

eNews From the Abbey

MARCH 21, 2008

Welcome to eNews From the Abbey! Please pass our newsletter along to people you think may enjoy it. Encourage them to sign up!

You can subscribe or unsubscribe to our monthly eNews any time in the Office at www.fromtheabbey.com.

"Human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and can't really get rid of it."

The From the Abbey Mission

What We Do

- Through **FROM THE ABBEY**, we offer lively interactive educational programs to parishes and home education groups (especially within the Diocese of La Crosse). If you would like to talk with me about coming to your parish or organization, call me at (715) 498-1370 or email jeff@fromtheabbey.com.
- Our content website www.fromtheabbey.com offers free educational content focused (though not exclusively) on moral doctrine and theology. Eventually, content will include text, interactive images, sound, videos, and forums.
- Our online bookstore www.fromtheabbey.net offers carefully reviewed Catholic books, audio presentations, video, music, rosaries, and educational material. **We offer free local delivery to customers in Marshfield, Wisconsin.** All profit (and there isn't much profit in a bookstore) goes to equipping and funding the apostolate. Donations are also greatly appreciated (though they are not tax deductible).
- Our monthly email newsletter will offer brief, easily digested discussions of contemporary moral issues, as well as news and updates about **From the Abbey**. To subscribe, visit the Office at www.fromtheabbey.com and fill out the subscription form.
- Jeff is in the process of writing the **Dear Brother Thomas** textbook and curriculum in moral theology, designed for teenagers and adults.
- Once the textbook and curriculum are done, Jeff will offer a 25-hour **Dear Brother Thomas** moral theology seminar to parishes within the Diocese of La Crosse (not all in one day, of course).
- If the apostolate can raise enough funds, the seminars will eventually be recorded onto a DVD and be available for purchase.

CS Lewis

Mission Statement

From the Abbey is a catechetical apostolate dedicated to leading Catholics to the joy of truth through education in authentic Church teaching, especially in the area of moral theology.

"My people have been silent, because they had no knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee"

Hosea 4:6

Morality Clip From the Abbey

What is the Natural Moral Law?

The simple definition of the natural moral law comes from Sacred Scripture - the law that is written in the human heart ([ROMANS 2:15](#)). Most explanations of this definition tell us that the natural moral law consists of the moral principles that are obvious to any human being. Everyone instinctively knows that murder of an innocent person is wrong, or that cowardice is not a virtue. If your friends are impressed by big words, you can tell them that the term for the moral law that human beings instinctively know is synderesis (sometimes called the "no-duh law" by high school students). Knowledge of such basic morality is ingrained in human nature and within human relationships. However, this definition of natural law only covers part of what Saint Thomas Aquinas called the Natural Law.

Saint Thomas teaches that the natural moral law is the law that governs human nature. Human free will gives us the choice to be fully human or to live less than human lives. The natural moral law guides us to integrate our intellect, will and physical faculties into a complete, fully human life. So, as an obvious example - human sexuality should differ from animal sex because human sex isn't just the impulsive result of physical desires. Our human intellect makes sexual union meaningful and our human will means that we can control ourselves and choose to express love and commitment with our bodies. When we forget meaning and commitment and make sex only about physical pleasure, we become animals. Natural law guides us to make our sexuality - and every aspect of our lives - more human.

The natural moral law also directs every aspect of human life toward the Good, the True and the Beautiful. The most basic tenant of the natural law is "do what is good and avoid what is evil." Human emotions motivate us to seek and attain what is good and to avoid what is evil. Human action empowers us to go get what is good or to move away from what is evil. Human freedom allows us to freely choose the greatest possible good among a selection of physical and spiritual goods. In human society, we strive to help each other find the Good, the True and the Beautiful because none of us can do it alone and because the Good, the True and the Beautiful are also found within relationships. Unfortunately, human emotions, human actions, and human freedom do not always accurately lead us to what is authentically good, true and beautiful. Natural law guides us to form our human faculties so that they do.

The tenants of the natural moral law can be known through human reason, without any help from Divine Revelation. We can figure out how to become more human by studying human nature. We can use our intellect to figure out what is good for us and what is bad for us. The natural moral law also guides us to form our conscience with human reason and to use our conscience (power to reason morally) to apply the moral law to specific moral decisions. The conscience will be the subject of a future eNews issue. In the next issue we'll examine the Divine Moral Law.

[FOR A MORE DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE NATURAL MORAL LAW, READ MORAL THEOLOGY IN A NUTSHELL IN THE LIBRARY AT WWW.FROMTHEABBEY.COM.](#)

[ALSO CHECK OUT THE INTERACTIVE "LAW OF GOD" DIAGRAM IN THE CLASSROOM!](#)

Offerings From the Abbey



We are constantly adding features and content to www.fromtheabbey.com. We hope to make this website a valuable tool for the reformation of our culture. The monthly updates in eNews **From the Abbey** will ensure that you don't miss out on a useful new addition, and that you don't forget about all that **From the Abbey** has to offer.

What's New

Work has progressed slowly on The Abbey this month due to computer problems. Please pray for my frustration.

Despite the setbacks, we do have some progress to report. The artwork is done for the classroom. Janene drew a classroom complete with a white board on which the Classroom's offerings are listed. We are experimenting with the interactive diagrams, which offer a quick lesson by letting you hover over parts of the diagram to read brief definitions and explanations. Let us know if you find them useful!

What We're Working On

In addition to the interactive diagrams, we are working on the study guide for *Gaudium et Spes*. This document from the Second Vatican Document explores how the Church can answer the deepest longings of the modern world by presenting the Gospel. This document reads the "signs of the times" and alerts Catholics to trends and dangers that we are still headed toward, even forty years after the document was written. You will be able to find this study guide in the Classroom by the end of March. [YOU CAN FIND GAUDIUM ET SPES ONLINE, OR YOU CAN BUY IT IN OUR BOOKSTORE.](#)

On the writing desk, I have two articles about which I am very excited. First, I am planning to fill our much-neglected web log (blog) with a series that responds to the declaration made by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) that strove to define conscience, and then to set limits on conscientious objection in the medical field based on their definition. You can always read the latest blog article in [THE STUDY](#). In tandem with this blog article, I will write about the Catholic understanding of conscience and place that article in [MORAL THEOLOGY IN A NUTSHELL](#) in the Library. Secondly, a friend has asked me to write about the morality of getting our children vaccinated for Measles, Mumps, and Rubella, since that vaccine was created from the cells of aborted babies. This is a complex issue, and I hope to shed some light on it so that we can use our consciences to make the best decisions. This article will be found in the [LIVING THE DIVINE LIFE](#) series in the Library.

From the Abbey Bookstore offers free delivery service to locations in Marshfield. You can choose to pick up your order at one of the three Marshfield parishes, at Columbus Catholic High School, or at the Christian Library in the Saint Vincent de Paul Outreach Center.

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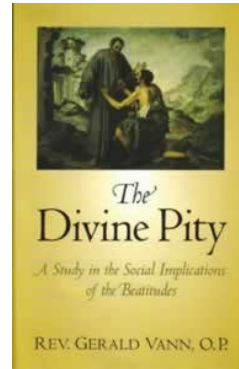
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We're on the Web!

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(content site)

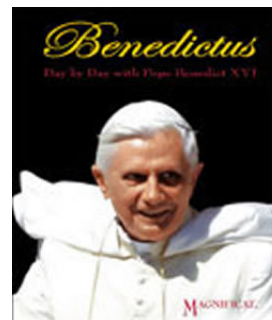
Features From the Abbey Bookstore

The **From the Abbey Bookstore** is stocked with resources to make the season of Lent more meaningful.



[Click on the image to read more about it or to purchase this book!](#)

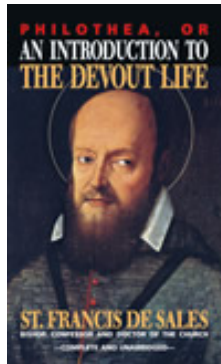
The Divine Pity explores the Beatitudes as guides to the moral life and to a deeper spiritual life. At the same time a catechetical work and an examination of conscience, *The Divine Pity* offers intellectual and spiritual challenge. As the subtitle indicates, Father Vann also explores the Beatitudes in social context - because we always exercise virtue in the context of the family of Faith and the family of humanity. Father Vann also teaches about how the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Cardinal Virtues help us to live each Beatitude. **\$9.48**



[Click on the image to read more about it or to purchase this book!](#)

Benedictus: Day by Day with Pope Benedict XVI offers a daily snippet of the theological and spiritual wisdom of our pope. These writings are taken from his works as Cardinal Ratzinger and as Pope Benedict. Each reflection is short (usually less than a page) and easily read, but each offers enough to ponder and meditate on for hours. **\$23.70**

www.fromtheabbey.net
(bookstore)



[Click on the image to read more about it or to purchase this book!](#)

If you have not yet discovered Saint Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Lent is a great time to experience the writings of this spiritual master. St. Francis de Sales writes for the Catholic lay person - in simple but lively prose. After explaining the nature of prayer, the spiritual life, and the road of conversion, he guides us through a series of powerful meditations that call to our minds and hearts our dependence on God, the horror of sin, and the greatness of God's mercy. **\$12.32**