



Where Justice and Truth Meet

May 2022

"Through our contemplation, transform us to listen deeply to one another and to the brokenness of the world. Bless our efforts to be the holy preaching." – A Prayer for the Life of the World

Catholics Are Called to Form Their Consciences

Pope Francis has shown us by his actions that encounters with people assist us in our formation of conscience. As his province's formation director, the young Jesuit Jorge Bergoglio required the seminarians to work in the barrios as they studied theology, to be taught not only by their professors but by the needs of the community. Encounter keeps us grounded and reminds us that the concrete, lived experiences of God's people are the home base from which we are to travel as missionaries into the world of theoretical understanding. Encountering another as *other* involves finding out what questions, concerns, needs, loves, and values they are living and to make those, at least in part, my own. This is surely one of the most important processes of [developing moral conscience](#).

The Catholic Catechism tells us that "[The education of conscience is a lifelong task](#)."

This is not a task anyone can do alone. We human beings are created for relationship, as part of the interconnectedness of all life. We are created for relationship by a God whose very essence is relationship. So we must form our conscience in relationship: with scripture, with tradition, and with experience, our own and the experiences of others, including the *rostros concretos* of the lives of all people.

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As we study and understand the issues concerning LGBTQ persons, it is important to remember context. They are [four times more](#)



[likely to experience violence](#) than cisgender persons; a record-breaking number of murders of trans people happened in 2020.

[More than 600 LGBTQ people were killed](#) between 1998 and 2018. There are eleven

countries where this identification is punishable by death and over 60 more countries where this is a criminal offense which leads to severe penalties including lengthy or life imprisonment.

In the context of discrimination, criminalization, brutality, and murder of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters, our consciences are formed.

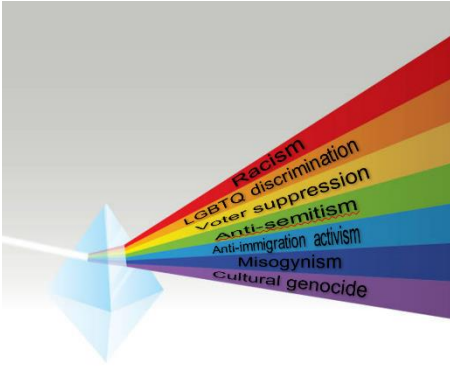
It is in this context of discrimination, criminalization, brutality, and murder that our consciences are formed. Pope Francis reminds us: We must always consider the person. [In life God accompanies persons and we must accompany them](#), starting from their situation. It is necessary to accompany them with mercy. Mercy impels us to recognize life and death issues such as those that LGBTQ persons face. As we pray *for the life of the world* through our

contemplation, we are transformed to listen deeply to one another and to the brokenness of the world.



... empathy leads to a genuine encounter – we have to progress toward this culture of encounter – in which heart speaks to heart... Pope Francis

Intersectionality provides a prism-like lens through which we recognize the connections between issues of social justice. Different forms



of social discrimination are inextricably linked.

Whether based on sexual orientation or identity, race or ethnicity, or

other factors like economic status or religion, discrimination is rooted in prejudice based on identity and the need to identify with a particular group. It leads to division, hatred and even dehumanization. Such prejudice is most often rooted in our own irrational fears.

After a teenage gunman went to a Buffalo supermarket and killed 10 people (and wounded others), we are hearing more about [replacement theory](#). This false conspiracy theory suggests that nonwhite individuals are being brought into the U.S. as part of a plot designed to undermine or “replace” the political power and culture of white people. Its purpose is to preserve the power structures of white supremacy.

The same irrational fear frequently underlies anti-immigration rhetoric as well as calls to “protect” voting rights (by limiting who can vote or how and when they may vote). Anti-Semitism and cultural genocide through war or indoctrination camps are similarly expressions of the fear of “other-ness”.



Once again, in the process of developing a moral conscience, encountering another as *other* involves finding out what questions, concerns, needs, loves, and values they are living and *making those, at least in part, my own.*

Intersectionality, however, not only looks at the diverse forms of discrimination within the human population. It is a lens to recognize the interwoven relationships of justice (or injustice) in all of our social structures.

The war in Ukraine, for example, has triggered global food insecurity. People in countries far-removed from the fighting are suffering because Ukrainian grain exports (primarily wheat, corn and sunflower oil) are falling short of expectations. Countries in desert areas that can’t support agriculture count on grain imports, as does the [World Food Programme](#) that feeds some 125 million people and buys 50 percent of its grain from Ukraine. [UN food chief David Beasley](#) says, “*This is not just about Ukraine. This is about the poorest of the poor who are on the brink of starvation as we speak.*”

The economic sanctions imposed on Russia affect not just the Russian economy but have repercussions around the world. We see the effects of the war in prices at the grocery store and at the gas station.

Bombing near nuclear power stations threatens the land, air and water in Ukraine and around the world. All is connected in the global web of life.

Unsung Heroes: a first-hand account from Dominican friar Jarosław Krawiec in Kyiv

A recent message from a Dominican friar in Ukraine shines a light on some of the unrecognized heroes in the efforts to evacuate Ukrainian civilians from danger:



“Over the last week, I traveled a lot on trains. Partly out of comfort, partly out of necessity due to the lack of gasoline. Many trains in Ukraine consist mostly of sleeping cars. Each of these cars has its “providnyk”, a railroad employee who serves the passengers. “Have you been working throughout the whole war?” I asked the woman responsible for my car. “Yes, I’ve been riding all this time,” she responded. “I would like to thank you. You are a real hero to me.” She was a little surprised by what I said. She immediately stopped what she was doing and called over her colleague. I listened to their stories about how they served on the evacuation trains in the most dangerous moments of war. They showed me pictures of bullet-ridden cars and rockets flying over the Kyiv train station from the first weeks of war. People like them are real heroes. Without their work, millions of human beings wouldn’t be able to evacuate to safety.”

Read more: [Dominicans in Ukraine](#)