

# *Faith Tidbits..*

*a little food for thought  
and some knowledge  
about your  
Catholic faith*

*February 2010*

*This monthly series will answer questions you always wondered about or questions you never even thought to ask... all about our Catholic Faith.*

*If you have a question you want answered, call Diane Hardick at 633-3672.*

## *1. How does the Church define “conscience”?*

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines “conscience” as “man’s secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths.” (1776) It continues by stating “Conscience enables one to assume responsibility for the acts performed” (1781). Paragraph 1784 states that “The education of the conscience is a lifelong task.” “In the formation of conscience the Word of God is the light for our path” (1785). Prayer and Scripture are a vital part of the formation of our conscience throughout all of our life. When we are faced with an important decision, consulting experts is also critical so that we have all the knowledge and understanding we need to make that decision. Too often people assume that they know, for example, what the Church teaches on certain issues. Take time to talk to a priest or medical expert or other expert so you have all the information you need to form and inform your conscience on certain issues. And trust in your own life experience. Your conscience has been formed over the years by good choices and even bad choices. What have you learned from those choices? And pray always, listening to what God is calling you to do. In the end, remember that we are all *becoming* a moral person – and it is a life-long task! Often it is our bad choices and our difficult times that shape us the most.

## *2. Are there steps I can follow when I am faced with a serious moral decision?*

First, sit down and clearly define what the moral issue or question is. Be sure you have a clear and concise statement or understanding of the problem or decision you are to make. Secondly, you need to decide who is the decision maker. Are you the one who needs to make the decision? Or does the decision belong to someone else? Sometimes we can be so close to a situation that we forget *who* needs to make the decision. Thirdly, you need to see if there are any hidden agendas. That is, are there issues that are clouding your choices—fears, rationalization, emotions, etc.? Sometimes, especially in the situation where we are making critical medical decisions about a loved one, we need to make these decisions with others. It is important to be sure that everyone is open and honest about their feelings so that there are no hidden agendas or issues that are not put on the table. Then the fourth step is to look at all your options and possibilities. Consult the experts and others who know you, as well as have an expertise in the area you are making the decision, so you can make an informed decision with all the options laid out for you. Too often we want to take the easier way out or are afraid or simply don’t know what all the options there are. Then make your decision! Later, you can take time to reflect on the decision you have made, its consequences, good and bad, and what you have learned about yourself. Lastly, always remember that *all moral choices are personal choices, but good moral decisions are not private ones*. The decisions and choices we make affect others.