

St. Mark RCIA Study Guide

Moral Decision Making and Conscience

“Conscience is not a power but an act... For conscience, by the very nature of the word, implies the relation of knowledge to something.” † St. Thomas Aquinas



1. If we don't have a well-formed conscience and follow it, we are probably walking in circles. What are the three elements of the moral act?
2. What is the difference, morally, between what a surgeon does versus a bank robber armed with a knife according to the three elements of the moral act?
3. How do you think understanding the three elements of the moral act can aid you in a reasoned examination of

your conscience?

4. How does conscience direct our life towards God?
 5. “Holiness is Wholeness” Describe someone you personally know who you think is a whole person?
 6. What is your understanding of grace and sin?
 7. What is the difference between an examination of conscience (*examen*) and an examination of consciousness?
 8. Conscience must be based on truth, conscience doesn't decide what the truth is, our intelligence is oriented towards truth. Conscience is an act based on our understanding of the truth. In conscience we take responsibility for what we say and do. How can we sin against conscience?
-

Points to Ponder

Grace and Virtue:

In addition, God's grace is offered to us to purify and strengthen our human virtues, for our growth in virtue can be hampered by the reality of sin. Especially through prayer and the Sacraments, we open ourselves to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and God's grace as another way in which we grow in virtue.

What is Conscience

Conscience is a judgment of practical reason.

Judgment is a decision.

Practical is something we actually say or do.

Reason is the use of our intellectual ability to guide our actions, not just pure emotion.

Obeying Conscience

There are some rules to follow in obeying one's conscience.

- **First**, always follow a certain conscience.
- **Second**, an incorrect conscience must be changed, if possible.
- **Third**, do not act with a doubtful conscience.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (2012-04-02). United States Catholic Catechism for Adults. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Kindle Edition.