



Class Two

Moral Teachings of the Church



Opening Prayer

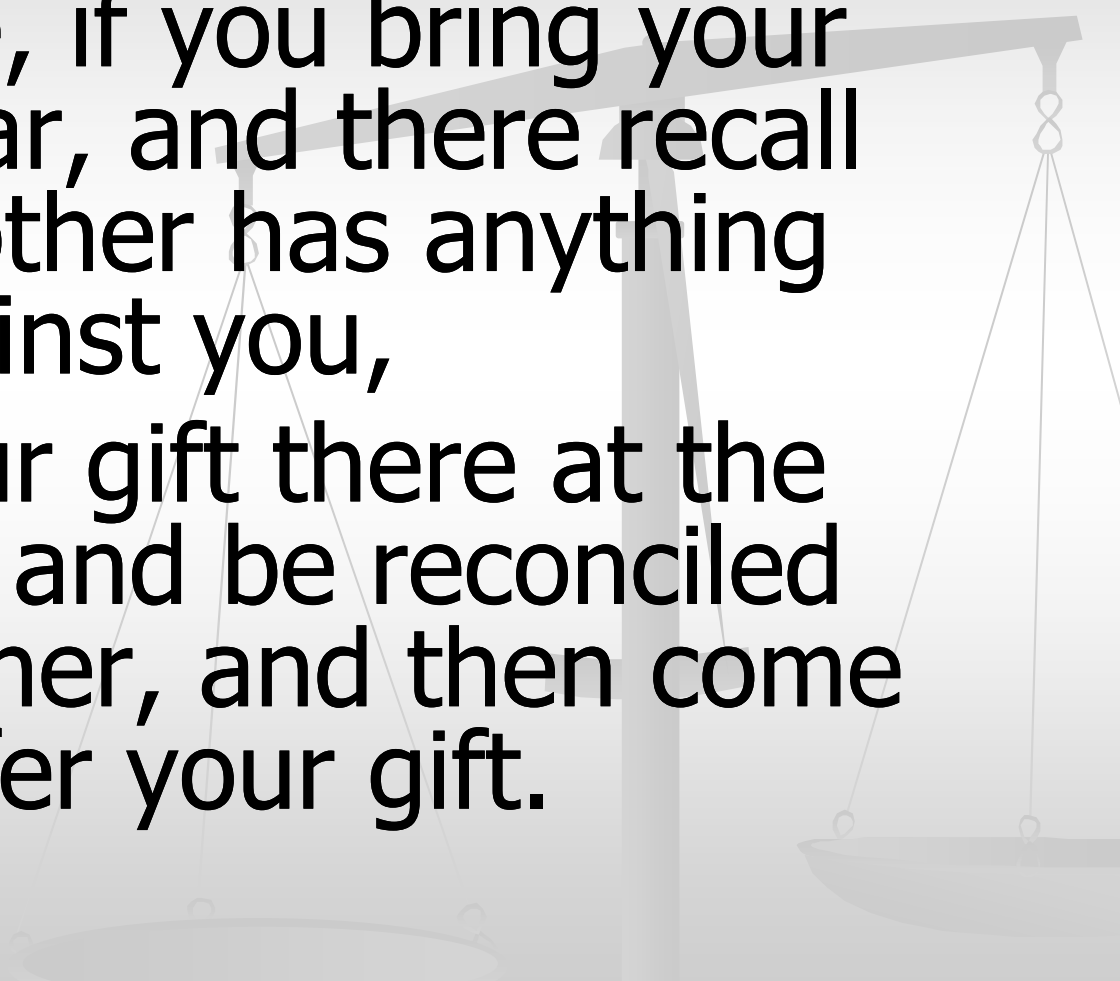
Matthew 5:20-24, 43-48

5:20 I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Teaching about Anger.

5:21 * * "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.'

5:22 * But I say to you, whoever is angry* with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.



5:23 Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you,

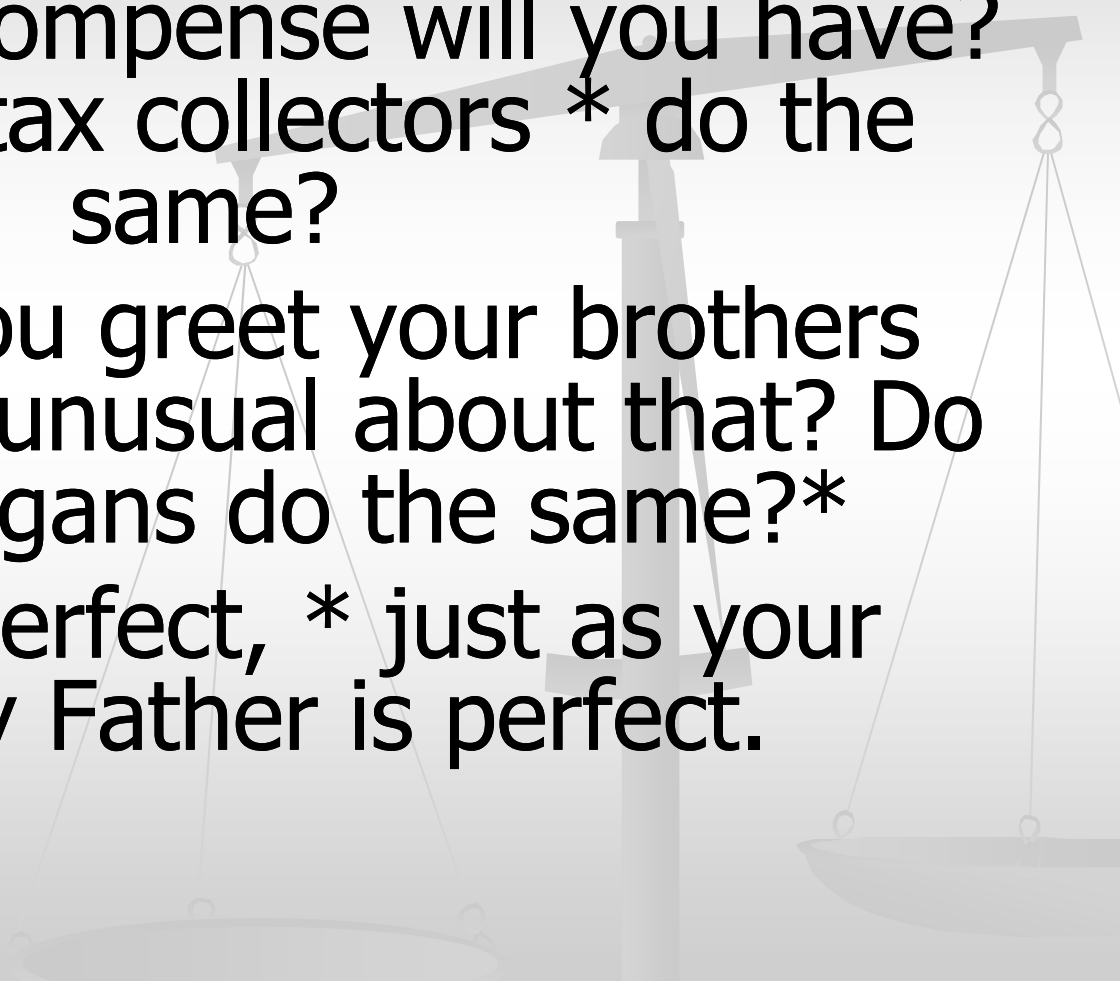
5:24 leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Love of Enemies.

5:43 * "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

5:44 But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,

5:45 that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.



5:46 For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?
Do not the tax collectors * do the same?

5:47 And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?*

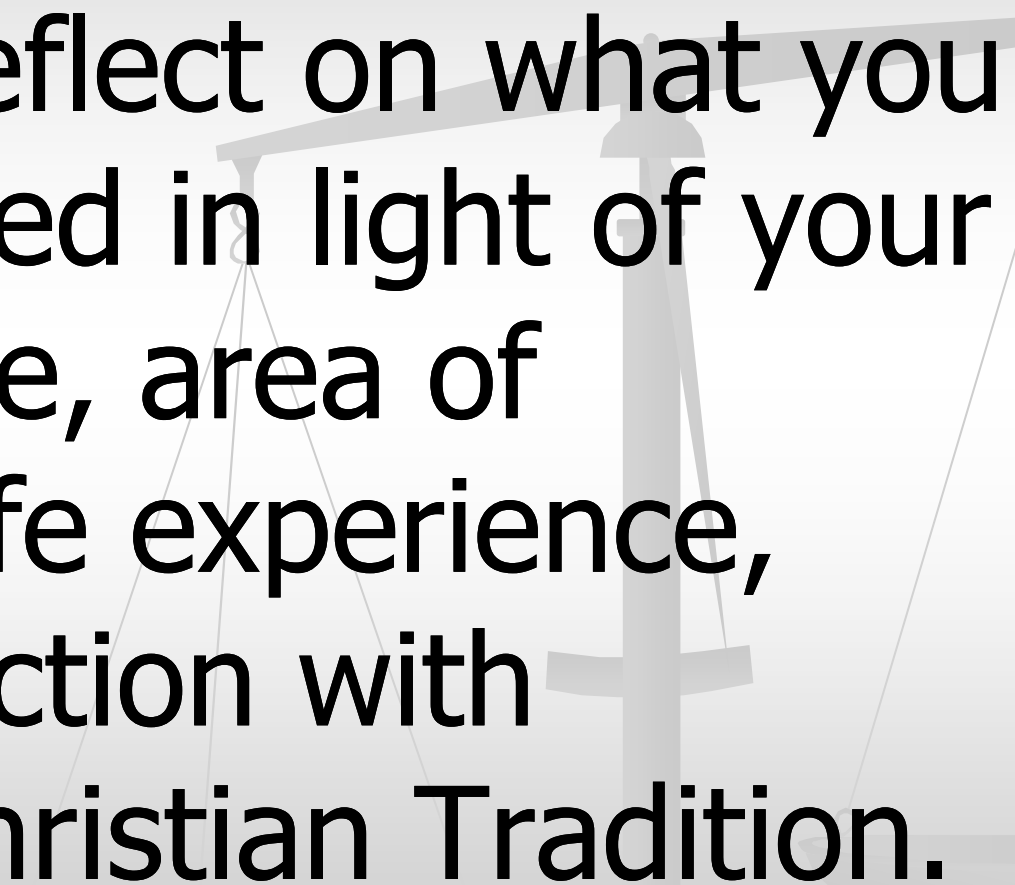
5:48 So be perfect, * just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Objectives



Objectives

- Articulate the Catholic Christian teachings on morality and conscience formation.
- Understand the role of conscience in the moral life.

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- Critically reflect on what you have learned in light of your own culture, area of ministry, life experience, and connection with Catholic Christian Tradition.

Conscience









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- *Gaudem et Spes* a.k.a
'Pastoral Constitution on the
Church in the Modern World'

Conscience



- Natural Law
 - God has written his Law within our hearts.
- Speaking of divine law
 - “Man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine providence, he can come to perceive ever increasingly the unchanging truth.” (*DH - Dignitatis humanae no. 3*)¹
- Since we can do this, man “has the duty, and therefore the right, the duty to seek the truth” (*DH no. 3*)²

Conscience



- “on his part man perceives and acknowledges the imperative of the divine law through the mediation of conscience” (DH no. 3).³

Gaudem et Spes 16 *(emphasis added)*

- “For man has in his heart a law written by God. *His dignity lies in obeying this law*, and by it he will be judged. His conscience is man’s most secret core, and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths.”⁴

Gaudem et Spes 16 *(emphasis added)*

- “By conscience, in a wonderful way, that law is made know which is fulfilled in the love of God and of one’s neighbor.”
(GS, no. 16)⁵

Conscience



- Judgment of conscience
 - Avoid evil and do good
 - “Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. The voice of this law, ever calling him to love and do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment, do this, shun that.” (GS no. 16)⁶

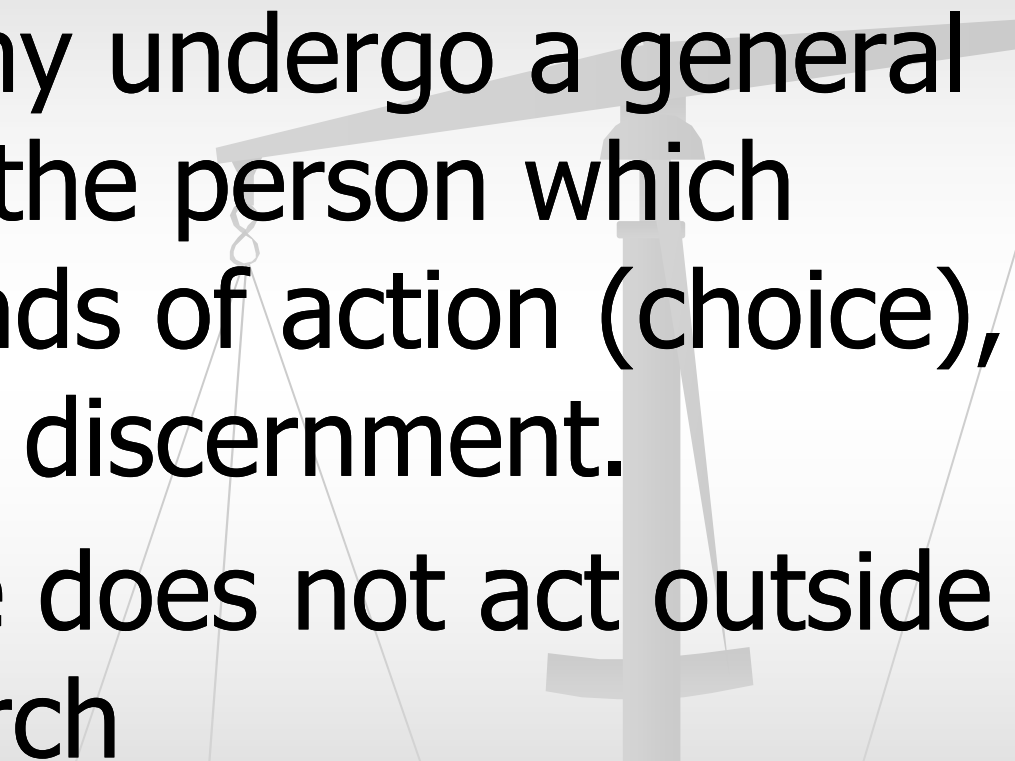


- Judges particular choice

- "...ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that" (GS, no. 16).
- "Through loyalty to conscience Christians are joined to other men in the search for truth and for the right solution to so many moral problems which arise both in the life of individuals and from social relationships" (GS, no. 16).

Formation of conscience

- Prayer
 - We are assisted by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Study
 - The Word of God is the light for our conscience
- Seeking guidance
 - Guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church
 - Priests
 - Theologians
 - Doctors

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- A person may undergo a general process in the person which dictates kinds of action (choice), a period of discernment.
 - Conscience does not act outside of the Church

Formation of Conscience

- General orientation to the “Good”
- The decision by the period to act in a certain way

To Choose in Accord with Conscience

- 1789 Some rules that apply in every case:
 - **One may never do evil so that good may result from it;**
 - **the Golden Rule: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them."[56](#)**
 - **charity always proceeds by way of respect for one's neighbor and his conscience: "Thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience . . . you sin against Christ."[57](#) Therefore "it is right not to . . . do anything that makes your brother stumble."[58](#)**

CCC 1783

- **Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened.** A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. **The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings.** (emphasis added)

CCC 1784

- **The education of the conscience is a lifelong task...** Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. **The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.** (emphasis added)

Types of Conscience



CCC 1786

- “Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them.”

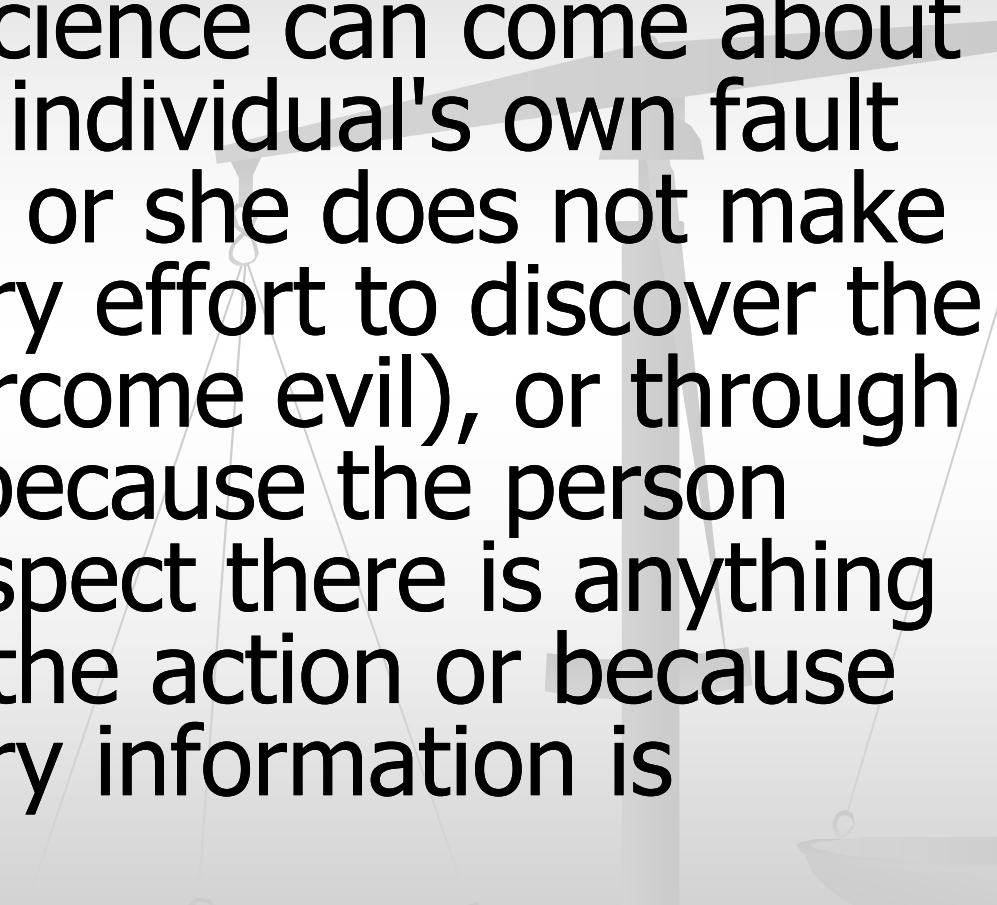
Types of conscience

- Types of conscience
 - True conscience
 - A true conscience is one that is rightly formed, one that is in accord with God's will and God's law.
 - To do this a conscience needs to be guided, directed, enlightened.

Types of conscience

■ False conscience

- is one that is not in accord with God's law and God's will, but is based on a false understanding of these or on purely selfish interests.

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- A false conscience can come about through the individual's own fault (because he or she does not make the necessary effort to discover the truth or overcome evil), or through ignorance (because the person does not suspect there is anything wrong with the action or because the necessary information is unknown).

Types of conscience

- False conscience (con't)
 - invincibly false conscience
 - An invincibly false conscience (**not through one's own fault**), on the other hand, can serve as our guide. For we are truly acting in good faith. We have taken our relationship with God seriously, we have done our best.

Conscience – *Gaudem et Spes* 16

Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity. The same cannot be said for a man who cares but little for truth and goodness, or for a conscience which by degrees grows practically sightless as a result of habitual sin.

Types of conscience

- vincibly false conscience

- A vincibly false conscience (**false through one's own fault**) is not good enough to be our guide. To follow such a conscience means that we are willing to offend God and his love without even bothering to search for the truth.

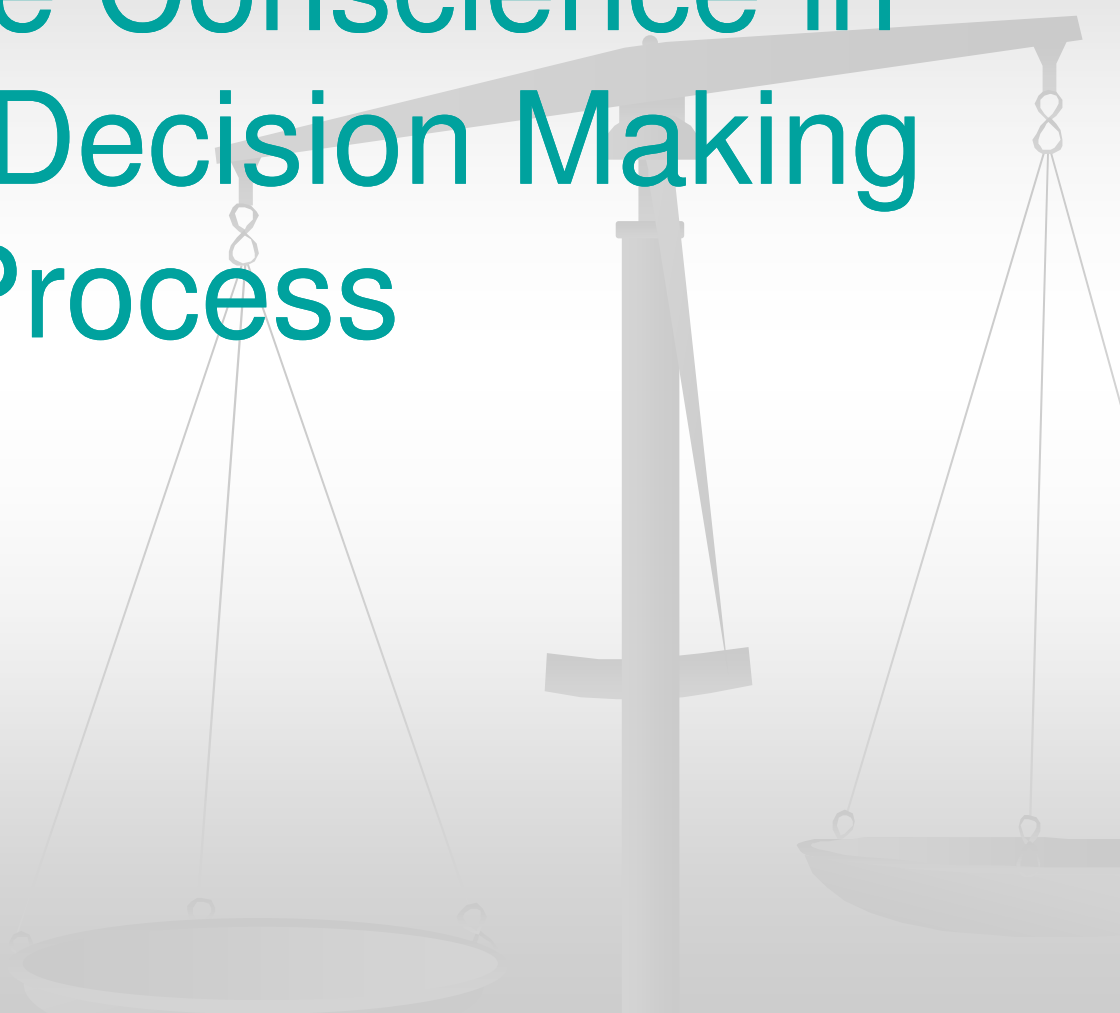
CCC 1792

- “Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad example given by others, enslavement to one’s passions, assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience, rejection of the Church's authority and her teaching, lack of conversion and of charity: these can be at the source of errors of judgment in moral conduct.”



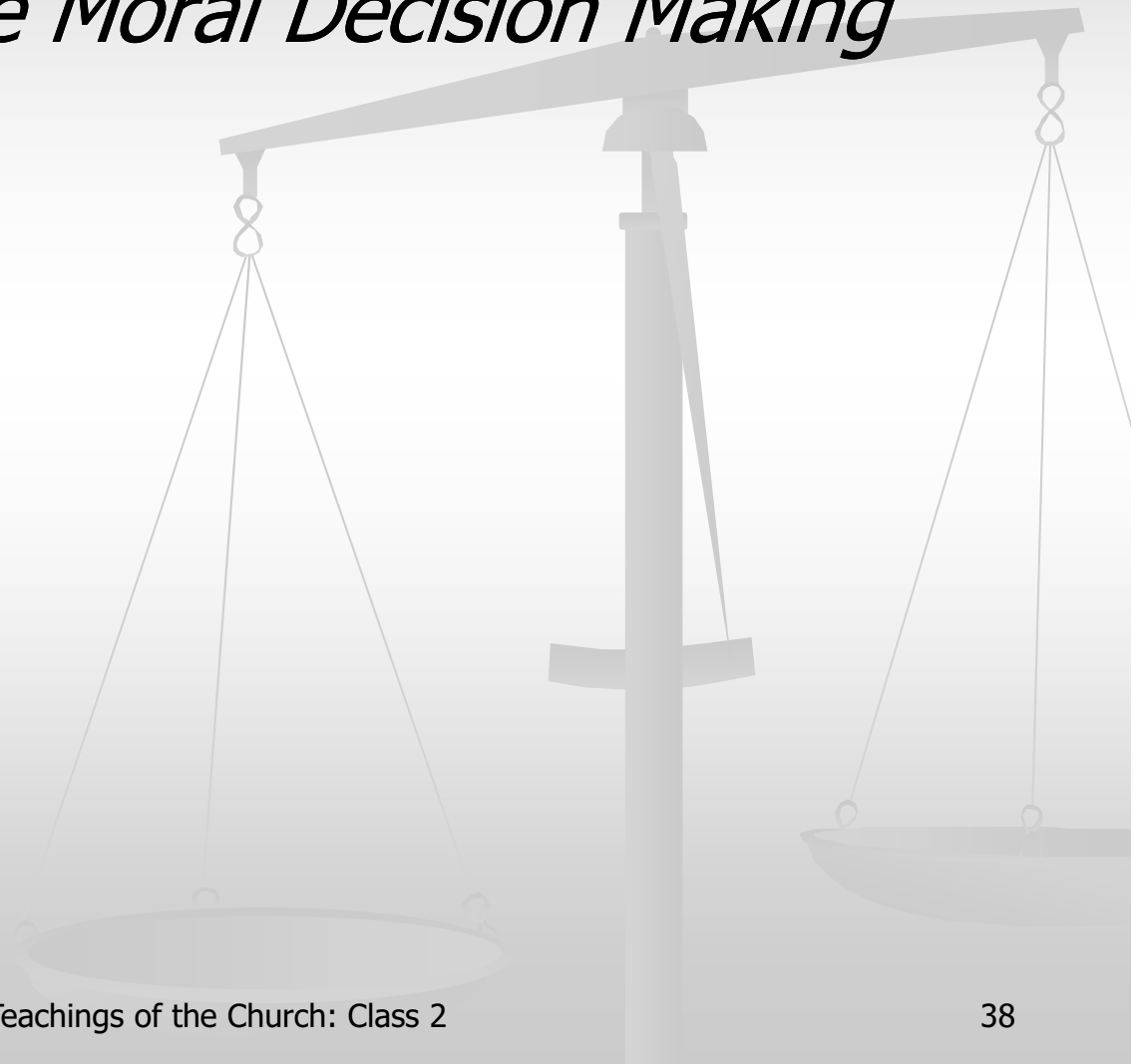
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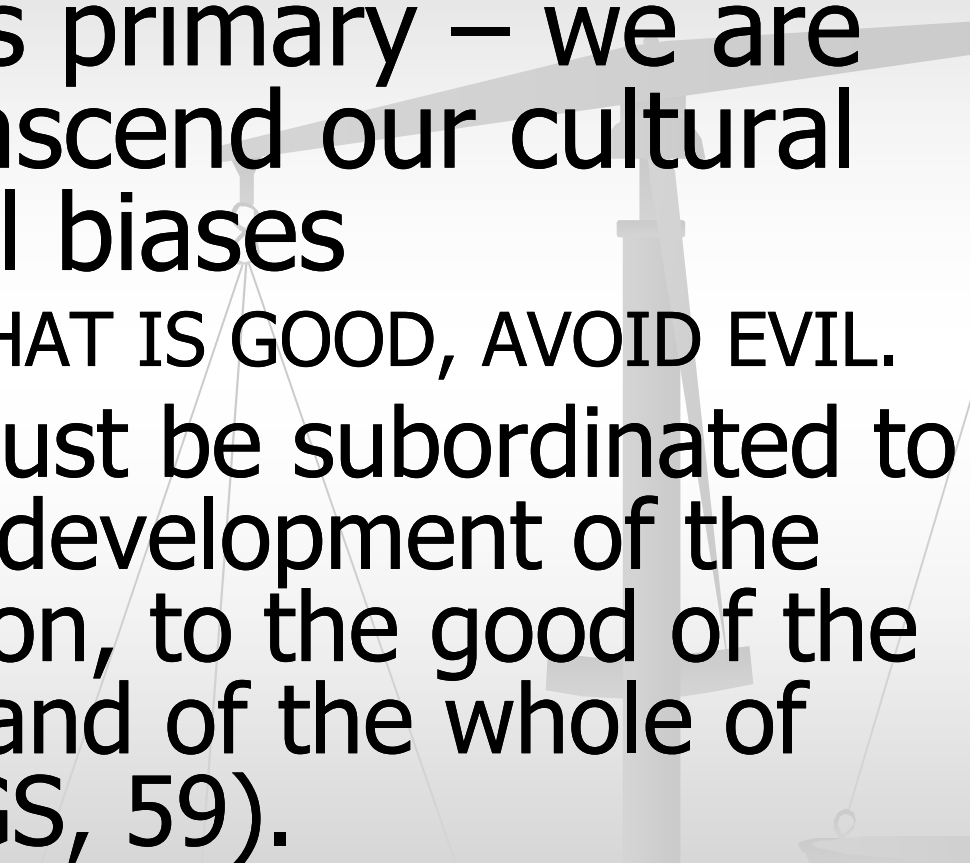
Role of the Conscience in the Moral Decision Making Process



Role of the Conscience in the Moral Decision Making Process

- Handout – *The Moral Decision Making Process*



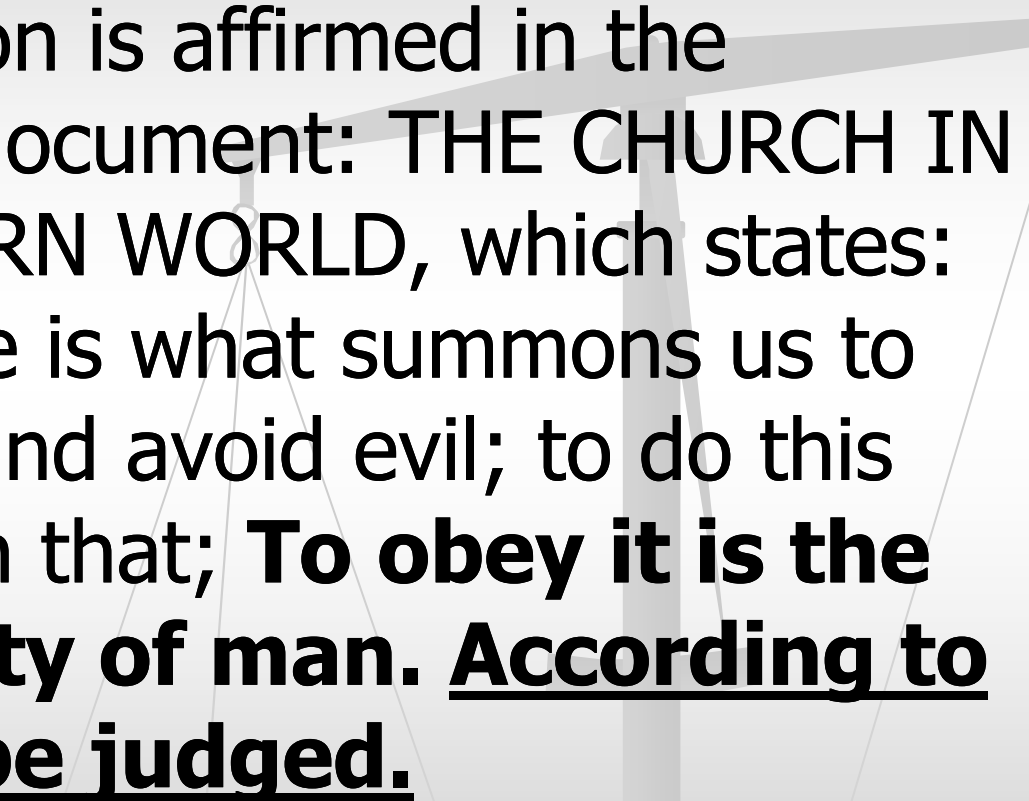
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- Conscience is primary – we are called to transcend our cultural and historical biases
 - TO DO WHAT IS GOOD, AVOID EVIL.
 - “...culture must be subordinated to the integral development of the human person, to the good of the community and of the whole of mankind” (GS, 59).



- A well formed conscience is not **BLIND OBEDIENCE**

- “The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.”
- “Only in freedom that man can turn himself towards what is good.” (GS, no 17)
- “We determine ourselves, make ourselves to be the kind of persons we are in and through the actions we freely choose to do.”⁷

- It does not allow a person to do whatever he/she wants in the moment

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- This tradition is affirmed in the Vatican II document: THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD, which states: "Conscience is what summons us to love good and avoid evil; to do this and to shun that; **To obey it is the very dignity of man. According to it he will be judged.**

Freedom of Conscience

- CCC 1782

- “Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. ‘He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.’”

To Choose in Accord with Conscience

- 1790 IV. Erroneous Judgment
 - **A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself.** Yet it can happen that moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed. (emphasis added)

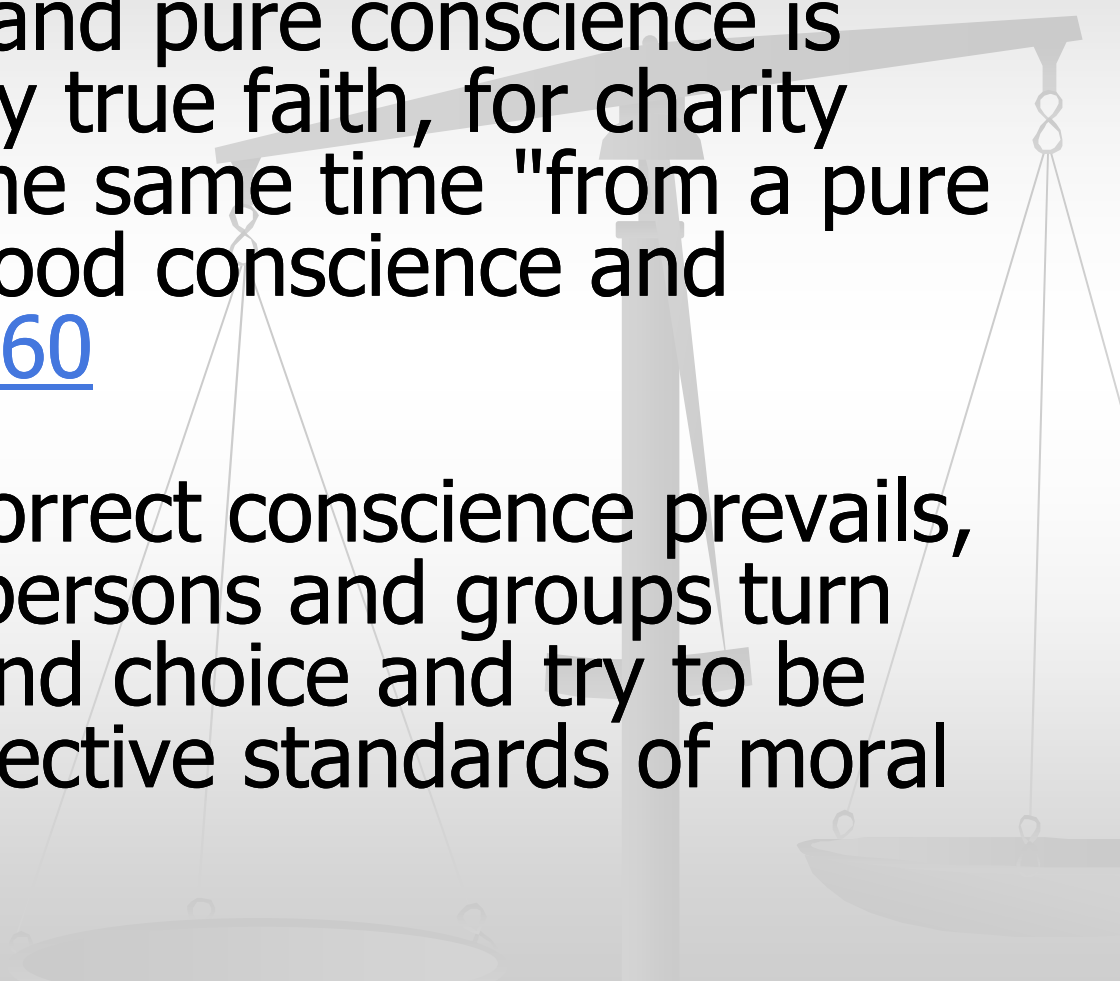
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To Choose in Accord with Conscience

- 1791

- This ignorance can often be imputed to personal responsibility. This is the case when a man "takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees almost blinded through the habit of committing sin." [59](#) In such cases, the person is culpable for the evil he commits.

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- 1794 A good and pure conscience is enlightened by true faith, for charity proceeds at the same time "from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith."[60](#)

The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by objective standards of moral conduct.[61](#)



“What happens when my
conscience conflicts with
Church authority? What
must I do?”

Code of Canon Law (ed.1989)

■ CAN. 752

- “Although not as assent of faith, **a religious submission of the intellect and will must be given to a doctrine** which the Supreme Pontiff or the college of bishops declares concerning faith or morals when they exercise the authentic magisterium, even if they do not intend to proclaim it by definitive act; therefore, **the Christian faithful are to take care to avoid those things which do not agree with it.** (emphasis added)

Footnotes

- ¹ Mays, William E. Catholic Bioethics and the Gift of Human Life. Our Sunday Visitor Publishing. Huntington, IN. 2000. p.54
- ² Mays, p. 54
- ³ Mays, p. 54
- ⁴ Mays, p. 54
- ⁵ Mays, p. 54
- ⁶ Mays, p. 54
- ⁷ Mays, p. 50