

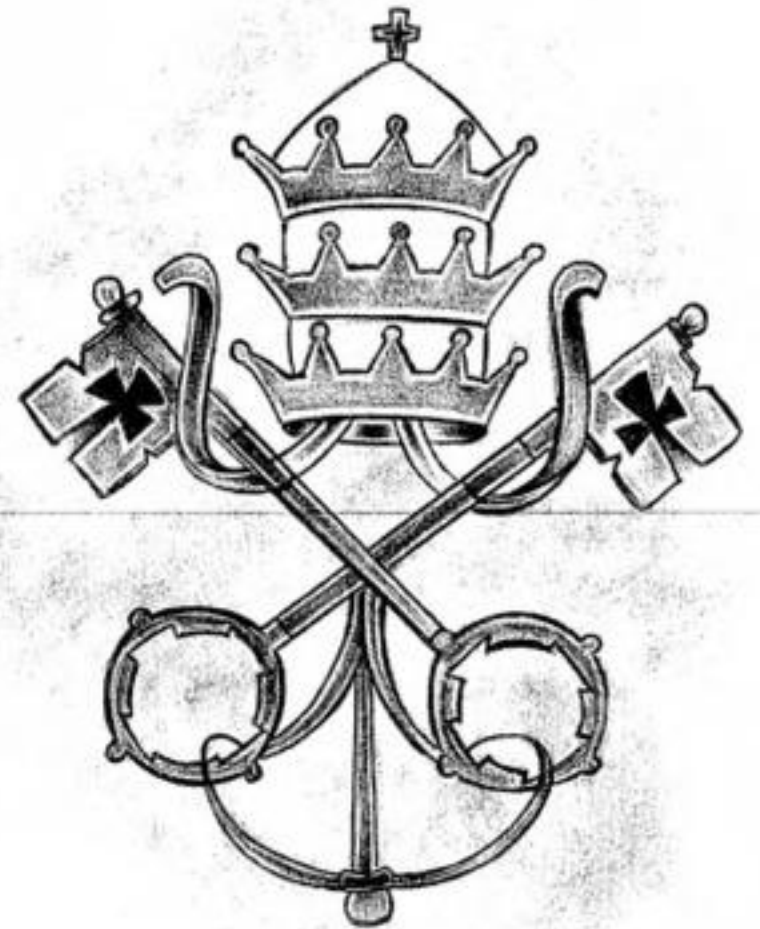
LESSON 2 : PATRIOTISM/LEGAL JUSTICE

In today's pluralistic and multicultural world, discerning the morally right and wrong thing to do in any given set of circumstances is difficult, if not impossible, to decipher. In a variety of religious and ideological systems, what is right to an adherent of one set of beliefs may be wrong to those of another, and vice-versa. Allowing the public's opinion of morality to guide our thoughts and behaviors becomes spiritually perilous as what is popularly considered 'right' is often easy to demonstrate as 'wrong', and even discerning a consistency of the public's opinion of morality varies from region to region and time to time.

Thankfully the Church's stance on morality does not, and cannot, change. "Stat crux dum volvitur orbis", or 'the world turns while the Cross remains constant', sums up the stabilizing force that the Church provides in the world. Social Catholicism explicitly and dogmatically applies the timeless principles contained within Sacred Scripture and Tradition to the varied circumstances in which individuals, communities, and governments find themselves in in the world of today. Two of the doctrines of the Church that deal exclusively with the distinctly different concept of 'Nations' and 'States' as explained in Lesson 1 are the teachings of the Church known as 'Patriotism' and 'Legal Justice'.

"Legal Justice" may be defined as the virtue or law of nature binding every member of the State to contribute his due share in safeguarding and promoting the common good. "Legal Justice" governs the rights and duties of members of a political unit, such as a 'State', regardless of whether these members belong to the predominant 'Nation' of the state or not. An immigrant, also, having no history with the majority of the members of a state, or even a cultural affinity towards them, would be bound by the duties enumerated in the doctrine of "Legal Justice". The immigrant, for example, who dwells and operates under the protection of the powers of a State have the duty to pay taxes and obey the laws enacted by that State, even if they are not in accordance with the 'State' he migrated from.

The end sought by a political 'State' is the common good of each and all of it's members. This common good is it's unifying cause, a good which



each member desires and needs but cannot get alone. Some of the more important common goods of the civil society are: civic friendship; domestic peace; order; justice; a well-informed public opinion; love of society, its families, its traditions; economic prosperity and freedom. The common good is a good which all the members of the State can give, but not give away (eg. wisdom, love, friendship) and the more each contributes the more everyone gets out of it. The Church's teaching on 'Legal Justice' enunciates

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civic neighbors, 'Patriotism', on the other hand, refers to our interactions with members of a 'natural unit', as distinct from an artificial arrangement, or mere positive law. The duties of Patriotism refer to all the members of a natural unit, and to none else.

'Patriotism' rests solely upon natural ties, and refers to the naturally constituted national unit, whether or not it is an organized state. It implies certain moral obligations to do one's just share in promoting the good of the body to which one belongs. Even if the 'Nation' has been split apart owing to the unjust action of a conquering power or other accidental causes, and the actual civic unit does not include the whole nation, as nature has formed it, or if its members embrace, under pressure of coercive forces, nations and communities that do not naturally belong to it, the duties of 'Patriotism' still refer to all the members of the natural unit.

This does not exclude a due regard and real love for members of other

our rights and duties
other as common mem-
unified political

virtue of 'Patriotism',
while sharing many
with that of 'Legal
is distinctly different
the eyes of the Church
own name. While the
teachings on 'Charity'
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scope one's relations
'Patriotism' and 'Legal
refer to one's relations
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relationship. Just as
'Justice' teaches us
in relation to our

nations or peoples. In fact, these latter are the natural development of a true love for one's own nation, just as the domestic virtues and affections are the natural foundation of patriotism itself. But as the Church wishes to do good to all men, this does not imply that the Church wishes to abolish or ignore the natural ties which bind individuals to their own nation. In the words of Cardinal Mercier: "The religion of Christ makes Patriotism a positive law; and there is no perfect Christian who is not a perfect patriot."

The virtues of 'Legal Justice' and 'Patriotism', while sometimes used interchangeably, are as identifiably distinct as the natural and political units of 'nation' and 'state' to which they refer. In today's diabolically disoriented world, sometimes morality is purposefully distorted as the virtue of 'Patriotism' is viewed by the governing powers as seditious or an obstacle to the attainment of their political ends. But, again, true, Divine, Eternal standards of morality do not, and cannot, change. Men may, at times, call 'good' 'evil' and 'evil' good, but this does not change the nature of good and evil. What is right is not always popular and what is popular is not always right, but the Church's teachings on the duties of 'Patriotism' and 'Legal Justice' have remained unchanged for millenia and always will.

Questions for Review

-Define 'Legal Justice'.

-Define 'Patriotism'.

-Which Virtue (Legal Justice/Patriotism) refers to our rights and duties in regard to the natural unit (Nation) or the political unit (State)?

*This lesson was gleaned and plagiarized almost exclusively from the following sources: Father E. Cahill, S.J. The Framework of a Christian State; Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Politics; St Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Quodlibeth; On Kingship; Pope Leo XIII Sapientiae Christianae; Cardinal Mercier, Patriotism and Endurance; Giloteaux, Abbe Paulin. Patriotism and Internationalism; Ralph T. Waters, Ph. D. The Common Good.