

3rd Sunday of Easter 2021

Fr. Blair Gaynes / General

Easter / Denial; A Witness; Testimony; Invincible Ignorance; Repentance; Deliverance; Obedience of Christ

Acts 3:13–19; 1 John 2:1–5; Luke 24:35–48

Having repented even of the things we've done in ignorance, we have been delivered and are not called and strengthened to give testimony to be a witness, secure in trusting God and the promises...

Notes

Focusing on Conscience and Ignorance

Conscience, Ignorance & Forgiveness

Conscience - the aboriginal Vicar of Christ

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1776-1794

In a person's most intimate core, where one is alone with God whose voice echoes deep in that sanctuary within, his conscience, he discovers a law, not of his own making, but which he must obey. Our dignity demands, in morals and faith, that we know what can be known so as to act as we ought to act. For, as human beings who are made in the image and likeness of God, we are free and rational creatures who are therefore responsible for their actions.

This judgment of reason, we are obligated to follow when certainty has arisen from the proper formation of conscience which thus prompts us to recognize the moral quality of an action.

In accord with our nature, we are obligated to act and therefore we have a right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. It is an inherent freedom which ought not to ever be unlawfully prevented or inhibited and neither is it to ever be coerced, especially in matters of religion and religious expression.

Assisted by the Holy Spirit, guided by the magisterial teachings of the Church - illuminated by the Word of God and tested 'at the foot of the Cross', as long as we live, we must be engaged in the indispensable education of our conscience. It must remain just and true. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator.

Ignorance - The absence of information which one is required to have.

[Acts 3:17](#), [Ephesians 4:17-19](#), [1 Timothy 1:12-13](#), [1 Peter 1:14](#)

Martin Luther King wrote, "Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity." MLK "Strength to Love" 1963. Upon reflection, one might consider such words as being prophetic.

It is true that we are bound to obey the certain judgment of our conscience and thereby avoiding condemning ourselves to a lack of integrity should we act contrary to its determinations. Even a faulty conscience must be followed, though we be unaware of its errors. So, in striving to always choose the good without being in error, we must be self-aware enough to recognize our ignorance and we must strive to overcome it, in order that our conscience can be properly formed for its role in guiding the intellect toward the good and away from the evil.

As St. Thomas Aquinas has taught, there are three divisions of understanding about which we might be ignorant.

- Ignorance of law, when one is unaware of the existence of the law itself, or at least that a particular case is comprised under its provisions.
- Ignorance of the fact, when not the relation of something to the law but the thing itself or some circumstance is unknown.
- Ignorance of penalty, when a person is not cognizant that a sanction has been attached to a particular crime. This is especially to be considered when there is question of more serious punishment.

In order to understand and assess human responsibility, we must among first things, recognized that ignorance is understood to be either vincible or invincible.

It is invincible when a person is unable to overcome it, that is, such as under the circumstances is, morally speaking, possible and obligatory.

It is vincible if it can be dispelled by the use of “moral diligence”. We may say, however, that the diligence requisite must be commensurate with the importance of the affair in hand, and with the capacity of the agent.

Since a person is bound to use all reasonable means in order to have the knowledge necessary for a moral life, so far as possible; a person sins grievously who remains, from his own negligence, in a particular error of thought or action. In such cases, the person is culpable for the evil he commits. It is said, the person has missed the mark, has failed to live in accord with his nature and divine law; the person has sinned through their fault, their most grievous fault.

The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by objective standards of moral conduct. Essential then, for excellence in the operation of the rational mind of any human being, is to be taught how to think so as to know how to act. Central to successful teaching of human persons is the family.

It has been said that in Luke’s gospel, Jesus is either at a meal, going to a meal or coming from a meal. Food or its growth is mentioned in every chapter of Luke. Meals, in the Jewish culture of the early church and in every culture / civilization including our own, have their greatest expression / fulfillment when experienced in the family or even ‘familial groups’. Historically and traditionally, these regular mealtimes in especially during the ‘high ritualistic’ family meals, a great deal of teaching and correction occurs. We see how Luke has made this a central feature of how Jesus taught.

Finally, we must consider again the essential sources for the eradication of our ignorance and the proper formation of our conscience. Assisted by the Holy Spirit, guided by the magisterial teachings of the Church - illuminated by the Word of God and tested ‘at the foot of the Cross’, as long as we live, we must be engaged in the indispensable education of our conscience. It must remain just and true. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator.

“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” St. Jerome, a father and Doctor of the Catholic Church from the 5th century AD