

CONSCIENCE & ITS FORMATION

*WHERE GOD SPEAKS TO US AT
OUR DEEPEST CORE*

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THESIS

The formation of one's moral conscience is one of the most important dimensions of human and spiritual formation that parents and catechists can impart to their children/students. But many today do not understand the role of the conscience and how it is properly formed. We will examine these topics and offer concrete methods for helping children/students to form their conscience in accord with the mind of the Church.

DEFINITION OF CONSCIENCE (OVERVIEW)

a judgment of reason that helps a person determine the moral rightness or wrongness of an action. It is not a source of morality itself, but rather the inner voice that applies moral principles to specific situations, obliging a person to follow what they know to be just and right. Forming a well-formed conscience involves lifelong learning through faith, prayer, reason, and the teachings of the Church.

JUDGMENT OF REASON:

- Conscience is an act of the intellect that applies general moral principles to concrete situations, rather than being a feeling or an act of will.
- ***It is where God speaks to us at our deepest core.***

SERVANT, NOT SOURCE OF MORALITY

- It is not the source of morality but its servant, tasked with making a judgment based on objective moral law.

I THINK VS. I FEEL

- We are not the sum total of our feelings
- The natural moral law is man's RATIONAL participation in the eternal law of God
- I don't permit students to say, "I feel..."

TRUTHFUL AND FORMED

- A well-formed conscience is truthful, and forms judgments based on reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of God.

LIFELONG PROJECT

- The process of forming one's conscience is ongoing and requires assimilating the Word of God, practicing that Word, examining one's conscience, and seeking the help of the Holy Spirit.

FORMING YOUR CONSCIENCE AND THOSE OF YOUR CHILDREN: GO TO RELIABLE SOURCES

- Scripture
- Church teaching (Catechism) and the saints
- Counsel from trustworthy priests (online or in person) - smart vs. holy (Avila)
- Prayer

OBLIGES

- Individuals are obliged to follow their conscience faithfully, but they are responsible for forming it correctly in the first place.

THE DANGERS OF BLINDLY "FOLLOWING YOUR CONSCIENCE"

- Your conscience does not make things right or wrong
- The moral law that exists outside of your own analysis

“FOLLOW YOUR CONSCIENCE”

- The role of the conscience is to perceive the moral law and apply it to a given situation
- Many women in the 1960s and 70s were simply told to "follow your conscience" when it came to contracepting. No one said to "form your conscience."

NOT INFALLIBLE (CAN ERR)

- Conscience is a subjective standard and can be mistaken, leading to a false conscience that is either too strict (scrupulous) or too lenient (lax).
- The pitfalls of the erroneous conscience and/or the individual who understands the moral principles and agrees with it wholeheartedly but doesn't think it applies to them.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING...

- Antecedent (before a decision to act)
- Concomitant (while an action is occurring)
- Consequent Conscience (after the action)

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

- Prior to confessing, this is crucial...
- Listening to the voice of God within takes discernment so that you are not merely hearing your own voice.
- A nightly exercise can help refine a conscience in its ongoing formation.

GRAZIE PER LA VOSTRA ATTENZIONE!

