

Chapter 3
Conscience and Conscience Formation
*[The Meeting of Thomas More with His Daughter
after His Sentence of Death by William Frederick Yeames]*

This assignment will help students reflect on conscience and what it means to suffer for what is right. Share the following in your own words:

The Catholic Church has a long tradition of people who have gone to their deaths for what is right. When confronted with torture or death for following God, people often say – like the apostles – “Is it better for us to obey God or human beings?” (Acts 5:29). Like St. John the Baptist 1500 years earlier (see Mark 6), St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, who were both killed by King Henry VIII of England in 1535 for opposing his unlawful divorce and marriage, are examples of this. They were killed for standing up against lies and corruption. St. Joan of Arc (+1432) was killed by corrupt church and government leaders because she refused to deny that visions she had were from God. She was burned at the stake for refusing to deny God. St. Maximilian Kolbe (+1941) was murdered when he chose to take the place of another man who was being murdered by the Nazis. He died sacrificing his life for others. All of these were motivated by following God’s law, like the apostles. And many others have done the same.

Distribute the worksheet. Have the students write responses to each question either on the worksheet or on a separate sheet of paper.

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1. Have you ever had to stand up for something you knew was right and which you had to suffer for? Do you know anyone who has?
2. Can you imagine a situation in your future where you might have to stand up for what is right? Do you think it's likely that Christians who really believe in their faith may be forced to choose between God's law and human concerns?
3. Do you think it makes a difference if someone is explicitly killed for their belief in God, or just for the truth or for doing what is right?

Optional Extra Credit:

Research and write a short essay (150 words) on a saint who died for the truth or for refusing to deny their belief and commitment to God.