

Key Words

Suffering

Pain or loss which harms human beings. Some suffering is caused by other human beings (often called moral evil); some is not (often called natural evil).

Natural Law

The moral laws of right and wrong which are universal and not dependent on human laws.

Conscience

Human reason making moral decisions. The knowledge we have of what is right and wrong and the God-given compulsion to do what is right and to avoid what is evil.

Evil

The absence of good and the impulse to seek our own desires at the expense of the good of others.

Privation

The loss or absence of something that is normally present. Evil is a privation of good.

Free will

A person’s ability to choose right from wrong without being controlled by other forces.

Incarnation

“Made flesh” The Christian belief that God became man in the person of Jesus, fully human and fully divine.

Goodness

The quality of being like God: seeking the well-being of others selflessly.

Trinity

What?

There is One God. God exists as three persons (Father, Son & Holy Spirit). Each person is distinct from the other two, each is fully God but there are not 3 Gods.

Why?

Nicene Creed. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus existed with the Father at the creation. Jesus said ‘baptise them in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit’. All 3 persons were present at Jesus’ Baptism.

Catholic views about the origin of evil

FREE WILL – humans choose to do wrong. Most suffering is caused by humans misusing their free will.
ORIGINAL SIN – God created a perfect world. Adam and Eve went against God. This introduced pain and suffering into the world. We all have Original Sin, the tendency to go against God.
AUGUSTINE’S VIEW - God made a perfect world. Fallen angels caused chaos in nature which brought natural evil into the world and Adam & Eve brought moral evil. Evil helps us to appreciate good. Evil is a privation of good.

Other religious views about the origin of the universe

Christian views	Judaism	Atheist responses (Hume & Mackie)
<p>John Hick: God made suffering to help us to grow and learn.</p>	<p>Jews do not believe in original sin but they do believe that humans are born with the inclination to do good and evil. The Torah teaches that they must struggle against the evil and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur give them the opportunity to return to God when they fail. Some suffering is a test or punishment from God but we cannot understand God and so should not question him.</p>	<p>God does not exist. The belief that God is all powerful, all knowing and all good is an ‘inconsistent triad’ (Hume) Mackie said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We don’t need bad to appreciate good and even if we did we don’t need as much suffering as we have in the world.• Why does God need to make us better people through suffering? Why not just make us perfect to begin with?• Why does God allow us to choose evil?

Catholic responses to suffering

We can’t understand God so shouldn’t try to (story of Job);
We suffer because we love ‘grief is the price we pay for love’;
Discipleship will always involve suffering.
We share in Jesus’ suffering when we suffer; The world is not supposed to be perfect, heaven is perfect and without suffering;
Suffering gives us an opportunity to help others through prayer and action; We deserve our suffering when we misuse our free will; We should bear our suffering patiently and we will grow stronger (Pope John Paul Salvifici Doloris).

Evidence that God is ‘good’

God made creation and ‘saw that it was good’. He created colour, beauty and variety that are not required for the survival of the species because he is good and loves us.

What Jesus’ example teaches us about how we should behave

Golden Rule – treat others as you would like to be treated
Jesus welcomed the sinner and the outcast
Jesus said ‘Love one another as I have loved you’

Sermon on the Mount

Jesus praises peacemakers, the merciful and those who seek to do what is right. He says that those who are persecuted will be rewarded. He tells us to do more than what the law requires e.g. do not murder becomes do not be angry. He says ‘turn the other cheek’ and do good in private.

Natural Law (St Thomas Aquinas)

God gives all humans the instinct to ‘do good and avoid evil’. To do this we should follow the 5 primary precepts ; Worship God; live in an Ordered society; Reproduce; educate children, preserve life.

Conscience

Only humans have a conscience. The instinct to ‘do good and avoid evil’ means we feel guilt when we fail. Our conscience must be informed by the Church, teachers, Bible etc.

The Rosary

What?

A set of beads to help Catholics focus on prayer. They pray decades of 10 Hail Marys, Our Father and Glory Be whilst focusing on the life of Jesus in the mysteries.

Why?

The sorrowful mysteries can help those who suffer to consider how Jesus suffered too. His resurrection can bring them hope.

Catholic views on incarnation of Jesus

(‘Carne’ = flesh) Jesus is FULLY GOD and FULLY HUMAN
Jesus became human and can identify with human suffering. Those who suffer can be comforted – Jesus suffered too. Jesus is an example of how to accept suffering. Jesus’ suffering ended in the resurrection which gives us hope.

Sources of Authority

ISAIAH 53 “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.”
Philippians 2:5-11 (The kenosis hymn) Jesus made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”
For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good? Disease and wounds mean nothing but the absence of health’ (St Augustine)

What sources of authority should we use to make moral decisions & why

We should follow Jesus’ example as he is the Son of God

We should use the teachings of the Church (magisterium) as the Pope is chosen by God and has authority.

We should use the Bible as it is the Word of God

We should use our conscience as it is the voice of God speaking to us.

We should use Natural Law as it helps us to ‘do good and avoid evil’

We should do the most loving thing in (situation ethics) or whatever brings the greatest happiness to the greatest number (utilitarianism).

Why Catholics use statues

Focus for prayer
Someone whose example we can follow
We ask the Saints to pray for us (we do not pray to the saints)
Crucifix reminds us of Jesus’ suffering for our salvation.

Other religious views on statues

Goes against the 2nd commandment ‘Do not have idols’
Praying to anyone other than God breaks the 1st commandment ‘Worship one God’.

Michelangelo’s Pieta

A sculpture of Mary holding the body of Jesus, her son
Mary’s open hand – she accepts God’s will
Jesus seems at peace – no wounds are visible. Gives hope to those who suffer.

Lourdes

What do people do there?

Visit grotto; Torchlight procession; Pray; Seek spiritual and physical healing; celebrate Mass; celebrate Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Why do people go there?

Pray for something special ; Strengthen their faith ; Give time and attention to God ; To thank God ; To show sorrow for sin
Join with other members of their faith.