



Conscience

The heart of the Church's moral teaching is the desire for people to live full, happy and good lives. This reflects Jesus' teaching: "I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10.10). The Church teaches that within each person is a law inscribed by God that calls them to do what is good and to avoid evil¹ which is the essence of conscience. Conscience is the experience of ourselves as moral agents, as persons responsible for our actions.² We are bound to follow our conscious in all activity. No one is "to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his (sic) conscience. Nor...is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious"³ However, conscience can be erroneous and needs to be formed in order to make informed decisions. (See *Informed Conscience*)

¹*Gaudium et spes Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world; promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965*

² McBrien, R. (1994). *Catholicism*. North Blackburn, Vic.: CollinsDove, p.1236

³ *Dignitatis humanae: Declaration on religious freedom promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965*