

FORMING OUR CONSCIENCE II

The foundation of “proper” choices

Catholics have always cherished the fact that we are free to make decisions, but at the same time we have always understood that each of us is inclined toward our passions – our emotions and appetites that can overrule our heads and our hearts. Passions such as love or infatuation, hate, desire, fear, joy, sadness and anger can twist our thoughts and cloud our consciences. The Church has always understood that our ability to “reason” and our capacity to will the good can help us in dealing with our strong emotional responses. A necessary component of this is to recognize that our emotional visceral [gut] responses to situations in our lives can pull us toward destructive behaviors, whether it is lashing out at another, or turning those emotions in on ourselves in the form of self inflicted wounds, for example depression. Put another way, emotions and feelings can be purified by the virtues, or perverted by our vices. A conscience that has been well formed in the virtues can lead us to persevere in the face of a strong emotional response to people and situations. If we have made it the habit to pray, to resist the lure of evil and to walk in the commandments we will be on firmer ground when responding to challenges in life that provoke an emotional response. The person with a well-formed conscience may be moved to violence, but will resist that emotional response because he or she has schooled themselves in willing to do the good, and avoid doing harm.

IHM Pray for us.

Fr. Jerry