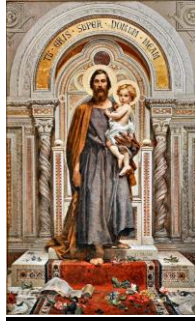


St. Joseph Society



Objective: Catholic morality is the practical outworking of the great dogmas of the Catholic faith. St. Paul commands us to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). Last month, we looked at the nature of authentic freedom. This month, we are going to look at the nature of conscience.

Unit 6 Podcast Schedule

- Episode #21 – What Conscience Is
- Episode #22 – How Conscience Works
- Episode #23 – Kinds of Conscience
- Episode #24 – Forming One’s Conscience & Virtue

Monthly Meeting

I. Episode #21 – What Conscience Is

1. What Conscience Is – Conscience stands as the subjective basis of morality, for by it the individual person determines whether this individual act of his is good for bad for him. “Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed” (CCC 1778).
2. Romans 2:14-16 – “When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”

II. Episode #22 – How Conscience Works

1. Deriving the Judgment of Conscience – The reasoning process involved in arriving at a judgment of conscience. The first premise is a general moral principle, the second premise brings the particular act here and now, and the conclusion (what should be done) logically follows. Example:
 - a. Lies are not allowed. (Major Premise – General Moral Principle)
 - b. This explanation of my conduct is a lie. (Minor Premise – Particular Act)
 - c. This explanation of my conduct is now allowed. (Conclusion)

2. Two Kinds of Practical Syllogisms

- a. Prohairesis Syllogism (Choice)
 - i. (U) What is unhealthy should not be eaten. (predicable of the object)
 - ii. (P) This particular food is unhealthy.
 - iii. (C) "I chose not to eat"
- b. Appetitive Syllogism (Passions/Appetites)
 - i. (U1) I want to eat what is unhealthy. (predicable of the agent)
 - ii. (P1) This particular food is unhealthy.
 - iii. (C1) "I eat" - these are the syllogisms of the weak person.

III. Episode #23 – Kinds of Conscience

1. Antecedent Conscience: A guide to future actions, prompting us to do them or avoid them.
2. Consequent Conscience: A judge of our past actions, the source of self-approval or remorse.
3. Correct Conscience: Judges as good what is really good, or as evil what is really evil.
4. Erroneous Conscience – Judges as good what is really evil, or as evil what is really good.
5. Certain Conscience – Judges without fearing that the opposite may be true.
6. Doubtful Conscience – Hesitates to make any judgment or does so with misgivings.

IV. Episode #24 – Forming One's Conscience & Virtue

1. Sacred Scripture on Conscience Formation – "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2).
2. The Catechism on Conscience Formation – The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. . . . The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart (CCC 1784).
3. The Stages of Moral Education – The three stages of moral education correspond to the three stages of human development and the three stages of spiritual development (purgative, illuminative, and unitive).
 - a. Stage 1: The Stage of Disciple (Childhood) – The Ten Commandments
 - b. Stage 2: The Stage of Progress (Adolescence) – The Sermon on the Mount
 - c. Stage 3: The Stage of Maturity or Perfection of Freedom (Adulthood) – Mastery of Actions and Creative Fruitfulness
4. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – "The law of nature so ordains that the transition from childhood to youth must follow a normal development; otherwise the subject will assume a positive bias to evil, or else he will remain a half-wit, perhaps even a complete idiot, for the rest of his life. 'He who makes no progress loses ground'" (*The Three Conversions of the Interior Life*, 27).