




We form our conscience.

Conscience is a gift from God. In a letter Saint Paul wrote to Timothy about following the teachings of Christ, he said:

“The aim of this instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5).

A good conscience leads us to be truthful and fair. It guides us to make decisions that are based on the actions and teachings of Jesus. A good conscience helps us to live the way God created us to live.

Forming a good conscience is our responsibility. This responsibility continues throughout our lives.

 Think about a time when you had a difficult decision to make. How did your conscience guide you?

A good conscience is formed by . . .

- listening to God the Holy Spirit
- asking your parents or guardians, priests, teachers, and catechists in the Church to help you
- following the good example of a life of one of the saints
- deepening your love for God
- learning more about God through Scripture
- learning more about God through Church teachings.

We examine our conscience.

No matter how busy we are, it is important to think about the things we do and say every day. An **examination of conscience** is the act of determining whether the choices we have made showed love for God, ourselves, and others.

Examining our conscience can help us to think about what we will say and do before we act. The more we examine our conscience the easier it is to hear and follow our conscience.

But how can we examine our conscience? First, we try to think about the ways we have loved God and others. We think about the ways we are living as disciples of Jesus and as members of the Church.

Next, we ask ourselves whether we have sinned, either by *doing* things that we know are wrong, or by *not doing* the good things that we could have done. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us to judge the goodness of our thoughts, words, and actions.

We can examine our conscience any time. One possible time is before we fall asleep at night. Another time is when we celebrate the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

When we examine our conscience we can thank God for giving us the strength to make good choices. Reflecting on the choices we have made helps us to make choices that bring us closer to God.


WE RESPOND

Pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance in examining your conscience. Then ask yourself the following questions:

How have I shown love, or failed to show love, for God in my thoughts, words, and actions?

How have I shown love, or failed to show love, for others in my thoughts, words, and actions?

How have I shown love, or failed to show love, for myself as a person made in God’s image?


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As Catholics...

We do not form our conscience alone. The Church helps us in many ways. One way is through her teachings. The pope and the bishops have the authority to teach us in Jesus’ name. They rely on Scripture and Tradition to help Catholics form their consciences.

What are some things that the pope and bishops teach us?

