

Looking Ahead

In this chapter, the Holy Spirit invites you to ►



EXPLORE how two boys mixed faith and fun.




DISCOVER how to make moral decisions as a disciple of Jesus.




DECIDE on ways you can form a good conscience.

Making Moral Choices

-  What are some skills that you would like to develop? What are some qualities about yourself that you would like to improve?

The Book of Proverbs is a summary of maxims, short sayings that guide us in living a moral life. In this proverb, we read about the value of wisdom:

*Happy the man who finds wisdom,
the man who gains understanding!
For her profit is better than profit in silver,
and better than gold is her revenue. . . .
She is a tree of life to those who grasp her,
and he is happy who holds her fast.* PROVERBS 3:13-14, 18

-  What is this proverb saying about the role of wisdom in making good decisions? In what ways do you seek wisdom?



Disciple Power

Prudence

This Cardinal Virtue is also referred to as wisdom. Saint Thomas Aquinas defined prudence as “right reason in action.” With experience comes wisdom, and prudence is often the guide for growing in wisdom.

THE CHURCH FOLLOWS JESUS

Mixing Faith and Fun

For the Hebrew people, proverbs were a source of wisdom. In this story, some contemporary students find value in the proverbs too.

In honor of Saint John Bosco, who was known for mixing faith and fun, the boys at Don Bosco High School have a tradition in which they challenge each other by quoting Scripture while juggling. It keeps their minds sharp and their bodies coordinated. Plus, the fun is a nice distraction from the poverty and turmoil of their inner-city lives. The one who lasts the longest is the “new Don.” This respectful title means “nobleman” in Italian. A sense of brotherhood among the boys results from the challenge.

“Yeah! Dominic! Get ready to call me Don Roberto!” shouted Robert. “You are on!” Dominic hollered back. “So you think you’ve got what it takes?” Dominic said, ready to juggle.

Robert and Dominic squared up in front of each other, while other boys circled around them in anticipation of who would be first to drop out. They began to juggle, and Robert started quoting first since he was the challenger.

“Proverbs 29:8—Arrogant men set the city ablaze, but wise men calm the fury!” Robert said confidently. The crowd cheered. Still juggling, Dominic went next, “Proverbs 16:8—Better a little with virtue, than a large income with injustice.”

“Proverbs 11:19—Virtue directs toward life, but he who pursues evil does so to his death,” Robert said, as he almost dropped a juggling ball. Dominic then moved closer to Robert saying, “Proverbs 15:4—A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse one crushes the spirit.” The crowd waited for Robert’s return.

Robert stood his ground saying, “Proverbs 24:3—By wisdom is a house built, by understanding is it made firm.” Just then, Dominic lost his balance, and the juggling balls scattered. Dominic was disappointed, but he went over to Robert and said, “Nice one, Don Roberto!”

? Who helps you to make good moral choices?



Christian Morality

Each day, we juggle many choices. The decisions we make as disciples of Jesus to live holy and moral lives are called moral decisions. Our lives are a response to God's invitation and to the grace he gives us as we make our journey. Here are some guides for our journey:

The natural law, the laws written on our hearts. For example, "Do good and avoid evil" and "Treat others as you want them to treat you."

The Bible, especially the Great Commandment and the Ten Commandments

The life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Church

Knowing what determines the **morality**, that is, the goodness or evil of human acts, will also help us make wise moral decisions. Three things determine the morality of an act. They are:

The Object. The object of the act is what we do. It is the good or the bad we do or say. Some things are good in themselves, such as praying. Other things, such as murder, are evil in themselves. Many evil acts, such as lying, cheating, and stealing, are prohibited by the Ten Commandments.

The Intention. The intention is what the person doing the act wants or desires to do. Intention is the purpose for doing or saying something. A good intention cannot change an evil act into something good. For example, if a person steals something to give it to someone else as a gift, the act of stealing is still wrong, even if the person had a good intention.

The Circumstances. The circumstances of the act are those things that surround the decision. Circumstances do not change the goodness or evil of an act. They can make something we do or say better or worse. For example, if a person steals out of fear or ignorance, the act is still evil and wrong, but they may not be as responsible for the act.

A morally good act requires all three aspects: the goodness of the object, a good intention in doing the act, and its circumstance.

Activity Discuss with a group examples of circumstances that might make it difficult for people to choose to do something they know is right. Role-play one of the situations you discuss.

FAITH FOCUS

How do you choose to make a good decision?

FAITH VOCABULARY

conscience

The gift of God that is part of every person that guides us to know and judge what is right and wrong.

morality

Refers to the goodness or evil of human acts; the morality of human acts depend on the object, intention, and circumstances of the action.





Faith-Filled People

Alphonse de Liguori

Saint Alphonse is a Doctor of the Church and the founder of a religious community called the Redemptorists. He was a poet, musician, and author. His writings on the moral life include practical answers to questions about moral decisions for daily living. He is the patron saint of confessors and teachers of moral theology. His feast day is August 1.

Sin: Turning Away from God

The Cardinal Virtues, such as prudence, help us make good moral decisions, which are necessary to live a holy and moral life. The decisions we make, however, are not always easy. Sometimes we come close to doing what we know is against God's Law and choose not to do it. At other times, we give in to temptation and choose to do something that we know is wrong.

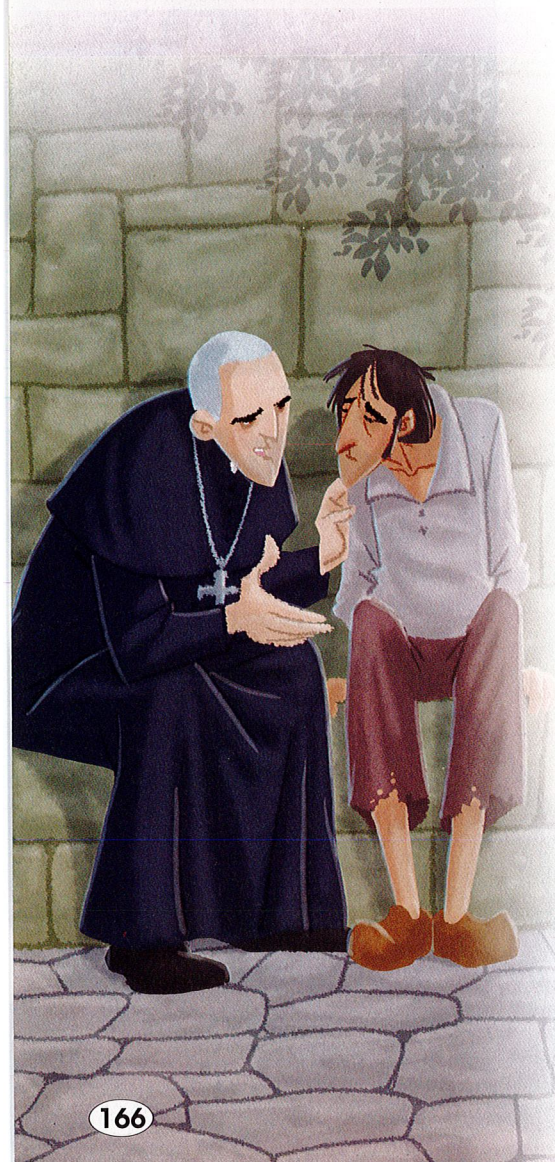
We sin when we deliberately turn away from God and his love. In doing so, we offend him. To help us understand more clearly what sin is about, the Church speaks about Capital Sins, mortal sins, and venial sins.

Capital Sins. These are sins that lead to other sins. There are seven Capital Sins (read Proverbs 6:16-19; Matthew 15:18-20). They are usually listed as pride, greed, envy, anger, lust, gluttony, and sloth, or laziness. Each of these Capital Sins has a corresponding Capital Virtue to help resist the temptations of these sins. The Capital Virtues are humility, loving kindness, patience, chastity, temperance, generosity, and diligence (read Galatians 5:19-26).

Mortal Sins. These are serious offenses against God that break our relationship with him (read Mark 10:17-22). If we die in this state of separation from God, we remain separated from him forever by our own choices. Being forever separated from God is what we call hell. When we are aware of being in a state of mortal sin, we are to seek God's grace and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Venial Sins. These are less serious offenses against God. Because all sins turn our hearts away from God's love, we should seek forgiveness of all sins, including venial sins (read 1 John 5:16-17).

- ❓ How does the virtue of patience help us resist the sin of anger? How does the virtue of humility help us resist the sin of pride? Discuss with a partner.



Conscience

Our lives are filled with so many things that compete for our attention. We juggle facts and ideas to make our decisions. How do we know what is good and what is evil?

Every human being has another “voice” that constantly calls for our attention. It is our **conscience**. Our conscience helps us to judge what is right and what is wrong. We have the responsibility to train our conscience and obey our well-formed conscience. The better we train, or form, a good conscience, the better we will be at making decisions that help us live as followers of Jesus Christ.

People can have a conscience that does not correctly judge something to be good or evil. Such a conscience is called an erroneous conscience. An erroneous conscience provides someone with information that leads to decisions that are against God’s law. When a person deliberately chooses not to work at forming a good conscience, that person is responsible for his or her erroneous conscience. That means that the person is also responsible for the wrong caused by actions that are due to erroneous conscience. However, if a person has never been taught what is right or is not mentally able to choose, then that person cannot be held accountable for the evil he or she does.

Catholics Believe



Magisterium

The Church has the responsibility to guide us to make moral decisions. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church fulfills this responsibility to make sure she is faithful to the teachings of the Apostles on faith and morality. We call this teaching office of the Church, the Magisterium.

Activity

What to Do?

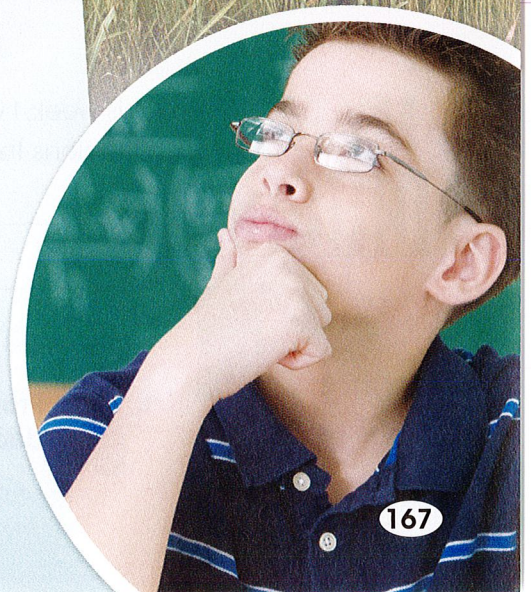
Solve this dilemma. Your friend approaches you with the answers to an upcoming test. What do you do?

1. What is your first response?

2. What will you do?

3. Why would you do it?

4. What might be the consequence of your decision?



I FOLLOW JESUS

You make many moral decisions each day. Some are easy to make; others are more difficult. The Holy Spirit is always with you to teach you and to guide you in making good moral decisions. Forming a good conscience will help you make wise and morally good choices.

CONSCIENCE-BUILDERS

Look over this list of conscience-builders. Mark a ✓ next to the actions you use to help build, or form, a good conscience.

- Read Sacred Scripture.
- Pray to the Holy Spirit.
- Study and follow the teachings of the Church.
- Learn from the stories of people of faith, like Saint John Bosco.
- Seek the advice of people of faith whom I trust.

How might using these conscience-builders help you make good moral decisions?

MY FAITH CHOICE

This week, I will practice the Cardinal Virtue of prudence and make good moral decisions thoughtfully and responsibly. I will



Pray, "Holy Spirit, be my advocate and guide me in making good decisions. Amen."

Chapter Review

Read this situation. Name the object, intention, and circumstances. Then discuss the morality of the whole act with a partner.

Sarah and her teammates were playing in the championship game. In the final minutes of the game, Sarah swept by the defender. As she kicked the ball, trying to break the 0-0 score, she slipped on the wet grass, and the ball, struck the goalkeeper in the face. Stunned from the fall, she looked toward the goal and saw the goalkeeper running toward her.

Object: _____

Intention: _____

Circumstances: _____

▶ TO HELP YOU REMEMBER

1. Sin is turning away from God and his love, freely choosing to do or say what we know is against God's Law.
2. The sources of morality are the object of the act, the intention of the agent, and the circumstances surrounding the act.
3. Our conscience helps us to judge whether an act is good or evil.

Examination of Conscience

Thinking about and evaluating our moral decisions is important. One way we do this is by examining our conscience.

Leader: Let us look into our hearts and think about the way we have loved or failed to love God and our neighbor as Jesus taught us.

All: Happy those who observe God's decrees,
who seek the Lord with all their heart.

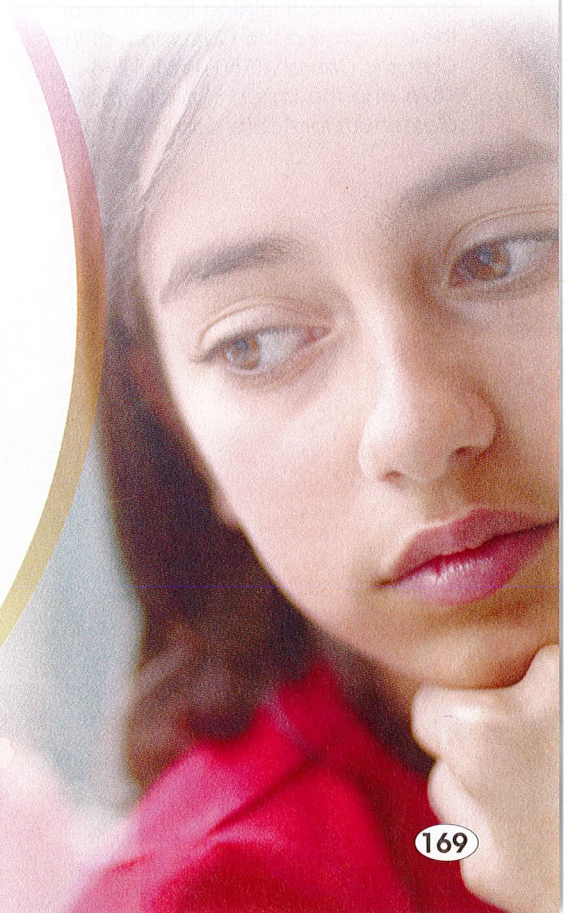
PSALM 119:2

Leader: Reflect in silence after each question.

Reader: How have you kept God first in your life? *(Pause)*
How have you shown respect to your parents and teachers? *(Pause)*
How have your words and actions shown respect for your body and the bodies of others? *(Pause)*
How have you been kind and helpful to other people? *(Pause)*

All: Happy those who observe God's decrees,
who seek the Lord with all their heart.

PSALM 119:2



With My Family

This Week . . .

In **Chapter 18**, “Making Moral Choices,” your child learned:

- ▶ The Church guides us in making wise decisions to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Prudence is the Cardinal Virtue that helps us make good moral choices.
- ▶ When we freely and knowingly choose an act that is evil, we sin; we turn away from God and offend him.
- ▶ These three things determine the morality of our actions: the object of the act, our intention in doing the act, and the circumstances surrounding the act.
- ▶ A good conscience helps us to judge if an act is good or evil; and guides us in avoiding evil and doing good.

For more about related teachings of the Church, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1750–1761, 1776–1876, and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, pages 311–321.

Sharing God’s Word

Spend time reading through sections in the Book of Proverbs with your child. Select proverbs together to memorize. Keep them in both your mind and your heart as you make daily choices in life.

We Live as Disciples

The Christian home and family is a school of discipleship. Choose one of the following activities to do as a family, or design a similar activity of your own:

- ▶ Discuss as a family how this statement applies to making moral decisions: “Right is right even if everyone is against it; and wrong is wrong even if everyone is for it.”

- ▶ Spend one-on-one time with your children doing an activity they enjoy. Offer bits of advice or “kernels of wisdom” to help them in life.

Our Spiritual Journey

Discernment is vital to living a moral life and making our spiritual journey. An examination of conscience is one traditional tool that facilitates our use of the spiritual discipline of discernment. In this chapter, your child used an examination of conscience as part of the closing prayer. Use this or another form of an examination of conscience every day.



For more ideas on ways that your family can live as disciples of Jesus, visit

www.BeMyDisciples.com