



**Topic:** Natural law

**Option:**

**Essential Richer Reading** – you must read this for your lessons ☒

**Recommended Richer Reading** – advised as it would enhance your understanding further ☐

**Further Richer Reading** – widening your knowledge beyond A-levels ☐

**Richer Reading title:** “Roman Catholic Catechism: Natural Law”

**Type:** Source can be found on numerous websites e.g. [EXERCISE Roman Catholic Catechism and Natural Law - Philosophical Investigations \(peped.org\)](#)

**Reading intention:** (*importance of the text, what students will gain from it*)

- Importance to understanding the principles of Natural Law and the ethics behind the Roman Catholic Church
- You will gain a secure understanding of Natural Law and this will link with other topics throughout the course e.g. Christian moral Principles, sexual ethics

**Core content to take away:**

- Key theological understanding of Natural Law
- Application of Natural Law to wider issues e.g. divorce and remarriage

**Exam help:**

- These can be utilised in your exams to support Aquinas' views in AO1 paragraphs and go into depth
- Useful for AO2 responses when refuting criticisms of Natural Law

**Task for this reading:**

1. Read the extract and annotate the underlined passages in more detail drawing on knowledge you already have. See some examples already.
2. Write 10 bullet points on the importance of Natural law from these extracts.

### Roman Catholic Catechism: Natural Law:

*Divine law is the Bible  
and Natural Law is  
innately given.*

*People must follow  
this to reach their end  
/telos... heaven...*

1955 The “divine and natural” law shows man the way to follow so as to practice the good and attain his end. The natural law states the first and essential precepts which govern the moral life. It hinges upon the desire for God and submission to him, who is the source and judge of all that is good, as well as upon the sense that the other is one’s equal. Its principal precepts are expressed in the Decalogue. This law is called “natural,” not in reference to the nature of irrational beings, but because reason which decrees it properly belongs to human nature: Where then are these rules written, if not in the book of that light we call the truth? In it is written every just law; from it the law passes into the heart of the man who does justice, not that it migrates into it, but that it places its imprint on it, like a seal on a ring that passes onto wax, without leaving the ring. The natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given this light or law at the creation.

1957 Application of the natural law varies greatly; it can demand reflection that takes account of various conditions of life according to places, times, and circumstances. Nevertheless, in the diversity of cultures, the natural law remains as a rule that binds men among themselves and imposes on them, beyond the inevitable differences, common principles.

1960 The precepts of natural law are not perceived by everyone clearly and immediately. In the present situation sinful man needs grace and revelation so moral and religious truths may be known “by everyone with facility, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error.” The natural law provides revealed law and grace with a foundation prepared by God and in accordance with the work of the Spirit.

*Different people apply  
Natural Law  
inconsistently  
dependent on their  
culture/exposure to it*

2384 Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract, to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other till death. Divorce does injury to the covenant of salvation, of which sacramental marriage is the sign. Contracting a new union, even if it is recognized by civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery:

If a husband, separated from his wife, approaches another woman, he is an adulterer because he makes that woman commit adultery, and the woman who lives with him is an adulteress, because she has drawn another's husband to herself.

2080 The Decalogue contains a privileged expression of the natural law. It is made known to us by divine revelation and by human reason.

2357 Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.