post in your home the family rules. Be sure that each of the family rules follows the Law of Love.

- ▶ During family mealtime, talk about some major events in the lives of your children. Discuss how the Law of Love is followed or violated.
- ▶ Select new ways to participate in the life of your parish and greater community that demonstrate the Law of Love.

Our Spiritual Journey

Often we struggle with the need to make sacrifices in life. This can limit us in our ability to fully respect others, especially those whom we might consider undeserving. Almsgiving is an ancient practice in which sacrifice and charity come together for the good of those in need, as well as for the good of ourselves. Find new ways to give to the needy this week.



For more ideas on ways that your family can live as disciples of Jesus, visit

www.BeMyDisciples.com