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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love Thee, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

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SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

### The Marks of a Good Conscience

*“Call the laborers and pay them their hire.” St. Matthew 20:8.*

The only thing that sweetens the workman’s toil is the hope of the wages he is to receive for it in the evening when his work is done. As long as we live, we are hired to work for the great Master; we are laborers, whose only end is to serve God, to love God, to keep God’s law, and to do his holy will in all things. The wages we are to receive at evening, that is, at the end of our lives, for this labor is eternal happiness in heaven. Oh, who will not work willingly for the short, uncertain time of his life to gain such a recompense! Yet we have such a good and generous God that He will not allow his faithful servants to wait till the end of their lives for their reward; but in the midst of their labors, during this life, He gives them a notable portion of the future reward, namely, peace of heart, a sweet repose of conscience, and joy in and on account of the work they are actually doing for Him. Yes, some will think: all that has been said of a good conscience is indeed consoling and comforting for those who have a good conscience; and I, too, would willingly rejoice in the Lord, if I only knew that I am in the state of grace, that I really have a good conscience. But who can tell me that? That question I am now about to answer.

*He who wishes to know whether he really has a good conscience must ask his own conscience about it; for that will certainly tell him whether it is good or bad.*

The conscience is a judge placed over men by the Almighty in his stead, to pronounce finally on their actions whether good or bad. Whatever the sentence of that judge may be, God ratifies it, and rejects as bad what the conscience condemns as bad and approves as good what it approves of. If I satisfy my conscience, I satisfy God. If my conscience accuses me, I am guilty before God. If my conscience does not accuse or condemn me, neither will God accuse, or condemn me. Therefore the conscience is called the rule and guide to be followed in judging between good and evil; and I am bound to follow and obey it in all my actions to such an extent that if I act against my conscience I act against God, nor can I do anything good or pleasing to God, however good or pleasing to him the work may be in itself, unless my conscience first looks on it as good and pleasing to him; nor can I commit sin, although in reality I do something forbidden by the law of God, unless my conscience knows and reminds me that I am doing wrong, or at least suggests to me a reasonable doubt regarding the

legality of my act. Thus I actually sin by doing a work that is good in itself and has nothing whatever wrong in it if my conscience erroneously judges, or gives me reasonable cause to doubt that act is unlawful; and I actually perform a good work, although what I do is really sinful, if my conscience assures me that the act is pleasing to God. Your conscience is nothing else than the reasonable, candid judgment that you form of your own actions. And with regard to the act you are about to perform, if you judge or think without any doubt that the act is a lawful one, you do it with a good conscience, and it is a good act; but if you judge, or have reasonable doubt, that it is not lawful, then you do it with a bad conscience, and commit a sin, no matter what the act may be in itself, whether it is good or bad, lawful or unlawful from this it follows:

1. That the conduct of those people is most unreasonable, who after having done something about the lawfulness of which they had not the least doubt, are filled with fear and anguish afterwards because they happen to hear that it is a sin. Then it is all up with them! My God, they think, I have often done that and never confessed it! What shall I do? All my past confessions are bad! Nonsense! You cannot sin unless you know, or have a reasonable doubt, that what you are doing is sinful; but that knowledge or doubt, you had not at the time of the action. What is once done well and without sin cannot be made sinful by any knowledge gained afterwards. Why then should you worry yourself so much? If it was forbidden a thousand times, or was the worst sin that one could commit, ask your conscience what judgment it formed at the time, and if it says that was no sin, be quite at ease; you are not even bound to mention the act in confession, because it is not matter for absolution.

2. On the other hand, we see how great is the error of those who, having done what they falsely thought sinful, and finding out afterwards that the act is lawful, congratulate themselves, saying: oh, I am glad of that! I need not confess it now, because it appears it is not a sin. But do not be so sure of that; the sin is already committed, because you thought at the time that you were doing wrong; so that it remains a sin, although you know better now; and you must confess it and repent of it.

3. Thirdly, it follows that those parents and servants are very unwise whom, to keep children in check or frighten them from evil, either tell them that things are sins which are no sins at all, or else make the sins greater than they are in reality. If the child throws away the bread after it has eaten the honey or butter, they cry out; you must not do that, or you will go to hell! Disobedience to parents or making a cross face is also condemned as a mortal sin. "Those naughty children who run about in the streets will go to hell." "Be careful not to tell a lie, for a lie is a mortal sin."

That is not the way, O parents, to instruct children! You must not make them believe that there are sins where there are none nor make sins greater than they really are; otherwise you teach them to do evil; for when they come to the use of reason, since what they have heard so often remains fixed in their memories, and they look on those actions as sins, when they do them they act against their conscience and thus commit sin, although the act itself is not sinful. You must have recourse to other means to keep them in check; threaten them with the rod when they do wrong, and if they do not amend beat them soundly in God's name; that is not so dangerous for them, and will do them far more good than that senseless manufacturing of sins.

4. You have a bad conscience if, after diligent examination and with good reason, you judge on sufficient grounds and can say with truth: after Baptism I sinned grievously when I came to the use of reason, when I was fully aware that what I did was a mortal sin; and if you can moreover say that there is one of those mortal sins that you have not confessed, or not confessed properly. Or else if you can judge with good reason and say, with truth: I have now really a desire and wish to sin grievously against the law of God; or I am in doubt as to whether this or that is a mortal sin, and yet I do not intend to avoid it or amend my life in that respect. There you have a proof of a bad conscience, and if such is the case with you, you will not long have rest, if there is even a little of the fear of hell left in you, or a slight hope or desire of going to heaven. For therefrom comes the bitter sting, or, as it is called, the gnawing worm of conscience, which eats it away like a worm gnawing into an apple.

5. On the other hand, if after due consideration you can say: as far as I know, I have never omitted a grievous sin in confession; I have prepared myself for confession always as well as I could; I have repented with my whole heart of my sins; I am still very sorry for having ever grievously offended my good God; if I had to live my life over again, I should never sin grievously. As far as I know, after that last mortal sin, I have never committed another. As far as I know, I have no ill-gotten goods and am not bound to restitution. I have hitherto

tried to do the duties of my state according to the will and law of God; I am willing and am firmly resolved to do them in future as long as I live, and never to offend God by a mortal sin, even if I had to lose all I have in the world. If you can say that with truth, then you can be certain with a human certainty, which will not admit of any reasonable doubt, that you have a good conscience and are in the state of grace.

6. This certainty becomes all the greater when you have good reason for believing, and can say to yourselves, that for a long time, some months, for instance, you have avoided all mortal sin. For it is a most difficult thing for one who is actually in mortal sin to abstain from committing fresh sins for any length of time. Hence, if you keep from grievous sin for a long time after having done penance, you have a good sign that you are in the grace of God.

7. Finally, do you not sometimes feel in your heart a fervent love of God, a desire to do something to please Him and to serve Him faithfully according to his holy will? Do you not feel an inward horror when you hear how recklessly men provoke God's anger? Are you not rejoiced to see people honoring Him publicly? Do you not experience an inward sorrow when in the examination of your conscience you find that you have willfully committed even a venial sin? Are you not uneasy until you have confessed it? That is another sure sign that you are in the state of grace, and are beloved by God. The Lord himself says: "I love them that love me" (Prov. 8:17). If I have committed even a hundred thousand million of sins, and make even for one moment an act of perfect charity, as David did when he said with a contrite heart: "I have sinned against the Lord" (2. Kings 52:53), all my sins are at once forgiven, and I am again beloved by God. "Oh," exclaims St. Bernard, full of joy and consolation, "I am not afraid, because I love." Why? Because I am thereby assured that God loves me; "if I love God I can as little doubt that I am loved by Him as I can that I love Him." Now every one can find out all this with the utmost certainty from his own conscience, if he asks it to pronounce on the matter. For I can and must know whether I have willfully sinned, or willfully concealed a sin in confession whether I truly repent of my sins and detest them; whether I love God with my whole heart, and am resolved to remain faithful to Him for the rest of my life. And if any of you can reasonably and honestly form that judgment concerning himself, then I congratulate him with all my heart; he is all right; he has a good conscience; he is a friend, a dear child of God, and if he were to die now he would inherit the kingdom of heaven. Let him rejoice then in the Lord; let him be peaceful and satisfied, and thank the good God. Only one word of warning I would wish to say to him with the old Tobias: "Take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God." If you are careful in that, there is no fear for you.

You are careful in your duties and employments; you daily trouble yourselves about many things, trying to avoid misfortune, and to attain success; ah, whatever you do, whatever you omit, whatever be your fears or hopes otherwise, be careful above all things to have a good conscience in the sight of God, and never to injure it!

Away then with the vain goods, honors, and pleasures of the world, in which you have hitherto fruitlessly sought happiness, rest and contentment of soul, and real joy of heart! You must acknowledge, with the wise Solomon, that in all these things you have found nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit. You have now learned something far better than all the world can teach you, and that is, always to rejoice with the true joy that consists in the Supreme Good; always to live in the true peace that the world cannot give; that peace which the Angels announced to the shepherds: "On earth peace to men of good will." That peace you find in your good conscience; if you have it, you can laugh at all earthly happiness and prosperity, and at all earthly misfortune and distress as well; for no matter how things go with you, you shall find comfort and consolation in God your Lord. Amen.

[Now we review a chapter taken from the booklet:](#)

The True Church Is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

### Chapter Six – CONSCIENCE

#### *The Most Basic of All Fatima Requests*

The most basic of all the requests of Our Lady is AMENDMENT OF LIFE or CONVERSION FROM SIN!

“PEOPLE MUST AMEND THEIR LIVES and ask pardon for their sins. They must not offend Our Lord any more for He is already so much offended!”

Amendment of life demands sincere repentance and a real conversion to God from sin, as well as penance and sacrifice and reparation for sin.

“People must amend their lives” means that faults MUST be corrected, sinful habits MUST be removed, erroneous ideas MUST be changed, and reparation to God MUST be done, painful and humiliating though this may be to proud and stubborn human nature.

“People must amend their lives” means that they MUST humbly and willingly allow themselves to be correctly informed as to what is sinful or immoral or contrary to the Faith, and therefore offensive to God and to Mary's Immaculate Heart!

Pope Pius XI teaches in *Divini Redemptoris*, March 19, 1937:

“Any Catholic who does not live really and sincerely according to the Faith he professes will NOT long be master of himself in these days when the winds of persecution blow so fiercely, but will be swept away in the new deluge which threatens the world. And thus, while he is preparing his own ruin, he is exposing to ridicule the very name of Catholic.”

Knowing we MUST AMEND our lives, we should review the following about Conscience. From: *A Parochial Course of Doctrinal Instructions Based on the Teachings of the Catechism of the Council of Trent*, prepared and arranged by Very Rev. Charles J. Callan and Very Rev. John A. McHugh, Imprimatur, 1941, MORAL SERIES, Part III, Page 73 ff:

#### The Meaning of Conscience.

“1) - There are two rules or norms according to which a person must shape his conduct, namely the Commandments of God and his own conscience. 2) - Conscience is the judgment of the practical reason which decides that a particular action is in conformity with or opposition to God's law. 3) - **We are NEVER permitted to act CONTRARY to the dictates of OUR CONSCIENCE**, for, as St. Paul says, all that is not of faith, i.e., according to one's conscience, is sinful (Rom. xiv. 23). If we eat certain food, thinking it is forbidden when it is not forbidden, we SIN, says the Apostle. 4) - But while one **MUST ALWAYS ACT ACCORDING TO THE DICTATES OF HIS CONSCIENCE**, it does not follow that in doing so he may not, under certain conditions, be guilty of SIN, for there is such a thing as a FALSE CONSCIENCE.”

#### Various Kinds of Conscience.

“1) - Conscience may be true, erroneous or doubtful. It is true when it is in conformity with God's law; it is erroneous when it is out of harmony with the divine law; it is doubtful when it hesitates or is unable to decide whether a certain action is right or wrong; 2)- **It is NEVER LAWFUL to act with a DOUBTFUL conscience**, because that would be carelessly running the risk of doing the wrong thing, and so of SINNING. If a person has to act without delay and cannot settle his doubt, he should seek GOOD advice if possible; and if this is impossible, he should do what appears the MOST REASONABLE AT THE TIME, waiting till later to settle the matter. 3)- A person's conscience may be in error with or without his own fault; if without his own fault, he does not sin by following it, e.g., if a person should eat meat on Friday not knowing it is Friday, or should miss Mass on a Holyday not knowing it is a Holyday. With regard to keeping the Commandments of God, however, no person of ordinary intelligence can be ignorant WITHOUT HIS OWN FAULT. It is plain to every sound mind that God and parents MUST be honored, that murder, theft, impurity, stealing, etc., ARE WRONG.

4) - When one's conscience is in error **through his own fault, because he DOES NOT WISH TO KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT, or because HE HAS NEGLECTED TO USE THE ORDINARY DILIGENCE AND INTEREST TO DETERMINE WHAT IS RIGHT, he has a FALSE conscience and IS in BAD FAITH, and IS GUILTY OF SIN EVERY TIME HE ACTS ACCORDING TO SUCH A CONSCIENCE.**”

“One of the choicest gifts of God to man is conscience. It is really His voice speaking to our hearts. No monitor can be more vigilant in warning us against evil; no parent more insistent on the doing of good always; no friend more anxious to insinuate the helpful and to encourage what is virtuous. Conscience is omnipresent. To the man tossed about by the angry waves in the ocean storm; to the man who would find escape from the trackless desert; to him who is almost deafened by the din and roar of business of pleasure or sin, CONSCIENCE SPEAKS CLEARLY AND UNMISTAKABLY.”

#### Doubtful Conscience

“True, man is not infallible; BUT it is assuring and consoling to us to know that when we **have used our BEST efforts** to find out what conscience urges, that, no matter whether the act be virtuous or not, we **SHALL BE REWARDED FOR WORK WELL DONE**. It is NOT the mere doing, BUT THE REASON for doing which gives MERIT to action. When we have acted according to conscience we are prompted not so much by the act itself as by a desire to **DO GOOD**. It is possible that at times the very thing we do is a thing most strictly FORBIDDEN, but this is NOT known to us. We recalled our teaching, our experience; we tried to compare the action with what WE thought was commanded or forbidden, and we believed that here and now virtue demanded that the action be performed.”

“For the same reason if at times we do what is innocent and harmless, BUT WHILE DOING IT we are under the impression that IT IS WRONG IN ITSELF, or that it is FORBIDDEN, we are to CONDEMN ourselves as SINNING, because we acted AGAINST what we THOUGHT WAS RIGHT.”

#### True Conscience

“It is VERY NECESSARY that from earliest days we expend **EVERY EFFORT** in trying to acquire a TRUE conscience. And by TRUE conscience we mean one that almost by instinct knows the will of God. No matter what action or course of action presents itself, no matter how far from the ordinary it may be, a TRUE conscience will ALWAYS prescribe what is ESSENTIALLY RIGHT.”

#### When Not Certain

“It is obvious, indeed, that the circumstances are necessarily **FEW** which demand immediate action. To act heedlessly under such circumstances, will expose one to the danger of SIN. This would be acting with what we call a doubtful conscience. One needs trouble himself LITTLE concerning a conscience that is in error through ignorance, because the ignorance **WHICH EXCUSES** can extend to **FEW** of our ordinary actions. One can hardly allege that he did NOT know it was WRONG to steal, to kill, to be impure, to refuse honor to God or to one's parents, these are dictates of common sense.”

Other things that every reasonable person must surely know are WRONG: 1) - To think several churches with contrary beliefs can all be the TRUE Church. 2) - To think one can be pleasing to God while disobeying His Laws and Commandments. 3) - To frustrate God's plans of Creation by using artificial means of BIRTH CONTROL. 4) - To think that men will no longer be tempted when they see an immodestly dressed woman. 5) - To think that those who teach things directly contrary to the true Popes, Councils and Doctors of the Infallible Catholic Church can be teaching the TRUTH. 6) - To think that a church that is NOT Infallible could be a better guide than the Church that IS Infallible. 7) - To call a man the TRUE Vicar of Jesus Christ who is the head of a schismatical, heretical non-Catholic church.]

#### False Conscience

“There shall arise false christs and false prophets.” Listening to Our Lord's warning words the mind naturally reverts to the many false teachers who, by word, example, or writing, lead men astray. But, as in Christ's own words, “a man's worst enemies are those of his own household,” so the MOST DANGEROUS of all false prophets IS WITHIN us--in a willfully FALSE or DELUDED conscience. “Woe to you,” says the prophet, speaking of those who fall into this state, “that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness ” (Isa. v. 20).”

#### Rule Of Conduct

“Now, the law of God is the outward, eternal, never-changing standard of right and wrong; and in so far only is conscience a safe and trustworthy guide inasmuch as it accords with, is conformed to and harmonizes with this divine standard. If it swerves therefrom, either willfully or unwillfully, by one's own fault or otherwise, it is wrong or erroneous. Conscience is, therefore, the knowing and applying of God's laws to the ever-varying thoughts, words, and actions of human life. It is NOT sufficient of itself; it does NOT dispense with the NECESSITY of an external divine teacher to point out our obligations and duties. On the contrary, we help and learn from one another; and GOD has appointed an INFALLIBLE CHURCH external to us to be our guide in the difficult path of morals as well as of belief. Nay, when in doubt, ignorance, darkness, or difficulty, conscience itself suggests the duty of seeking for help, light, and guidance wherever they can be found.”

#### We Must Follow Our Conscience

“Now, from this it follows that in ALL deliberate moral actions we MUST BE GUIDED BY OUR CONSCIENCE at least to the extent of NEVER WILLFULLY ACTING AGAINST IT as it is to us personally the voice of God and the internal rule by which the morality of our conduct is measured.”

“Furthermore, we should ALWAYS respect our neighbor's conscience, even when opposed to our own, and never take upon ourselves the office of judge of their conduct, for “Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?” (Rom. xiv. 4). “To his own Lord he standeth or falleth.”

“A superior has no right to issue a command that violates conscience.”

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