

Words from Fr. Peter to parishioners of St. Claude and St. Denis,

Brothers and sisters,

This Sunday, the sixth Sunday of Easter, the second reading is excerpted from the first letter of St. Peter (1Pr 3: 15-18). St. Peter exhorted us that: **“Beloved, keep your conscience clear...For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil”**. As Catholics, we were taught about conscience in catechism class when we were children. We have heard of it or talked about it in our daily lives. In short, conscience is familiar to most of us. I am writing to remind you of the thing that you have might already known—understanding of conscience under the Catholic prism.

What is conscience?

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, **Conscience is a judgment of reason by which we determine whether an action is right or wrong** (Cf. CCC #1778).

“Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment. . . . For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. . . . His conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths” (CCC # 1776).

God creates us with a capacity to know and love him, and we have a natural desire to seek the truth about him. Fortunately, we don’t search for God unaided; indeed, he calls us to himself and writes his law on our hearts to help us draw closer to him.

Conscience helps us hear the voice of God; it helps us recognize the truth about God and the truth about how we ought to live.

Jesus told the apostles, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). We deepen our relationship with God by following him, and in doing so, we become more fully ourselves.

Importance of a Well-Formed Conscience

Have we ever made a decision that turned out badly, but if we had more information beforehand, we would have made a better decision? Sometimes, we may have the best of intentions to do good, but choose an action that is, in itself, wrong.

For example, think of learning a new language. We can only speak with the language we have, and if we have not received good education in vocabulary and grammar, we will communicate poorly, and others will not understand us. It is similar with conscience.

If our conscience isn’t well-formed, we aren’t well-equipped to determine right from wrong. All of us have the personal responsibility to align our consciences with the truth so that, when we are faced with the challenges of daily life, our consciences can help guide us well.

May 17, 2020

Sixth Sunday of Easter (A)

How to Form Our Consciences

Wherever we are on our journey with Christ, we can grow deeper with him by continuing the work of forming our consciences well, so that we may follow him ever more closely. Although not a complete list, these suggestions can help us as we seek to inform and strengthen our consciences with God’s truth.

1. **Pray**

Through prayer and participation in the sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist, we encounter the living God. Spending time with the Lord, such as in silent adoration, opens our hearts to him. In drawing closer to the Lord, we allow God’s grace to conform our minds and hearts to Christ, so that we might better discern in every moment how we ought to act. Daily examination of conscience is very important and helpful in keeping our conscience well-formed and clear.

2. **Learn**

Without a foundational, practical formation, it is difficult for our consciences to guide us well in concrete situations. As Catholics, we have the immense gift of the teaching authority of the Catholic Church and can turn to it for help forming our consciences. For example, learning about Christian moral principles, reading the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, or researching what the Church says about a challenging teaching will help us grow in knowledge of the truth. In turn, this helps us understand a little more how to live in a way that leads to our true happiness.

3. **Reflect**

We are formed by the stories we hear and tell. We may be uncertain how we ought to respond to various challenges as followers of Jesus, but there are many saints who have faced similar questions throughout the ages. Immersing ourselves in the stories of holy women and men can encourage us and help us develop habits of mind that allow us to grow. Stories help us hone our instincts.

4. **Nurture friendships**

A life of following Jesus is exceedingly difficult without help from a community. When we devote energy to holy friendships with people who are also trying to know, love, and serve the Lord, we gain partners who can lighten the load. Conversation with our priests, spiritual directors and with other Christians about how to respond to challenges in the life of discipleship are vital.

Two Challenges

A couple challenges we may face in following our consciences are worth noting.

1. Indifference

When we are bombarded with news, images, stories, and sound bites, it's easy to become numb to other people and the world around us. Conscience requires us to be attentive. We must listen to God, who speaks to us. Having a well-formed conscience doesn't mean we have all the answers to the complex problems in the world, but it does mean that we are sensitive to the needs and struggles of other people.

2. Coercion

Increasingly, we are seeing that certain groups use the power of the media and even of the state to coerce people to violate their consciences. We can see how unjust these types of actions are that insist that popular opinion, rather than conscience, should be our primary guide for action.

Some rules apply in every case: (CCC #1789)

- 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." (Mt 7:12; cf. Lk 6:31; Tob 4:15)
- 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." (1 Cor 8:12). Therefore "it is right not to... do anything that makes your brother stumble" (Rom 14:21).

The Word of God is a light for our path. We must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. This is how moral conscience is formed (CCC # 1802).

Brothers and sisters, remember that the primary vocation of all baptized Christians is the call to holiness. Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, religious monks, nuns, and lay persons... everyone is called to become saint. We are called to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Therefore, brothers and sisters, keep your conscience clear, live in the presence of God and live in the state of grace. When we have a clear conscience and are living in a state of grace with God, we will have the inner peace, the peace that no one can take it from us.

May the peace of the Lord be with you always!

Fr. Peter Le

(Some parts of this writing is excerpted from the article found on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2017/understanding-conscience.cfm>)



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LOVE GOD LOVE OTHERS TRAIN DISCIPLES

May 17, 2020

Sixth Sunday of Easter (A)

Eucharistic Celebrations :

Sunday, May 17th - private mass – Lucien & Alexine Rouire

(Marcel & Dorothee Dequier)

Friday, **May 22nd - 9:00 am** Adoration and reconciliation
private mass – August Debusschere *(funeral collection)*

Sunday, **May 24th - private mass – Paroissiens défunts** *(anonymous)*

Sanctuary Lamp – this week: **Maurice Poirier**

God's Share for May to date : \$590.00 + \$70.00 (DD) = **\$660.00**

Pope's Pastoral Works to date : **\$10.00**



Readings for Sunday: May 24, 2020
Acts 1, 12-14; Psalm 26 (27), 1, 4, 7-8;
1 Peter 4, 13-16 John 17, 1b-11a

Prayer Intention for May 2020:

For Deacons - We pray that deacons, faithful in their service to the Word and the poor, may be an invigorating symbol for the entire Church.