

# **How to Determine if an Act Is Morally Good (CCC 1750-1756)**

## **Determinants of an act**

- Object (Action of the will) - Objective to the act
- Intention (End or Purpose) - Subjective to the moral agent
- Circumstances

**For an act to be morally good none of the determinants can be evil**

## **Object of the act (CCC 1751)**

- Answers what kind of act it is – what the moral agent is setting out to do
- What the act is essentially concerned with should conform to the moral law
- The Object is the means of the act and has its own intrinsic end
  - This means that some objects are intrinsically evil - i.e. it cannot be done no matter what the End or Circumstances are (e.g. fornication)

## **End (Also called Intention or Purpose) of the Moral Agent (CCC 1752-1753)**

- Answers why the act was performed – why the moral agent is acting
- The Intention is found in the subject, which is the moral agent
  - This subjective end is different from the objective end (intrinsic end of the Object)
- The Intention is not intrinsic to the act, but is chosen by the moral agent
- The Intention
  - May make an otherwise good act an evil act
  - Can never make an otherwise evil act a good act
- Having a good Intention with an evil Object cannot make the act good
  - Evil cannot be done so that good can come from it (Romans 3:8)

## **Circumstances surrounding the act (CCC 1754)**

- Answers who, when, where, how, and by what means
  - This includes the consequences of the act
- All the elements that affect the act without being part of its essence (i.e. they are secondary elements of the act)
- The Circumstances
  - May make an otherwise good act an evil act
  - Can never make an otherwise evil act a good act
  - Can aggravate, minimize, or multiply guilt
    - May make an evil act that is a venial sin a mortal sin
    - May make an evil act that is a mortal sin a venial sin
    - May make an evil act that is a mortal sin an even greater mortal sin