

- What's wrong

3. In response to prevalent views held by proportionalists, consequentialists and relativists (views that appear in some works by Richard McBrien, Richard McCormick, Charles Curren) that the morality of any act must be judged in light of the person's intentions or the moral act's consequences, John Paul II clearly states that the concrete, material nature of the act itself can be right or wrong. Despite what some dissidents claim, there are indeed moral absolutes. The gravity of the act itself must be measured by its very nature, not just by its intended results. "If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or particular circumstance can diminish the evil, but they cannot remove it," he writes. In fact, the encyclical identifies some sins which are "condemned as morally unacceptable." These include abortion and euthanasia. The pope does affirm *Humane Vitae* and its rejection of contraception and direct sterilization. In *Veritatis Splendor*, the Pope criticizes strongly those moralists who argue for exceptions to the Church's prohibitions against premarital relations, autoeroticism or homosexual activity. In quoting St. Paul, John Paul II says that "idolaters, adulterers, sexual perverts, thieves, the greedy and drunkards" will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

- Putting it into practice

In the third chapter, the Pope examines how these moral principles are to be applied to everyday life. One has no hopes of finding true human freedom without seeking to know God's law and nourishing oneself in Christ. While the challenge is a difficult one, fidelity to Christ and the divine law is not impossible.

John Paul II expresses his desire for the faithful to recognize their weakness and sinfulness so that in realizing human limitation, Christ may enter in and show one the path toward life eternal. To this end, the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* provides the faithful with a clear articulation of the Church's moral teaching. The Holy Father exposes the fallacies involved with the theories of dissenting moral theologians and much of contemporary moral discussion. But he does so in a way that gives guidance and clarity to the people of God in their quest to know God's law and to practice it in their lives faithfully.

- Everlasting life

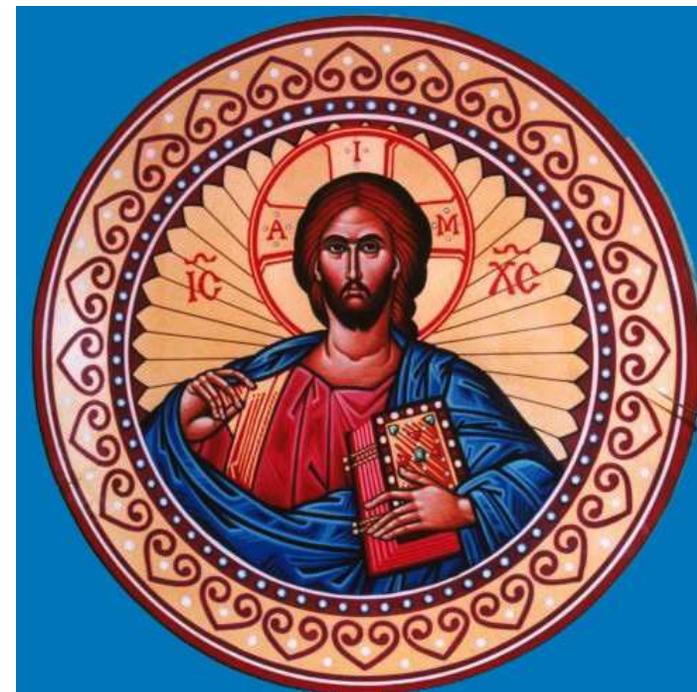
"What must I do to gain everlasting life?" the rich young man asks. *Veritatis Splendor*, in laying bare the marvelous core of Catholic moral teaching, re-echoes the very words of Christ himself: abandon oneself and follow me; you will be transformed by my grace and mercy. There is no other way to eternal life than the way laid out for us by Christ himself. It is this way which is embodied for us now in his Church. How blessed is the Church to have this way so clearly and decisively explained and opened before us by John Paul II. *Veritatis Splendor*, the moral masterpiece of our day, is a gift of the most immense proportions. May the grace of Christ himself enable each of us to recognize the truth and live it faithfully each day of our lives.

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## Veritatis Splendor



Pope Saint John Paul II shows forth the Splendor of Truth in his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*. This is an analysis by the Very Rev. Kris D. Stubna, S.T.D.

**The Truth Will Set You Free**