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Shepherd's Message

A Relook into Our Own Conscience



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"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (Proverbs 4:23).

In an age marked by rapid change, technological advancement, and growing moral confusion, the formation and preservation of a good conscience have become more important than ever. Conscience is the sacred sanctuary where God

speaks to the human heart. The Second Vatican Council teaches: *"Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that"* (Gaudium et Spes, 16).

A breach of conscience is not merely a personal weakness; it is a sign of the gradual collapse of humanity. A good conscience preserves our humanness, protects us from spiritual decline, and safeguards the moral fabric of society.

St. Paul warns us: *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall"* (1 Corinthians 10:12). Many public failures are not sudden events; they are often the visible result of years of hidden spiritual decline.

Signs of a Declining Conscience

1. The Fear of God Disappears

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). When holy reverence for God diminishes, sin is easily rationalized. The heart

gradually loses its sensitivity to God's voice. What was once recognized as wrong begins to appear acceptable.

A weakened or poorly formed conscience often reveals itself through certain attitudes and behaviors. These may include rationalizing sinful actions instead of acknowledging them, living a double life in which one's public image differs significantly from one's private conduct, and interpreting Scripture selectively to justify personal desires rather than seeking God's truth. Other signs are the deliberate suppression of the inner voice of conscience, a continued persistence in immoral behavior without genuine repentance, and a growing indifference toward prayer and spiritual practices. Such tendencies gradually distance a person from God and can lead to spiritual blindness if left unaddressed.

The Catechism reminds us: *"Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened"* (CCC 1783). When conscience is neglected, spiritual blindness follows. Jesus himself warned: *"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness"* (Matthew 6:22-23).

2. Private Life and Public Ministry Do Not Match

One of the most serious threats to the Christian life is hypocrisy—the tendency to project an appearance of holiness while neglecting genuine interior conversion. Jesus sharply criticized such attitudes when He said, *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead"* (Matthew 23:27). A compromised conscience often becomes evident through various forms of moral and spiritual inconsistency, such as sexual misconduct, jealousy and unhealthy comparisons, pride and an inflated self-image, financial dishonesty, resentment and an unwillingness to forgive, harmful addictions,

deceptive relationships, and even corruption concealed beneath a façade of religiosity. Pope Francis frequently warns against what he calls “spiritual worldliness,” a subtle temptation that seeks personal recognition and advantage rather than the glory of God. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he identifies this attitude as one of the gravest dangers confronting the Church because it places self-interest above the demands of the Gospel. Therefore, St. Paul's exhortation remains ever relevant: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them” (1 Timothy 4:16), reminding us that authentic Christian witness requires both integrity of life and fidelity to the truth.

3. Resistance to Correction, Denial and Self-Glory

A conscience that is gradually losing its moral sensitivity often becomes resistant to guidance and correction. When pride takes root in the heart, a person may begin to believe that he no longer needs advice, accountability, or spiritual direction. This attitude can manifest itself in an unwillingness to accept constructive criticism, a lack of transparency and accountability, and a tendency to view ministry merely as the management of activities rather than as a mission of evangelization. It may also be seen in the desire for human recognition and praise instead of seeking God's approval, in acting independently without proper spiritual guidance, and in drawing attention to oneself rather than glorifying Christ. Sacred Scripture strongly cautions against such attitudes: “Whoever remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1). Likewise, St. Peter urges believers, “Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). The Catechism of the Catholic Church further teaches that pride is the source of many sins because it elevates the self above God and the needs of others. Therefore, cultivating humility and remaining open to correction are essential for preserving a healthy and well-formed conscience.

4. The Remedy: Returning to the Lord

The Good News of the Gospel is that God never abandons His children, even when they fall into sin. His mercy is always available to those who turn to Him with sincere and contrite hearts. No failure is too great, and no wound is too deep for God's healing grace. The journey of spiritual renewal begins with humble surrender before God, accompanied by an honest examination of one's life and a sincere acknowledgment of personal weaknesses and shortcomings. It is nourished through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, guided by spiritual direction and

accountability, strengthened by a willingness to accept correction, and sustained by a renewed devotion to prayer and meditation on the Word of God.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord extends a tender invitation to His people: “Return, faithless people; I will heal your backsliding” (Jeremiah 3:22). Similarly, the Psalmist cries out, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10), expressing the deep desire for inner transformation that only God can accomplish. Pope St. John Paul II frequently emphasized that conversion is not a single moment but a lifelong process of continual renewal and growth in holiness. Every disciple of Christ is called to return to the Lord Day after day, allowing His grace to purify the heart, strengthen the conscience, and conform one's life ever more closely to the image of Christ.

Conclusion: Guard the Heart

Our world today does not simply need Christians who are successful in the eyes of society; it needs Christians who are holy in the sight of God. Likewise, the Church is enriched not merely by active ministers but by authentic witnesses whose public service flows from a deep and faithful relationship with the Lord. Genuine Christian discipleship begins in the heart and is sustained by a life rooted in prayer, integrity, and obedience to God's will.

Therefore, we are called to examine our conscience regularly, approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation with humility, remain accountable to the teachings and guidance of the Church, and nurture a profound reverence for God. Such spiritual practices help us remain vigilant against complacency and strengthen our commitment to living the Gospel faithfully.

St. Paul urges believers: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5). This invitation to self-reflection reminds us that the Christian life requires continual conversion and renewal. May we never allow our conscience to become dull or indifferent to God's voice, but instead seek each day the transforming grace of Christ. As the Book of Proverbs wisely counsels, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23). A well-guarded heart and a well-formed conscience remain the foundation of a faithful and fruitful Christian life.

Fear God. Walk humbly. Live authentically. Serve faithfully.

God Bless You all!

+ Sebastian Kallupura