

MUSIC FOR THE LITURGY

Sunday, May 26, 2019
Sixth Sunday of Easter

4:00 PM
8:00 AM

Gathering: Jesus Christ Is Risen Today BB 160

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 145)

Sing a joyful song to the Lord! Let the heavens and earth rejoice! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Sprinkling Rite: *God, you have moved upon the waters, you have sung in the rush of wind and flame; and in your love, you have called us sons and daughters, make us people of the water and your name.*

Preparation The Day Of Resurrection BB 178

Mass Parts Storrington Mass

Communion Eat This Bread BB 336
One Bread, One Body BB 339

Recessional: Ye Sons And Daughters BB 172

10:00 AM

Gathering: Glory And Praise To Our God BB 546

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 145)

Sing a joyful song to the Lord! Alleluia! Let the heavens and earth rejoice! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Sprinkling Rite: *If we have died to ourselves in Jesus, then we shall arise to new life in Him, Alleluia, alleluia!*

Preparation Love Goes On BB 477
What Wondrous Love Is This BB 480

Mass Parts Mass of God's Promise

Communion Ubi Caritas BB 479
In The Breaking Of The Bread BB 324

Recessional: Blest Be The Lord BB 430

✠ PARISH TITHING ✠

Our Parish needs to take in \$7,000.00 each week in order to make ends meet. Thank you for your generosity to our parish! Your weekly contribution helps ensure that the parish remains a vibrant community. Please remember to submit your weekly gift even if you will be away. We depend upon your support!

May 19 2019

Offertory	\$6,402.57
Fuel	\$1,991.15

PARISH GIVING

Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish has engaged *Parish Giving* to provide parishioners with an opportunity to make your offertory and other contributions through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Parish Giving is a simple, secure, and convenient way to manage your stewardship without weekly envelopes and without worries. It allows you to select contribution amounts and special collections right from your own computer or smart phone. You can be a good steward for the Parish even when you are away from the area on a weekend. Parish Giving allows you to print out a report detailing your contributions for the year. This program is available to parishioners at no cost. Log on to the St. Luke the Evangelist Parish website at <http://stlukenh.org>, click on the Parish Giving logo, and follow the easy registration instructions.

UPCOMING SECOND & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

May 26, 2019	Catholic Communications
May 30, 2019	Ascension
June 2, 2019	Property Management
June 9, 2019	No Second Collection

Out of respect, please remember to silence or turn off your cell phones during Mass. Thank you!



Suggested Weekly Contribution Based on Income

Annual Income	5% Commitment annually/weekly	3% Commitment annually/weekly
\$100,000	\$5,000/\$100	\$3,000/\$60
\$75,000	\$3,750/\$75	\$2,250/\$45
\$60,000	\$3,000/\$60	\$1,800/\$36
\$50,000	\$2,500/\$50	\$1,500/\$30
\$40,000	\$2,000/\$40	\$1,200/\$24
\$30,000	\$1,500/\$30	\$900/\$18
\$25,000	\$1,250/\$25	\$750/\$15
\$15,000	\$750/\$15	\$450/\$9

Suggested Weekly Contribution Based on a Percentage Increase

Your Current Offertory Contribution	25% Increase	30% Increase	40% Increase
\$75.00	\$93.75	\$97.50	\$105.00
\$50.00	\$62.50	\$65.00	\$70.00
\$40.00	\$50.00	\$52.00	\$56.00
\$35.00	\$43.75	\$45.50	\$49.00
\$30.00	\$37.50	\$39.00	\$42.00
\$25.00	\$31.25	\$32.50	\$35.00
\$20.00	\$25.00	\$26.00	\$28.00
\$15.00	\$18.75	\$19.50	\$21.00
\$10.00	\$12.50	\$13.00	\$14.00
\$5.00	\$6.25	\$6.50	\$7.00

✠ PARISH NEWS ✠

PAINT THE TOWN!

THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST PARISH

Our Parish community continues with our Capital Campaign. Our next projects include exterior painting for the church and Parish house in Newton. We'd also like to paint the interior sanctuary of the church in Newton and complete some electrical upgrades to the church.

Other possible projects include work on our Plaistow and Newton parking lots, and ramp access to the church in Plaistow.

Can you help?

Any contribution is welcome. Make checks payable to
Saint Luke the Evangelist – Capital Campaign.

PARISH OFFICE CLOSED

In observance of the Memorial Day Holiday, the Parish Office will be closed on **Monday, May 27, 2019**. The Office will reopen at 8:30 AM on Tuesday, May 28.



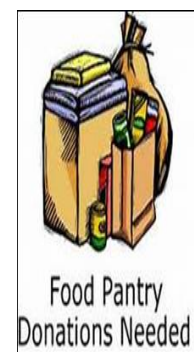
SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION

On **Thursday, May 30**, we will celebrate the Ascension of the Lord, which is a holy day of obligation. Liturgies will be celebrated at **6:30 PM on Wednesday, May 29 in Plaistow** and at **8:00 AM on Thursday, May 30 in Newton**.

ST. LUKE'S WEBSITE! <http://stlukenh.org>

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST FOOD PANTRY

Food or care items are always needed – donations can be dropped off at Church or are welcome at the Parish Office during regular business hours. Cash donations for food are always welcome – make checks payable to **St. Luke the Evangelist Food Pantry**. All donations to the Food Pantry go toward helping the needy of our communities.



FOOD PANTRY HOURS

Wednesday from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon
Thursday from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM
Friday from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

For more information, call the St. Luke Food Pantry at **603-819-4949**.



PENTECOST IS UPON US!
SHOW YOUR TEAM SPIRIT!
WEAR RED TO CHURCH ON THE WEEKEND OF JUNE 8-9

Pentecost Evening Prayer and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
Holy Angels Church
Sunday, June 9 at 6:00 PM
Pentecost Dessert Reception follows at 6:30 PM in the parish hall

WHILE AWAY THIS SPRING...

We appreciate all of you who remember to send in your Parish Offertory during the Spring even when on vacation or visiting other parishes. Thank you for remembering that our expenses also continue through the Spring months. We invite others to consider doing the same before or even after you return home.

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

✠ WEEKLY CALENDAR ✠

Monday, May 27
PARISH OFFICE CLOSED

Wednesday, May 29
HOLY ANGELS CHURCH OPEN
ALL DAY FOR PRAYER

Thursday, May 30
8:30 AM Adoration Begins *Newton*
8:30 PM Adoration Ends *Newton*

Saturday, June 1
3:00 PM Sacrament of Reconciliation *Plaistow*

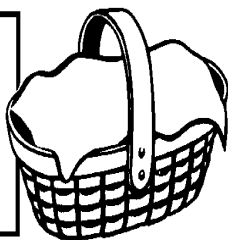
Sunday, June 2
11:00 AM Baptism Catechesis *Plaistow*
12:00 PM Parish Pastoral Council Meeting *Plaistow*

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL IS COMING!!!

Miraculous Mission
Jesus Saves The World
June 24 through 28, 2019
9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Children won't want to miss out! They will meet new friends, sing songs, make crafts, play games, and eat snacks. To register, call Joyce Szczapa at 382-8324, ext. 303 or take a registration form from the back of the church. Cost is \$50 for one child, \$75 for two children, and \$85 for three children.

**St. Vincent
de Paul
Society**



The generosity of your contributions have allowed us to help out those in need with rent, medical, and heating oil assistance. The St. Vincent de Paul Society is so grateful and blessed.

Our next meeting on **Wednesday, June 19 at 7:00 PM**. We meet downstairs in the Church Hall in Plaistow. **New members are always welcome!**

If you seek assistance or need information about the St. Vincent de Paul Society, call 603-382-8324 x315.

**Hear, OH LORD, and answer me
for I am poor and needy.**

✠ MASS INTENTIONS ✠

Saturday, May 25 ~ Vigil / Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Rv 21:10-14, 22-23; Jn 14:23-29
4:00 PM Martin Feuer by Eleanor Feuer and family
Plaistow

Sunday, May 26 ~ Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Rv 21:10-14, 22-23; Jn 14:23-29
8:00 AM Mildred Healey by her family
Newton
10:00 AM Veronica Webster (11th Anniversary)
by her daughters
Plaistow

Monday, May 27 ~ Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop
Acts 16:11-15; Jn 15:26—16:4a
8:00 AM People of the Parish
Newton

Tuesday, May 28 ~ Easter Weekday
Acts 16:22-34; Jn 16:5-11
8:00 AM Rosemary Duhamel by Edward Duhamel
Plaistow

Wednesday, May 29 ~ Easter Weekday
Acts 17:15, 22—18:1; Jn 16:12-15 (Day)
Acts 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23; Mk 16:15-20 (Vigil)
6:30 PM Phil Consentino by Verna Carbone
Plaistow

Thursday, May 30 ~ Ascension of the Lord
Acts 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23; Mk 16:15-20
8:00 AM People of the Parish
Newton

Friday, May 31 ~ Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Zep 3:14-18a or Rom 12:9-16; Lk 1:39-56
No Mass

Saturday, June 1 ~ Justin, Martyr
Acts 18:23-28; Jn 16:23b-28 (Day)
Acts 7:55-60; Rv 22:12-14, 16-17, 20; Jn 17:20-26 (Vigil)
4:00 PM Paul O'Leary by Colleen and Mark Hammond
Plaistow

Sunday, June 2 ~ Seventh Sunday of Easter
Acts 7:55-60; Rv 22:12-14, 16-17, 20; Jn 17:20-26
8:00 AM Bernie Gosselin by the Knights of Columbus
Newton
10:00 AM D. Jesselyn Driscoll by her family
Plaistow

PRAYER LINE

St. Luke's offers a prayer line as a resource for those seeking prayer assistance. To submit your prayer request please call Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 314 or email her at csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.

MAY 26, 2019

✠ FAITH FORMATION & PARISH INFORMATION ✠

CONGRATULATIONS!

Please remember in your prayers

Adam and Debamitra Choudhury Brockett
Christopher and Michelle Stockman Roggi
Kevin and Kimberly Lozeau Rozzano
who were recently married in our Parish

RCIA

The **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** is the process by which people become members of the Roman Catholic Church. If you or someone you know is interested in inquiring about becoming a member of the Roman Catholic Church, call Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 305 or email her at csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.

ADULT CONFIRMATION

Are you an adult who has been Baptized and received Eucharist, but has not celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation? The adult Confirmation process is an opportunity to complete the Sacraments of Initiation. If you would like to prepare for Confirmation, or if you have questions, call Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 305 or email her at csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.

PARENTS BAPTISM PREPARATION SESSION

The monthly preparation session for infant Baptism will be held after the 10:00 AM Liturgy on **Sunday, June 2, 2019** in the Parish Office living room. All parents planning to celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism are welcome. Families wishing to celebrate Baptism in the Church must be registered (according to Church Canon Law) and practicing (attending Sunday Mass) for 3 full months before a Baptism can be scheduled. The use of the envelope system is always optional; however, it does guarantee a manner of accountability. For most families, the Pastor or staff can easily verify attendance during these three months. Church Canon Law also regulates baptismal sponsors (godparents). Sponsors must be at least 16, fully initiated (having received Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation), and be practicing Catholics living Christian lives consistent with the Church's teaching. Please see Fr. Albert with questions.

LED BY THE SPIRIT

Discernment Retreat

June 7-9, 2019

This is a retreat for single men ages 18 to 50! Spend a weekend with other men from the Diocese of Manchester who are discerning the Lord's will for their lives. Fr. Matthew Mason and the vocations team will lead a retreat on the shores of beautiful Otter Lake. Take time to pray, to learn, and to listen for the Lord's will for your life.

The retreat will be held at the Barbara Harris Retreat Center in Greenfield, NH on the weekend of **June 7-9, 2019**. Cost is \$50.

For more information, or to register, please visit www.liveinblackandwhite.com or contact Fr. Matthew Mason at 603-663-0196 or mmason@rcbm.org.

WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND

June 8-9, 2019

Medway, MA

For more information, visit <https://www.wmema.org/>.

ADORATION

We are truly blessed to have times for Adoration of Our Lord in our Parish. This time of prayer and intercession is not only a source of great grace for the individual, but it is a great source of grace for us as a parish family, as well.

We have many who have made the commitment to spend an hour each week with our Eucharistic Lord, **but** we need more people so there will be at least two people at each hour. We are also looking for people who would be able to substitute.

Newton – Thursday

8:30 AM – 8:30 PM

If you can commit to one hour a week in Adoration of our Lord, or if you can be a substitute, please contact Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 305 or email her at csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.

The Church in Plaistow is open all day on Wednesdays for people to stop by and pray before the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle.

✠ PARISH DIRECTORY ✠

Parish Office	382-8324
Parish Prayer Line	382-8324 x 314
St. Vincent de Paul Society	382-8324 x 315
St. Luke's Food Pantry	819-4949
Preschool	382-9783
Presentation of Mary Convent	382-2744

Fr. Albert Tremblay	fr.albert@stluketheevangelist.net
Cathy Smith	csmith@stluketheevangelist.net
Joyce Szapa	jszczapa@stluketheevangelist.net
Jackie Tremblay	jtremblay@stluketheevangelist.net
Thomas Kondel	tkondel@stluketheevangelist.net
Val Barczak	mvmbarczak@comcast.net
Youth Ministry	youth@stluketheevangelist.net
Parish Council	parishcouncil@stluketheevangelist.net

✠ Parish News ~ Youth News ~ Around The Diocese ✠

WOMEN'S RETREAT
Saturday, June 1, 2019
9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

St. Michael Parish, Exeter, NH

Walk alongside women of the Gospels and explore what it means to be loved by a God who longs to bless you, help you, heal you, forgive you, and give you a voice. Cost is \$35, lunch included. To register online, please go to www.stmichaelparish.org or contact Susan Breton for more information at religioused@stmichaelparish.org.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS PLAISTOW COUNCIL
24th ANNUAL ST JUDE OPEN
June 1, 2019



The Knights of Columbus are running their 24th Annual St. Jude Open on June 1st at 7:30 AM at Apple Hill Golf Course in East Kingston. This event raises net proceeds in the range of **\$15,000** every year. This year we are helping a family from Atkinson, a mother with three children under the age of 7, whose husband died unexpectedly.

WE NEED YOU!

For \$100/player you get:

- 18 holes golf with cart
- Steak tip lunch
- Gifts/raffles/contests
- Sponsor a hole or have your employer sponsor a hole for \$100
- Come volunteer the day of the tournament

Please be a part of a wonderful local community event with the goal of helping others in need. Please contact Dan Sullivan at 603-770-4803 or dans49@comcast.net to register and/or to get a brochure to become a sponsor.

Catholic Day
at NORTHEAST DELTA DENTAL STADIUM



Sunday, June 9, 2019
Fisher Cats vs. Flying Squirrels
12:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Tickets: \$8.00 - \$11.25
<http://bit.ly/FCCatholicDiocese>

Includes: Pregame prayer, recognition on the field, singing of the National Anthem & God Bless America, Catholic student announcer of the day, and more!

Please contact Brian Harrison with any questions
bharrison@rcbm.org • (603) 663-0173

YOUNG NEIGHBORS IN ACTION
July 21-26, 2019 ~ Worcester, MA

Young Neighbors In Action is a Catholic week-long mission for high school teens. To learn more, or to register, contact Brian Harrison at bharrison@rcbm.org

AMAZON SMILE

AmazonSmile.com is the same market platform as Amazon.com, but with the added benefit of allowing customers to donate 0.5% of the price of items purchased to a charitable organization. Please register today to start shopping and donating at www.amazonsmile.com. Be sure to choose:

St Luke the Evangelist Parish, Plaistow.



St. Luke the Evangelist is now on Facebook! Go to www.facebook.com/stlukenh.org/ or **St. Luke the Evangelist Parish – Newton/Plaistow** and give us a Like! Please invite fellow parishioners & friends to do the same.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
ST JUDE COUNCIL # 6617
GIVE YOUR PARISH COMMUNITY
1 HOUR A MONTH

The Knights of Columbus are a vital and vibrant part of the St Luke the Evangelist Parish. We welcome any practicing Catholic man 18 or older to join the Knights, whose main purpose is charitable works in support of our parish and community. Joining is simple – talk to a brother Knight or you can now join on-line. Go to www.kofc.org/joinus. Your Council is involved in many activities from collecting money for people with intellectual disabilities through the Tootsie Roll Drive to the annual St Jude Golf Open which raises money for parish families in need. The list is as long as you want it to be. Do you have a certain passion you would like to get involved in? Come join us and make it a reality! We are Catholic men. We live by principles informed by faith. We are sons, fathers, husbands, and grandfathers. Join us on life's greatest adventure to discover the man God calls you to be. Feel free to call Dan Sullivan at 603-770-4803, email him at dans49@comcast.net, or catch him at the 8:00 AM Sunday Mass in Newton. For more information about the Knights, go to www.kofc.org/un/en/todays-knights/what-we-do.html

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



The Advocate

Lord God,
you give us all that we need,
there is nothing that we lack.
Guide us so that we do not become
easily distracted with what is not
essential.

Help us when we are confused
or uncertain about a decision,
to turn to you when we need
guidance and support.

May we allow the Holy Spirit
to dwell within us and aid
our living out the joy
your Resurrection brings.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sunday, May 26, 2019
My Peace I Give to You



Today's Readings: Acts 15:12, 22–29; Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8; Revelation 21:10–14, 22–23; John 14:23–29. After the disciples have followed Jesus for three years, one can imagine that they would be apprehensive and fearful at the thought of his leaving them. In today's Gospel, Jesus explains to the disciples how they are to live when he has gone to the Father. They are to keep his word, rely on the Holy Spirit, and live with untroubled hearts. In this way, they will live out his love in community.

Jesus gives his followers the gift of peace. As he states, this gift of peace is “not as the world gives.” The peace of Christ is not fleeting as is the peace that occurs when nations

or individuals cease to be engaged in conflict. This peace is a sign of unity with the Father, Son, and Spirit. When believers remain in Christ, they are at peace.

As is seen in the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, peace may come after discerning the guidance the Holy Spirit provides. The early Church leaders needed to have many difficult discussions as they decided the rules necessary for followers. Regarding the decision on circumcision, the issue was debated and a determination made with the Holy Spirit. Just as the early Church relied on the Spirit, we need to do so. This week consider the place of the Holy Spirit in your life.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, May 27

The Holy Trinity

Jesus speaks of the Trinity as he tells his disciples that he will send the Spirit from the Father. The mystery of the Trinity is central to our faith and is expressed each time the Sign of the Cross is made. As all sign themselves with the cross at the beginning of Mass, the Trinitarian dynamic of worship is recognized. *Today's Readings: Acts 16:11–15; Psalm 149:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 9; John 15:26–16:4.*

Tuesday, May 28

The Paraclete

After being with him for three years, Jesus is preparing his disciples for the day when he will no longer be physically present among them. Unless he goes to the Father, the Paraclete will not be able to come. The word Paraclete means “advocate,” a support to comfort and to console. Journal today on how the Holy Spirit has been a source of comfort or consolation in your life. *Today's Readings: Acts 16:22–34; Psalm 138:1–2, 2–3, 7–8; John 16:5–11.*

Wednesday, May 29

Spirit of Truth

Jesus tells his disciples that he has so much more to tell them, but they cannot bear it now. Jesus knew that it was not possible for them to absorb the fullness of all that he had to teach them at that moment. It should be comforting to us as well that Jesus still teaches us, reveals himself to us, and allows us to hear his message and meditate upon it. May the Spirit guide us to the truth. *Today's Readings: Acts 17:15, 22–18; Psalm 148:1–2, 11–12, 12–14, 14; John 16:12–15.*

Thursday, May 30

The Ascension of the Lord

The disciples received a glimpse of the glory of God the Father on that hill near Bethany. We now stand in that time between his glorious Ascension and the resurrection of our

body. Until then, it is our mission to spread his Word and baptize in his name. *Today's Readings: Acts 1:1–11; Psalm 47:2–3, 6–7, 8–9; Ephesians 1:17–23; Luke 24:46–53.*

Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Change is difficult, since we become dependent upon what is familiar to us. The disciples are used to Jesus' presence, but soon he will be absent. They do not grasp that he will be with them in his Word and in his Body and Blood. Even when they are in the depths of their mourning, he will be present and walk with them in their sadness. How do we allow Jesus to be present to us in times of sorrow or sudden change? *Today's Readings: Acts 18:1–8; Psalm 98:1, 2–3, 3–4; John 16:16–20.*

Friday, May 31

Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Imagine the humility with which Mary and Elizabeth greeted each other. The two women rejoice in each other's company and then Mary praises God for blessing her with the privilege of birthing the Messiah. Today pray the Magnificat and share in Mary's joy that God has “remembered his promise of mercy.” *Today's Readings: Zephaniah 3:14–18a or Romans 12:9–16; Isaiah 12:2–3, 4bcd, 5–6; Luke 1:39–56.*

Saturday, June 1

Ask and You Shall Receive

What type or form of prayer is most comfortable for you? Do you pray traditional prayers or do you offer a spontaneous prayer? Do you offer prayers of thanksgiving or blessing? Do you seem to pray more often for what you desire? Do you write your prayers or offer them to God in song? Gather your family around the table and ask them to choose a form of prayer that is new to them and pray together. *Today's Readings: Acts 18:23–28; Psalm 47:2–3, 8–9, 10; John 16:23b–28.*





Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday of Easter (C)

May 26, 2019

Trust the Spirit for Guidance

By Mary Katharine Deeley

For many Catholics, Vatican Council II was a watershed moment in Church history. I remember the nuns in our school turning on the radio to listen to reports. They shared what St. John XXIII said at the start of the council. The media still follow large Church events, but it's easy to forget that Church leaders have been gathering to talk about the issues of the day since the first century.

In the first reading, we hear about the Council of Jerusalem in fairly abbreviated form. The apostles and other leaders of the Church came together to discuss

whether Gentiles had to be circumcised (a tenet of Jewish Law) before they were baptized. There were legitimate claims on both sides. Remarkably, the leaders prayed, talked, and prayed some more. They spoke from their experience and their faith. They assumed that all the assembled were people of faith, and so they wrestled together to find the answer most in keeping with the commands of Jesus.

In the end, when they decided to admit Gentiles without circumcising them, the whole community recognized that the Holy Spirit was at work, and the letter sent to the various churches began, "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us..." The Council of Jerusalem gives us a model for resolving our differences: pray, dialogue, and pray some more. This week, read all of Acts 15 to see what happens when we trust the Spirit to guide us rightly: arguments fall silent, and we find delight, strength, and peace (see Acts 15:12, 31-32 and John 14:27). +

Sunday Readings

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

"It is the decision of the holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities."

Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light.

John 14:23-29

[Jesus said,] "The holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you."

*The Council of Jerusalem
gives a model for resolving
our differences:
pray, dialogue,
and pray some more.*

A Word from Pope Francis

Our ideal is not to live without love! A good pastor renounces the love of a family precisely in order to focus all his energies and the grace of his particular vocation on the evangelical blessing of the love of men and women who carry forward God's plan of creation.

—Meeting with bishops,
September 27, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- When faced with moral decisions, do I research what the Church has to say?
- Do I make an effort to know what the pope or my bishop is teaching?

Just Follow Your Informed Conscience

By Jim and Susan Vogt

Is it really that simple? Yes. No. Maybe!

Yes, it's simple, but not quite *that* simple.

A woman steals food for her family when her unemployment runs out. A man decides not to report cash income on his taxes. When faced with moral decisions, people say you must follow your conscience, and indeed that is what one must do. But how do we hear our consciences, and is it possible to follow one's conscience and still be wrong?

The Catholic Church teaches a principle called "primacy of conscience," which means that conscience is the ultimate authority and we're compelled to follow it: "A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1790). We must also make the effort to have an "informed" conscience: "The education of the conscience is a lifelong task" (CCC 1784). In other words, it's not just doing what feels good.

So how does a person develop a well-formed conscience? Here are some traps to consider in coming to decisions of conscience.

Traps to Conscience Formation

1. Rationalization. When faced with paying income taxes, it's tempting to think, "Hey, rich people get big tax breaks. Is it really so wrong for me to fudge a little on my income tax return?"

2. Scrupulosity. Another trap is being scrupulous about the letter of the law while missing its spirit. When Susan was young, her godparents took her out for lobster every Good Friday. Technically, they kept the law of abstaining from meat, but a lobster dinner was hardly the sacrifice the law intended.

3. Going along with the crowd. How could so many people be wrong? For years, most adults didn't think twice about driving after drinking. Just because it's common doesn't make it right.

4. If it feels good, do it. Conscience shouldn't be guided



solely by emotion. Following it may not coincide with happiness—at least not fleeting feelings of bliss. Eating half a dozen doughnuts may feel good—temporarily—but this affects one's long-term health.

5. It's my body; it's my business. Just because I'm not directly harming another person doesn't mean my action is good. Drug addiction or pornography may seem like victimless crimes, but they not only hurt the doer, they also weaken the moral fabric of society.

Steps to Forming a Christian Conscience

The STOP method is an easy framework for checking one's conscience.

S—Study. Decisions of conscience begin with knowledge. It's not a matter of being smart, but of making serious efforts to learn the facts from credible sources, such as reading what the Church teaches and consulting experts.

T—Think Together. It's best not to make decisions in isolation. A married couple shouldn't make an important moral decision without discussing it and coming to something mutually agreeable. In faith communities, this means testing out the options with other believers and seeking consensus.

O—Others' Experiences. Wisdom is also carried by others who have experienced an issue. Don't listen only to people with whom you agree. Consult with others whose experience has led them to different conclusions.

P—Pray. Important decisions should always be brought to prayer so that we can check our rationalizations and be honest before God. Prayer provides us time to listen and sort.

Done all the steps? Still unsure? This quick version of conscience formation could be summed up by asking two other questions: Is my contemplated decision life-giving? Is it generous? A well-formed conscience doesn't simply apply rules but brings the whole self to the decision and weighs how each decision will affect the common good. +

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 27-June 1

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:11–15 / Jn 15:26–16:4a

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:22–34 / Jn 16:5–11

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 17:15, 22–18:1 / Jn 16:12–15

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:1–8 / Jn 16:16–20

Friday, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
Zep 3:14–18a or Rom 12:9–16 / Lk 1:39–56

Saturday, St. Justin:
Acts 18:23–28 / Jn 16:23b–28