

# Church and State

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The Church and the state are distinct from each other. But that does not mean the Church has no bearing on political matters. How, then, should they interact with each other? Consider the discussion of this topic, below, based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and respond to the questions.

“Those subject to authority should regard those in authority as representatives of God, who has made them stewards of his gifts”<sup>1</sup> (CCC 2238). A steward is one who cares for something on another’s behalf. Authorities are entrusted with the care of the societies they lead and should make laws with God’s moral laws and the good of society in mind.

At the same time, “if rulers were to enact unjust laws or take measures contrary to the moral order, such arrangements would not be binding in conscience” (CCC 1903). In that case, citizens might rightfully refuse to obey such laws because of “the distinction between serving God and serving the political community” (CCC 2242).

**If authorities should be good stewards of God’s gifts on behalf of society, how can you be a steward of those gifts in your own way?**

**Answers may vary.**

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“The Church, because of her commission and competence, is not to be confused in any way with the political community. She is both the sign and the safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person” (CCC 2245).

**How do you think the Church can (or should) influence society?**

**Answers may include the Church protects the dignity of the human person and advocates for laws that are moral and just.**

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In its preaching and witness, the Church “strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships” (CCC 2420). “It is a part of the Church’s mission ‘to pass moral judgments even in matters related to politics, whenever the fundamental rights of man or the salvation of souls requires it’”<sup>2</sup> (CCC 2246).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rom 13:1–2.

<sup>2</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* 76 § 5.

Why do you think the Church speaks about political matters if its mission is spiritual?

Answers may include a society's laws and culture can affect the way people live their lives and to give them the proper structures and freedom they need in order to practice virtue and seek God above all other things.

Has what you have read here changed your opinion about what the Church's role in society and in your own life looks like? If so, in what way?

Answers may vary.

# Restless Hearts

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

“You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”<sup>1</sup> These words of Saint Augustine come from the opening paragraph of his most famous work, *Confessions* (see page 75 of the Student Text). Augustine had firsthand experience with the restlessness that he describes here. He spent many years of his life seeking his own glory as a teacher of rhetoric. During this time, he also had a long-term relationship with a woman to whom he was not married and with whom he had a son.

Augustine was not satisfied by his illustrious career, and after spending close to a decade of his life as a member of a heretical group, he finally entered the Church. His conversion meant he had to embrace all the moral teachings of Christianity. This conversion brought great peace to Augustine. His heart was made for a relationship with Christ, and it was only in that relationship that he could find the peace he sought.

We also experience this restlessness in our own hearts. If you buy a new phone, within a year you become restless for the next model. Your new shoes or clothes will wear out. Technology breaks, money runs out, and popularity is fickle. We are ultimately longing for Christ and for the peace that he alone can bring. We were made to be in relationship with God, and it is only in union with him that we will be truly happy.

Today, though, many of us numb our restlessness with our phones, video games, music, food, and other forms of entertainment. It is easier to distract ourselves than to confront the reality that our hearts are aching and longing for love and fulfillment that will last. This love and fulfillment can come only from Christ.

**In what area of your life do you see that your heart is restless?**

Answers may vary.

**How do you try to numb your restless heart?**

Answers may vary.

**When you feel that your heart is restless and want to distract yourself with screens, food, etc., how can you turn to Jesus instead so he can satisfy you?**

Answers may vary.

<sup>1</sup> *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York, Image, 1960).