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Message from the Spiritual Advisor: Reflections on Conscience

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Message from the Spiritual Advisor . . .

Reflections On Conscience

A term much in use in the oral and written communications of today is "Conscience." In the work entitled *Making All Things New*, the Higher Institute of Catechetics, Nijmegen, points out that a better education in the Faith, not just instruction, is necessary for this renewal. A deeper understanding of Conscience is part of that Christian formation. The following excerpt might be helpful.

"Conscience is not primarily an organ for judging what is evil, but one by which I here and now recognize and fulfill the good that is to be done. The Lord is holy and He wants us to be holy. This is His great plan of salvation for men: Be holy as I am holy." This holiness of the living God, that was revealed in all its splendor in Jesus Christ, is the firm pivot of my conscience. The holy living God speaks here and now directly to me. His law was not only engraved on stone but lives in the hearts of all men, it is the hidden presence of God in us.

"From this presence we may not divorce conscience. Conscience is a voice within us but, at the same time, transcending us. The Holy Spirit lives in our hearts, and in our conscience. It is He who enlightens our mind and moves our will to what is good and even to what is heroic. Through Him we already possess the holiness of God, but as yet only in capacity, as a taste for what is good and holy. This capacity comes alive by being confronted with the values of the world and of men around us. It is in the encounter between myself and these values that I hear God's voice.

"Hence conscience may not be isolated from the religious foundation which gives it a divine dimension. Conscience is the organ for the good, still more for the holiness, that consists in love. It is the instrument by which God's Spirit makes me see God's will: what does God want of me at this moment in the present situation?

"But this means also that man must learn to have an eye for the situation, for the possibilities and opportunities that the situation contains for the realization of what is good. With respect to the formation of conscience, this means that it is absolutely necessary to explain at once to the awakening conscience of youngsters that moral goodness has its foundation in the earthly reality of things and men themselves. On the other hand, however, we would render a disservice to them if we did not also, just as early, orientate that goodness Godwards." How best to accomplish this today, for children and adults, needs to be answered seriously, and well.

"Do not extinguish the Spirit, but test all things; hold fast that which is good. Keep yourselves from every kind of evil" (1 Thes. 5:19).

Father Kenneth MacKinnon