Making Moral Decisions

Teacher Background

In making and arriving at moral decisions, a person has the right and responsibility to act in conscience and in freedom. A person is not to be forced to act contrary to the dictates of his or her conscience. It follows that conscience is to be informed and moral judgment enlightened. As people mature and develop, they naturally look for guidance and support from parents and other responsible people who are mature and in a position to provide sound guidance. A conscience that is well formed is upright and truthful. The education of the conscience is indispensable the task of a lifetime and demands the attention of parents and educators. Conscience formation for Christians entails:

- consideration of facts and truth
- prayer
- reflection on the Word of God
- the life and teaching of Jesus and
- the moral teaching and guidance of the Church.

A human being must always obey the certain judgment of conscience. It can happen, however, that moral conscience makes erroneous judgments about how to act in particular circumstances. The degree of guilt and culpability that an individual bears for the erroneous judgments is dependent on a range of factors. Among such factors are the age and maturity of the individual, the trouble taken to seek out what is true and good, the degree of good or bad influence from others and habitual sin creating a moral blindness in a person. Other factors include rejection of the teaching authority and moral guidance of Christ, his Gospel, the Church and other sources of moral guidance. Even when an individual carries little or no personal guilt for the erroneous judgments of his or her conscience the resulting evil remains no less an evil and a disorder. It is important then, to work to correct the errors of moral conscience and to form conscience on sound lines.