

Fr. Perozich comments —

**DISTINCTION** is one of the beautiful and foundational methods of teaching the faith. A distinction is a clarification of doctrine and practice that cuts through the “**studied ambiguities**”, carefully constructed expressions that allow for multiple interpretations, and the **sophistries**, partial truths designed to lead us to path of the person proposing them, that are out there to confuse Catholics and to draw us to **novelties**, new ideas, statements, practices that never have been Catholic.

St. Thomas Aquinas is the master of **distinction**, particularly in his Summa Theologica, which is why the proponents of novelty and ambiguity often decry, denigrate, and dismiss Thomism. Thomas’ **distinctions** make it harder for them to take over our thought processes, our practices, our doctrine, and our Holy Church.

Donald DeMarco makes a few below in what he calls definitions. To define means to explain, add borders to keep in truth and to keep out novelty and ambiguity. Too many Catholic leaders who are proponents of “novelty” want to have “open borders” in theology, just as they wish to do in their constant political drumbeat to change the country as well as the church.

**Catholics sociologically** groups all those who have been baptized or professed Catholic belief into one group, that is those who believe what the church teaches, who worship regularly, who profess that faith with others who do NOT worship regularly, who profess their own “novelties”, and who practice their feelings.

Often the latter are referred to as CINOs, Catholic In Name Only. They seem to be the ones who are quoted by the media when the media wants to use them to promote a secular agenda and to show that the Catholic Church is moving in the secular direction.

**Morality** is used in two senses, the broad one in which many people live their lives often outside the church’s teaching in a particular culture

**Morality** used in the Catholic distinction is a life lived according to the faith, natural law, reason, and directed toward our final end — heaven.

**Reason** alone is not enough to empower a proper moral life. **Pride** and the other deadly sins interfere. **Pride** substitutes **self** for **fact**. **Pride** is seen in the writings of James Martin in promoting

homosexuality, bishops who go along with him in this and in their trying to change the catechism with new definitions to fit their prideful selves, and their constant references to “Francis wants this, Francis wants that”. Our Holy Father is to be the **herald** of the truth of Jesus, not the **owner or inventor** of truth.

**Divine Revelation** is necessary to help reason. Jesus Christ is the **divine revelation** not the pope, nor a cardinal, nor a bishop, nor a theologian, all of whom are to be heralds of God’s truth, not their own.

The eagerness to dissent is often from **pride**.

**DeMarco says “it is better to confess the truth than to cling to error. It should not be humiliating to admit to one’s mistakes. Rather, it should be a source of joy to trade them in for truths.”**

Catholic morality is difficult, but attainable and good toward getting us to our goal of heaven. We should eschew the “path of least resistance.”

Faith in Jesus will overcome pride, self, ambiguity, difficulty, doubt, and replace it with humility, God, distinction, fortitude, clarity, and truth.

*"We wonder how often the eagerness to dissent from traditional Church teaching is simply an expression of pride. We should not want to exchange God's truths for our own deceptions. Humility, therefore, becomes an indispensable virtue in living a life that accords with Catholic morality." (Donald De Marco)*

<http://thewandererpress.com/catholic/news/featured-today/catholic-morality-some-helpful-definitions/>

## **Catholic Morality: Some Helpful Definitions**

In the interest of clarity, it is necessary to define what we mean by the words “Catholic” and “morality.”

“**Catholic**” is used in **two** different senses. The **first** is what we may call the “sociological” meaning that conceptualizes “Catholic” in terms of how Catholics behave. In this sense, Catholics who are living their faith and those who are not are mixed together. “Catholic” becomes an umbrella term that applies to any Catholic who calls himself a Catholic. Here, practice is separated from any unifying standard.

The **second** meaning, which is the proper one, views Catholics as those who are living their faith and abiding by the teachings the Church has honored throughout her history. A Catholic, then, is someone who believes and behaves according to Catholic standards.

In a similar way, we distinguish between two ways of understanding the term “**morality**.” In one sense, it characterizes the way people live in a very broad sense. Here, “morality” has a cultural implication and may differ from one culture to another. On the other hand, we can understand “morality” as a consistent set of rules based on the natural law and grasped through reason. This kind of morality is also based on the nature of the person and provides a way of life, though demanding and difficult, that is consistent with his nature and his final end.

“**Catholic morality**,” therefore, is a way of living that is consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church and at the same time grounded in the existential reality of the human being as a person whose nature is discernible through reason and perfected through virtue. It is a formula for both freedom and personal fulfillment. Furthermore, it is philosophical and theological, rather than sociological and culturally determined.

As in sports, the game plan and its execution often differ widely. Aim and realization are not always on the same page. While reason is necessary to live a good life, it is not sufficient. We are weak creatures, subject to emotional swings, cultural pressures, and errors in judgment. The Seven Deadly Sins are never far from us, we can be deceived by pride, distracted by envy, devoured by anger, dissipated by lust, degraded by gluttony, dominated by avarice, and made indolent by sloth.

We need help that goes beyond reason, for it is eminently unreasonable to believe that reason alone can make us consistently behave reasonably.

The notion that we need something higher than reason was of paramount importance to St. Thomas Aquinas and for this reason, he dealt with it in the very first question he posed in his monumental *Summa Theologiae*. He argued that “the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors.”

“Therefore,” he went on to state, “in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly, and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine Revelation.” Aquinas’ advice is as practical as it is anthropologically sound.

As important as reason is, we cannot rely on it exclusively. Sooner or later, we make mistakes, see things in a confused way or do not see them at all, or are victimized by our pride. G.K. Chesterton accurately characterized pride as “the falsification of fact by the introduction of self.” In so stating, he brings out the foolishness of substituting self for fact. As he implies, we get in the way of truth and thereby distort it. Our ego is often in combat with truth and though it can never win, is reluctant to acknowledge that it ever loses.

The Danish poet, Piet Hein, who also made a name for himself as a mathematician, scientist, and inventor, called attention to this problem when he remarked as follows: “The noble art of losing face may one day save the human race and turn into eternal merit what weaker minds would call disgrace.”

The ego has trouble with truth. It is reluctant to acknowledge truths that are higher than itself and is loath to release from its grip the errors of its own way. The willingness to lose face, for Piet Hein, uncustomary as it may be, is the honest recognition that it is better to confess the truth than to cling to error. It should not be humiliating to admit to one’s mistakes. Rather, it should be a source of joy to trade them in for truths. Why would a person trade in a new Cadillac for a broken-down jalopy? Yet, how often the ego stands in the way of truth! For good reason, pride is the first of the Deadly Sins.

We wonder how often the eagerness to dissent from traditional Church teaching is simply an expression of pride. We should not want to exchange God's truths for our own deceptions. Humility, therefore, becomes an indispensable virtue in living a life that accords with Catholic morality.

For, as St. Bernard of Clairvaux affirmed: "The three most important virtues are: humility, humility, and humility." And, according to St. Augustine: "No one reaches the Kingdom of Heaven except by humility."

Catholic morality, rightly understood, is profitable and practical, though unceasingly difficult. We are well advised to deal with the difficulties rather than to pare them down. We should prefer the path of most persistence to the one of least resistance.

Difficulties are manageable as long as they do not degenerate into doubts. Blessed John Henry Newman advised that "ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt." Surely there will be difficulties of all kinds. But they should not be impediments to faith. It is better to say, "I believe, Lord; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

(Dr. Donald DeMarco is professor emeritus, St. Jerome's University. He is a regular columnist for St. Austin Review and an adjunct professor at Holy Apostles College. His latest book, *Apostles of the Culture of Life*, is posted on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).)