

Catholic Diocese of Raleigh

A Well-Formed Conscience



“Catholics have a serious and life-long obligation to form their consciences in accord with human reason and the teaching of the Church. Conscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil. Conscience always requires serious attempts to make sound moral judgments based on the truths of our faith.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, No. 17
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The formation of conscience includes several elements. First there is a desire to embrace goodness and truth. For Catholics this begins with a willingness and openness to seek the truth and what is right by studying the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church as contained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It is also important to examine the facts and background information about various choices. Finally prayerful reflection is essential to discern the will of God.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, No. 18
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The Church fosters well-formed consciences not only by teaching moral truth but also by encouraging its members to develop the virtue of prudence. Prudence enables us “to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No.1806). Prudence shapes and informs our ability to deliberate over available alternatives, to determine what is most fitting to a specific context, and to act decisively. Exercising this virtue often requires the courage to act in defense of moral principles when making decisions about how to build a society of justice and peace.”

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, No. 19
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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The Catholic approach to faithful citizenship rests on moral principles found in Scripture and Catholic moral and social teaching as well as in the hearts of all people of good will. The central and enduring themes of Catholic social tradition can provide a moral framework for decisions in public life. These themes will be explored more in depth in the following weeks.

Catholic Social Teaching Themes

A Well-Formed Conscience

The Right to Life and the Dignity of the Human Person

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Rights and Responsibilities

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Solidarity

Caring for God’s Creation