

St. Mary's of the Lake, Watkins Glen, NY
St. Benedict's, Odessa, NY



Being Church in Today's World Part III

Fr. Jeffrey S. Tunncliff
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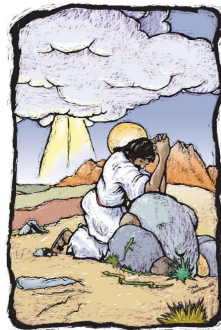
Webinar Tips

- All participants are muted to reduce background noise
- If slides are not fully visible, check at the top center of your screen for "fit to window" under arrow.
- If you would like to ask a question, at the bottom of your screen you should see a box with the letters "Q & A". Click it and you can type your question. It will show on my screen.
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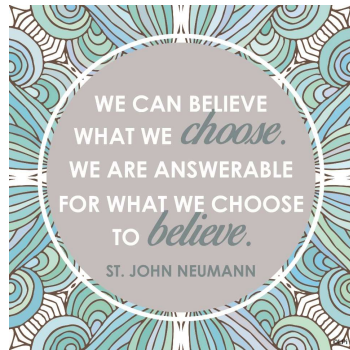
Review – Parts I & II

- Why this Series?
- "What is the future of Christianity???"
- Will there be a "remnant" left?
- Hermeneutic of continuity
- Dulles' *Models of the Church*
- "One, holy, catholic, and apostolic church"
- The magisterium
- Parts I & II available at
www.renewaloffaith.org/beingchurch2022

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From Part II Evaluations

"I'm very interested in the development of conscience.

- When does it develop?
- Is it part of every human being?
- How does it develop?
 - Parental impact? What if it doesn't come from parents?"
 - Fr. Williams writes, "Though our parents often were our first *teachers* of morality, it doesn't follow that they are its *authors*" (67).

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The Catechism of the Catholic Church on "Conscience"

"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, sounds in his heart at the right moment...For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God...His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths." (1776, original quote from *Gaudium et Spes*)

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The Catechism of the Catholic Church on "Conscience" cont'd

"Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. "He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters (DH 3.2)" (1782).

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How Far Does Freedom of Conscience Go?

"Deneen and Hanby are rightly repulsed by the radical individual autonomy that has infected American life, exemplified in Justice Anthony Kennedy's notorious statement in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) that "at the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."

(Reilly, *America on Trial*, 6. interior quote "Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. et al., v. Casey, Governor of Pennsylvania, et al., 505 U.S. 833, 851 (1992) <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/91-744.ZS.html>.")

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To Understand Its Development, We Must Ask what is Conscience?

- "According to some, conscience is the awareness that there is moral dimension to one's conduct, together with the urge to prefer right over wrong. Others would say that conscience is conformity to one's own sense of right control" (Williams, 6).
 - "Conscience is more than just a feeling. It is not simply guilt" (Williams, 6).
 - "Conscience is the mind thinking morally, evaluating the goodness or badness of our actions" (Williams, 6).
- Conscience develops in application
- "In other words, conscience doesn't stop at acknowledging general moral norms but applies them to specific actions" (Williams, 8).

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Right and Wrong

- "Conscience doesn't *determine* right and wrong. It merely *acknowledges* it" (Williams, 10).
- "We have the power to *choose* right or wrong – but we do not have the power to *declare* what is right and wrong and have it be so" (Williams, 10).

→ Thus, we need to discern what is right and wrong. This is not just something we do in a crisis moment. It needs to be an ongoing process so when needed, we can be ready to make a decision. In discernment, we depend on the gifts of the Holy Spirit of knowledge, understanding, wisdom and right judgment (good counsel).

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A "Well-formed Conscience"

- Our desire to have a well-formed conscience is part of our response to what God has placed deep within us.
- "Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1783)
- "The education of the conscience is a lifelong task." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1784)

Yet, LORD, you are our father; we are the clay and you our potter: we are all the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:7)

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You may know something about **what** the Church teaches?

Do you understand **why**?

We need to know both the what **and** the why to make good decisions.

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With a Well-formed Conscience

"Citizens are obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order. ***"We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)."*** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2256)

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For more on conscience:

Williams, Rev. Thomas D., *Knowing Right From Wrong: A Christian Guide to Conscience*. Faith Works: New York. 2008.

- See the article I wrote after reading this book, "Do We Listen to Our Conscience", on my website at <http://www.renewaloffaith.org/conscience.html>

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What does it mean to "tolerate"?

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What does it mean to "tolerate"?

Toleration does not mean saying an action or behavior is okay (thus not against our beliefs).

We can state our objection to something and still be tolerant of people actually doing it.

We do not speak "hate speech." We speak for good behavior. We speak out of love for the sinner.

- To make a good choice a person must understand what their choices are and what the consequences are and have a well-formed conscience.

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Do Toleration Require Us to be Relativists?

- If toleration requires us to condone all behavior, then we become relativists.
- But toleration does not require relativism
- Question From Part II evaluations? "How do Catholics fight relativism in faith" Answer:
 - By knowing our faith
 - By speaking and acting with Christian compassion

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Spiritual Works of Mercy

#3 **Admonishing** the Sinner

"In this sense, then, it should be noted that correction should be made not as a judgment, but as a service of truth and love, since it addresses the sinner not as an enemy but as a brother (see 2 Thessalonians 3:15). It can thus result in leading a brother who was becoming lost back to life (Jas 5:19). This fraternal correction is to be exercised firmly (see Ti 1:13), but without harshness (Ps 6:2), without exacerbating or humiliating the one admonished (Eph 6:4)." (The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, 53).

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Bring Division or Keep the Peace?

From a past evaluation – "When a member of my family is extremely hostile about even the mention of Jesus or Mary or anything Christian, is it better to remain quiet and never bring them up or should I continue to share what God is doing in my life? Some people have told me to just pray for them but I don't think the apostles or the saints would have remained quiet. What is the best way to handle this? I love them very much and I am concerned for their soul."

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Bring Division or Keep the Peace? Cont'd

- Luke 12:51 "Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."
→ Don't assume we will all get along
- Paul in Acts 20:26-27 "And so I solemnly declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the entire plan of God."
- Parable of the Sentinel - Ezekiel 3:17-21
- Luke 9:52b-56 "On the way they entered a Samaritan ...do not destroy them

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Tolerance Must Work Both Ways

"Let us lie in wait for the righteous one, because he is annoying to us; he opposes our actions, Reproaches us for transgressions of the law and charges us with violations of our training. He professes to have knowledge of God and styles himself a child of the LORD. To us he is the censure of our thoughts; merely to see him is a hardship for us. Because his life is not like that of others, and different are his ways. He judges us debased; he holds aloof from our paths as from things impure." (Wisdom 2:12-16)

They never deny what he says.

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Hearing Other Opinions

We may frequently encounter people who disagree with us. What should we do?

- Pray for them!
- Should we stop interacting with them?
- Listen to what they have to say so we can address their questions or see where we need to clarify our teaching to help them understand. To do this, we need to study and understand our own faith.
- Then, if they still disagree, tolerance is required, but not giving up our own beliefs

We do need to be careful that our listening to them in no way condones or appears to condone their position. We pray for the grace to hold to our faith and offer compassion.

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Spiritual Works of Mercy #2 Instructing the Ignorant

quoting JP2 in *Fides et Ratio*

"He concludes that the most urgent task today is "to lead people to discover both their capacity to know the truth and their yearning for the ultimate and definitive meaning of life (102)." (*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 52).

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Schisms, Denominations, & Church Splits

- There are over 30,000 denominations today
 - I wonder how many of these "denominations" largely overlap
 - Church splits – if you don't like what your church is doing, start a new one, rather than looking for the one that already has the truth
 - What has been gained except division? The devil likes division.
 - What happens when everyone interprets the Bible for themselves? How do we know we are right?
- Do we trust/pray that the Holy Spirit is leading the Catholic Church?

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The Internet – An Opportunity or a Threat?

- From past evaluations
 - "How do we bring our children into this truth when they are inundated with social media lies?"
 - What can we do to try to bring others into the Church during these modern times when so many are turned off by religion?
- Learn our own faith well
- Live your faith, witnessing to what you say
- Be compassionate
- Do you use social media?
 - Make sure you share good things on your own page. This will point others to it.

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From Part II Evaluations

"In Part III would it be possible to give a "sketch" or "model" of how teaching, evangelism, social connections, actually look in a local Catholic Church? Coming from a Protestant church background I see a strong contrast between the two - more coming together and fellowship over service projects, Bible studies, coffee hours, celebrations, etc. in the different Protestant churches I attended than in my Catholic Church."

We need to change our parish culture!

- It is not enough to show up for Mass one hour a week.
- Being a welcoming community is not only the role of a greeter at the door. Everyone must be welcoming
- We need to make a deliberate effort to put our faith into action (See James 2:14-18).

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I don't know about you but I don't want to decide my own truth. I am looking for something greater than myself for answers.

That "something" is God.

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"*
(Matthew 5:3).

*"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, for they will be satisfied."*
Matthew 5:6

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In Part I, I quoted from 2 Timothy 4:1-5 regarding those who reject sound doctrine. Those verses are followed by verse 7 by

"I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith."

What criteria do we use to draw out our conscience to know if we have *"kept the faith"*?

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How Do We Examine Our Conscience?

"Conscience involves both dialogue with oneself and dialogue with God, who is the Author of the moral law" (Williams, 16).

On my website*, I provide an examination of conscience based on:

- The Ten Commandments
- The Seven Deadly Sins

*www.renewaloffaith.org/reconciliation.html

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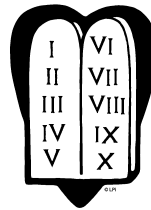


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How Do You Look at the Ten Commandments?

Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:6-21

- As a set of legal rules, checklist
- Black and white, cast in stone
- People interpret them looking for the minimum we have to do to get into Heaven.
- Fr. Williams offers a better way, "A good conscience is like that like that, too. It doesn't settle for a bare minimum but urges on to greater virtue" (23).



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Is Following the Commandments Enough?

"As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.'" He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions" (Mark 10:17:22).

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The Seven Deadly Sins What is in our heart?

1. Pride
2. Greed
3. Envy
4. Anger
5. Lust
6. Gluttony
7. Slothfulness

We generally ask ourselves these questions as individuals.
We should ask if any apply to our church.

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The Commandments may be interpreted as

- Rules we must follow or else bad things will happen or
- Bringing to the front the goodness God has already planted within us.
- “If we conceive of the Christian moral life essentially as rule-keeping, logically we will associate conscience with the referee. He enforces the *rules*. If we think of the Christian life in terms of the object of the game, our conscience becomes more like a coach” (Williams, 22).

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Which is better?

Commandments



Negative reinforcement

Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-12a



Positive reinforcement

You catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

(For more on the Commandments and the Beatitudes, see my presentation, *Are They Rules or a Way of Life?*

www.renewaloffaith.org/wayoflife

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Examples of

how the Commandments are good:

- Don't steal
- Don't commit adultery
- Don't covet
- Don't bear false witness

→ To function as a society, we need to be able to **trust** one another

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Is Ignorance Bliss?

- “Second, ignorance of the master’s wishes attenuates guilt but it doesn’t necessarily remove it. Jesus says that “the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating” for what he has done will receive a light punishment. The one who is privy to his master’s wishes is clearly more responsible for his conduct than the one who had only his good moral sense to guide him (Williams, 32).
- “So for one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, it is a sin” (James 4:17).

→ chosen ignorance is not bliss

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Future Schedule

- Next Series - *The Greatest Gift: The Eucharist*
 - Thursdays (estimate 3 sessions)
 - January 12th
 - February 9th
 - March 9th
- When you exit this webinar a short evaluation questionnaire should come up to invite your feedback.
- The slides for this presentation will be available online at <http://www.renewaloffaith.org/beingchurch2022>

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Resources

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second Edition. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.

Chaput, Charles J. O.F.M. Cap. *Render Unto Caesar: Serving the Nation by Living Our Catholic Beliefs in Political Life.* Doubleday, New York. 2008.

Chaput, Charles J. O.F.M. Cap. *Strangers in a Strange Land: Living the Catholic Faith in a Post-Christian World.* Henry Holt and Company, New York. 2017.

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Dulles, Avery, S.J. *Models of the Church (Expanded Edition).* Image Books/Doubleday: New York. 2002.

Longenecker, Fr. Dwight, *Immortal Combat: Confronting the Heart of Darkness.* Sophia Institute Press: Manchester, NY. 2020.

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Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, The Word Among Us Press, Frederick, MD. Copyright 2013 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano.

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*. HijeGlobal Press, Cottbus, Germany. Copyright 2020 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

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Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution On The Church, Lumen Gentium* in Vatican Council II, Volume I: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents, New Revised Edition. Austin Flannery, O.P., Ed. Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company. 1996. Also available online at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

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Resources (cont'd)

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Tunnickliff, Rev. Jeffrey S., *We Profess, We Believe: One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church*. May 26, 2015. Available online at <http://www.renewaloffaith.org/video---one-holy-catholic-and-apostolic-church.html>.

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Resources cont'd

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USCCB, *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006.

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