Introduction: As Christians, our calling in life is to do the will of God. But how do we know what is the will of God for us as we daily choose the actions and courses of our lives? How do we perceive good and evil. In the mundane acts of life, how are we to decide between God's will and sin? What we need is a strong, well formed and healthy conscience.

The Conscience is the faculty of reason by which human beings judge the moral worth of their actions already done or to be done in the future. All normal human beings have this faculty of reason by virtue of their creation in the image of God and by God's ordering of the natural law.

Human conscience can be good, in other words it can be well ordered an. On the contrary, the conscience can be evil, disposed to act against natural law and the well orderer will of God imposed on life. It can also be absent. A person who lacks a conscience is a “sociopaths.”

St. Paul writes that the most important duty of a Christian is to transform our conscience by the constant and total renewal of our minds. In the language of moral theology, we are to form or transform our consciences. And he offers several valuable helps in our struggle to leave the disorder of this present age and to seek the transformation that comes from ordering our lives by knowing and doing that which is good, and acceptable and perfect.

1. We must abandon pride, the sin of “thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought.” Pride is the enemy of knowing and doing what we ought to do.

2. We must acknowledge we are each one member of a larger body, the body of Christ, and therefore our choices and actions affect the lives of all members of the body of Christ.

3. Each of us must exercise our consciences by daily choosing to do what we clearly know God has called us to do. How do we clearly know what we ought to do?
   -by the light of natural law, the innate ability to know what is good.
   -by prayer and fasting, which God answers, especially when we ask in humility
   -by Scripture, first and foremost, through which God makes his explicit will known; as for example, Romans 12 provides a long list of guidelines for perceiving the good and avoiding evil.

Theological note: Another enemy of the conscience is the sin of “willful ignorance” which is insurmountable so long as it remains in the heart. Ignorance is not a sin. However, willful ignorance is the deliberate choice to remain ignorant of that which a person can know in order to avoid responsibility or culpability. The Christian is not allowed the indulgence of wallowing in ignorance. See Romans 10:3, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:13

1 Romans 12:2
2 Romans 12:3
3 Romans 12:5
Conclusion: For many centuries the Church has advised all Christians to form their consciences, to renew their minds, by making a daily examination of conscience. If we make a list of the virtues* which a Christian ought to possess, and daily examine our actions, both already done and planned for the future, to see if any of these violate or offend against a virtue, then we can repent of sin and choose a new course which is good, acceptable and perfect, in accordance with the will of God.

Closing prayer
The Collect for the First Sunday after Epiphany

O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people who call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.