

THE
CATHOLIC
Vision of Love
Diocese of Pittsburgh

**CHASTITY EDUCATION AND
PERSONAL SAFETY CURRICULUM**

REVISED 2011
**A Curriculum for Christian Education
in Sexuality and the Family**
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GRADE 7



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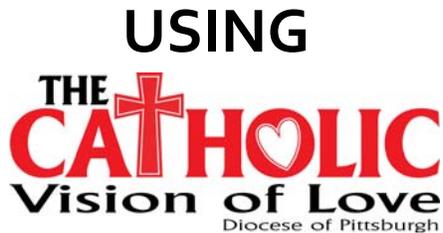
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This notebook contains three sections. A Table of Contents can be found in Sections One and Two and Directions for Use in Section Three.

SECTION ONE • Guidelines

These are the general guidelines to be referred to and followed by all catechists as they prepare to teach *The Catholic Vision of Love*.

SECTION TWO • Catechist's Notes

This section contains grade-specific notes that correspond to each of the four student lessons.

SECTION THREE • Student's Lessons

This section contains the blackline masters of the five lessons that can be reproduced for each student. The fifth lesson on personal safety includes both **catechist notes and student lessons**.

GUIDELINES

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I. INTRODUCTION

.....
These Guidelines seek to apply the teachings of Christ and of His Church to pressing needs of the time.



God Himself created us male and female. He called us to find in love and marriage the fulfillment of deep desires, which He Himself planted in our hearts. In marriage as well as in chastity, accepted for the sake of the Kingdom, God has provided ways in which generous love is made to last, homes made strong, children protected, and the most basic of human goods guarded.

The Church has good news to proclaim about the family, and about human love and sexuality. The Church is called to make clear “the biblical foundations, the ethical grounds, and the personalistic reasons” (Pope John Paul II, *The Christian Family in the Modern World* [*Familiaris Consortio*], n. 31) for the Christian teaching that she hands on concerning human love and sexuality.

In her most basic teaching of the faith, both to adults and to young people, the Church must teach in appropriate ways the vision of love and sexuality that she has received from her Lord as a gift to all the faithful. These *Guidelines* then present the Church’s teaching about love, marriage, and the home as what it truly is: an integral part of the catechetical task of the Church. They give guidance to all who assist in handling on the message of faith.

Pastoral guidance from the Church

Christian teaching about sexuality is true and it is liberating. It heartens people to live their lives with generous love in furthering the basic good things for the sake of which God has made us sexual beings. It enables us to escape the despair that causes so many in the materialistic age to abandon the hope of finding a generous and joyful love such as God intended us to find and to live.

Catholic teaching on sexuality

In our own day the Church has spoken forcefully and clearly of the very meaning of sexuality. This comes in the face of many bitter and inhuman teachings about sexuality that are focused widely today. She has taught also the moral principles that should guide our consciences and our lives if sexuality is to be the blessing that God intended it to be.

The doctrine taught in these *Guidelines* is that of the Church herself. It is rooted in Scripture; it has been constantly taught in the family of faith; and it has been found in the experience of faith over the centuries to be essential for strengthening the family, for making love endure, and for the defense of lives lived in faith and in love.

Among the more important Church documents that should be familiar to all who teach about sexuality in the Church’s name are:

**The Church
has good
news to
proclaim
about the
family....**

Second Vatican Council. The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes) Part II, Chapter 1 (1965).

Pope Paul VI. Encyclical Letter, Of Human Life (Humanae Vitae) (1968).

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Declaration, Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethic (1975).

Pope John Paul II. Apostolic Exhortation, The Christian Family in the Modern World

(Familiaris Consortio) (1981).

Pope John Paul II. Encyclical Letter, The Splendor of Truth (Veritatis Splendor) (1993).

The teaching of the faith on sexuality can be found in Bishop Donald Wuerl, et al., *The Teaching of Christ*, Fourth Edition, (1995), with \ reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (English edition, 1994). There, and in the section below on "Catholic teaching on education in chastity," will be found more abundant reference to documents on the universal Church and of the Church in America on this subject.

Catholic teaching on education in chastity

Catholic teaching on the nature, goals, and proper principles for education on the meaning of sexuality, chastity, and the family can be found in the following sources:

Pope Pius XI. Encyclical Letter, *On the Christian Family (Casti Connubii)* (1930).

Second Vatican Council. Declaration, on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis) (1965).

Pope John Paul II. Apostolic Exhortation, On the Family (Familiaris Consortio) (1981).

Congregation for Catholic Education. Declaration, Educational Guidance in Human Love (1983).

Catholic Bishops of Pennsylvania. Education in Human Sexuality (1989).

National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective (1990).

Pontifical Council for the Family. The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family (1995).

Pontifical Council for the Family. Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage (1996).

II. FOUNDATION

These Guidelines are centered around eight foundational principles.



.....
1. Education in the Catholic vision of love and human sexuality is education in an integral part of Catholic *faith* and *life*. It is formation in ways of living that are inseparable from the Gospel. Education in human sexuality is *inseparable* from our overall faith education and formation.

This education is not only *instructional*. It addresses also the emotions and the whole person. The purpose of this education is to move a person to exercise a personal freedom to choose ways of living that are faithful to the Gospel call. Thus, its concern is to prepare students to have the ability to make intelligent choices regarding their sexuality; to help them integrate their attitudes toward sexuality with their faith and their whole vision of life; and to enable them to acquire self-possession and to exercise authentic freedom.

2. There are certain doctrinal and moral teachings of faith that underlie the program. These basic tenets illumine ways of living our personal lives and of shaping our love and affection in Christian ways. That is, the program emphasizes a *positive vision* of what human love and sexuality mean — a vision that flows from the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. These basic tenets would include:

- The human person is made in the *image of God*. In our masculinity and femininity God has given us ways to imitate the personal goodness that is at the heart of the very life of God.
- Sexuality is *God's work*. It is something *very good*. Much of the joy and energy of human life flow from a recognition of the goodness of all dimensions of the being the Father has given us, including our sexuality.
- Sexuality is to be understood in the context of *human fulfillment*. By our very nature, we long for the good things that we need to have happy and *fully human lives*. By our nature, we seek to escape the loneliness of the human condition and find "enduring love" — a love that gives all of itself to another.
- Sexuality is a *natural sacrament*, or a visible sign of what enduring love means and needs to be among human persons. All our longing is indeed toward a richness we know that we cannot quite express. Thus, it is God we must first learn to love with all our heart. In learning to love Him, we learn to love one another.
- Those sexual acts which faith has always taught to be sinful (such as masturbation, adultery, homosexual activity, contraception, and all extramarital sexual activity) are truly immoral. They are not simply forbidden; they are in truth bad kinds of acts. They use sexuality in ways that fail to respect the very meaning and purposes of sexuality. They keep people from obtaining the good things for the sake of which God created sexuality. They undermine the dignity and happiness of human life.

3. There are certain major practical problems that must be faced today. An education in human sexuality must treat these problems effectively. These problems include AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the rise in teenage pregnancies, abortion, and a variety of promiscuous attitudes. Our young people's understanding of love and sexuality is dramatically affected by a culture caught up in materialism, hedonism, unbelief, and even despair. However, while the program will face these contemporary issues, its primary focus is not one of *avoiding certain grave moral evils* but one of *positively guiding people toward living excellent lives* in all that touches love, affectivity, and personal relationships.

... it is
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heart.

4. Sexual education is primarily the responsibility of the *parents*. Thus, an education in love and sexuality will be effective only to the extent that parents cooperate and take an active role. The aim of the teachers is to *assist parents*: to help them to communicate with their children in these matters. The *principle of subsidiarity* reminds us that such tasks are only effectively accomplished if the essential smaller units, in this case families, are doing their tasks. The program is meant to cooperate with parents and *not substitute* for them. On the other hand, teaching is so critical in this area, it simply cannot be taken for granted that parents are capable of doing it on their own with no assistance from the Church.

5. Human sexuality education is to be integrated with education in Catholic faith and life generally. The education will be designed to be *integrated into the religion curriculum itself*. This will be a total parish program involving both Catholic school and Religious Education programs.

6. Only those who can and do agree with Catholic teaching in these matters can be permitted to teach *The Catholic Vision of Love*. There is a need for adequate catechist formation and training prior to beginning the actual teaching of this material.

7. Education and materials need to be provided for parents and other adults. Assistance should be given to the clergy who will be instrumental in the implementation of this pastorally important education. The media, the internet and contemporary pressures tend to press all people toward attitudes and practices which contradict Christian principles. The whole community needs to get a firmer grasp on basic Catholic moral principles if it is to communicate these principles effectively to its young members.

8. Education in the proper use of media is an indispensable part of any effort at human sexuality education.

III. GOALS

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Christ is the Teacher of life. He came that we might “have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).



This program aims at assisting all to lead richer and happier lives by following Christ's guidance in walking in the ways of love. He is the best teacher about such basic realities. We learn from Him about the kind of love that can endure in this world, about the home and family, about the preciousness of life and of chaste and human love.

The principal goal of *The Catholic Vision of Love* is:

To present Christ's vision of love and sexuality, and to encourage all to live according to the Good News of His teaching on love, marriage, the family, sexuality, and the freedom of self possession.

All the other goals and objectives follow from this principal goal. These more specific goals are:

- To show that God is our Father, the Creator of *all* our being: that our sexuality is God's rich gift, which affects all that we are and serves precious human goods, when it is understood in the light of Christ's gracious teaching.
- To stress the sublime importance of every person and the essential equality of all persons; and to show that each one is called to greatness of heart and to friendship with the Lord.
- To teach the profound Christian motives for reverence for every person, and for a healthy self-esteem; to make clear how precious every person is to God, and how by God's grace each is capable of living the excellent ways Christ makes known.
- To guide all toward a fuller understanding of what Christ teaches in His Church about sexual morality and self possession, and to assist them in seeing how good Christ's teaching is, and how important it is to shape our consciences to live in His ways.
- To lead all toward understanding and acceptance of all the dimensions of our human lives: spiritual, moral, psychological, physical, emotional, sexual, intellectual, and social.
- To seek to guard all from exploitation by providing a clear understanding of everything one needs to know about sexuality to be secure and fortified to live in this contemporary world.
- To support all persons in their efforts to acquire the skills, insights, and virtues they need to have confidence and peace in leading chaste lives.
- To motivate and assist all to follow Christ's vision of love, guarding all the good things God intended sexuality to serve, in lives enriched by heeding the commandments and beatitudes, and by doing the works of mercy.

IV. THEOLOGY

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The *Catholic Vision of Love* is rooted in the Scriptures. It has been taught in the Church through the centuries and faithfully presented for our time in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and in other recent Church documents. Christ continues to teach in the family of faith, and His teaching is true and liberating. Through this teaching He defends indispensable human goods that serve both human happiness and the dignity of the person.



Scriptural roots

The teachings of the Church about marriage and sexuality can be traced through their development in both the Old and New Testaments.

Old Testament

There is a *religious context* to the Old Testament teaching on sexuality and sexual morality.

The Old Testament understanding of sexuality is deeply related to its understanding of God. The God of revelation is very different from pagan gods such as Baal. This difference is reflected in the distinctive nature of sexual morality in revealed teaching. In the myth of Baal, the gods themselves are sexual beings, capable, as fallen beings are, of selfish and unrestrained lust. Pagan fertility cults presented sex, even its selfish and cruel manifestations, as participation in the divine. But the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not like Baal: He is not sinful and selfish as we can be; He is different, and altogether good. We are flawed, and inclined toward behaving badly. But God calls us to be His friends, and so to lead good lives, after the pattern He teaches us.

Though not every kind of sexuality activity is good, the Old Testament sees sexuality itself as good. Sexuality has intelligent purposes and deserves to be treated with reverent care. It is the gift of an all-good and transcendent Creator. This is the thrust of each of the narratives in Genesis of the creation of man and woman.

Human beings are not created to be isolated individuals. "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). The two accounts of the origins of male and female, and indeed also of marriage, in the book of Genesis, Chapters 1 and 2, each stress different goods that sexuality furthers. The account in Genesis, Chapter 2, speaks of the great good of interpersonal love, of the need of each bodily person for another with whom to share life. It calls for spousal love to be a kind of love like the Lord's that is full of generosity and self-giving. The account of Genesis, Chapter 1, stresses the procreative good, which later inspired writings will celebrate so richly: the joy that children are to parents.

Thus for the Old Testament, sex is a blessing from God, Celebrated with great joy in the Song of Solomon, sexuality is yet a reality to be responsibly controlled. Human beings are to integrate their sexuality by understanding its meaning and purposes. Throughout the Old Testament marriage is presented as something holy. The sexual relationship in marriage should mirror the relationship between God and His people. This is a reciprocal relationship: What we learn, by experience or revelation, teaches us about God's covenantal love; and what God teaches us of that love reveals what spousal love should be like.

Thus for the Old Testament, sex is a blessing from God. The Old Testament's moral precepts about sexuality, as contained in the Decalogue, are right and good; but they reflect the imperfection of a not fully developed state of moral revelation and teaching. But clearly the Old Testament recognizes the great dignity of wife and mother. Wisdom literature repeatedly counsels husbands and wives to love one another truly and to be faithful to one another. It urges young men to live chastely, avoiding harlots and wayward women, as paganism did not. Faithful, lifelong marriage is the normative context for sexual love.

The Old Testament clearly condemns many of the kinds of sexual acts that do not further faithful love and the procreative good, and threaten marriage. It condemns adultery, and homosexual and bestial acts; it rejects all activity that surrenders to impulse rather than governs sexuality by love of authentic goods; implicitly it rejects fornication (sexual intercourse between unmarried persons) and it forbids the internal act of "coveting thy neighbor's wife." The moral teaching of the Old Testament is clearly no mere expression of Semitic culture and social conditions. Other Semitic people accepted the myths of Baal and the sexual morality of other nations. It was their covenant with the Lord that led the Jews to so sublime an understanding of sexuality.

New Testament

The Good News that Christ taught puts all things, even sexuality, in a new light. This new perspective is seen very clearly in the new evaluation of celibacy and virginity accepted willingly for the sake of the Kingdom (see Matthew 19:12). Of course, the New Testament takes for granted the teachings of the Old Testament on the goodness of sexuality and on the beauty of faithful marriage. But the Gospel advances these teachings to a more profound level of understanding.

Generally speaking, the Old Testament clearly disapproves of divorce (see Malachi 2:16) and in the Gospel Christ clearly condemns divorce and remarriage. Human acts of divorcing cannot break the indissoluble bond of valid marriage. It would be adultery to live as married to a partner who is not a real spouse (see Luke 16:18). Christ points out that the man who divorces his wife and marries commits adultery against her. His teaching seeks to guard the rights of women, their personal dignity, and equality with men.

For Jesus, sexual morality is not merely a matter of external behavior, but one of a person's internal disposition and will as well. "Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Evil acts coming from the heart, are what corrupt a person. These evil

acts are said to include adultery (*moicheia*), fornication (*porneia*), and sensuality (*aselgeia*) (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21-22). There are difficulties in analyzing the precise sense of each word. But it is clear that lustful acts include more than adultery. *Porneia* is used in the New Testament to include acts properly designated by the English term *fornication*.

The writings attributed to Saint Paul also illumine faith's vision of sexuality. Writing to Gentiles living in a pagan world, affected both by licentiousness and by an antisexual Gnosticism, Paul stresses the goodness of marriage and of sexual union within marriage. Everything is to be experienced "in the Lord," including their sexuality and their married lives. The holiness of marriage, and its sacramental ties with the love of Christ for His Church, are stressed in Ephesians 5:22-23.

**All is
transformed
by Christ.**

All is transformed by Christ. Our bodies need reverence: They are members of Christ and temples of the Spirit. But since sexual immorality affects the Christian person in so intimate and bodily a way, it is a sacrilegious desecration of the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. "Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Because authentic human love and marriage are such indispensable goods for ordinary Christian living, sexual sins have a tragic seriousness. Like the Gospels, Paul too gives a list of sexual sins and notes how fearful are their consequences. "Neither the immoral, not idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals...will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Hence chaste hearts and self-possession are necessary for the Christian. The form of life that guards spousal love, homes, and the family, and nourishes enduring love, is the form of life that is needed both for human happiness on earth and for finding relationships with God that make one worthy of life forever in Him.

Bibliographical notes: Some studies helpful for grasping the vision of sexuality found in Scripture include:

Pope John Paul II. *The Original Unity of Man and Woman, Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*. Boston: St. Paul Editions (1981).

_____. *Blessed Are the Pure of Heart*. Boston: Saint Paul Editions (1983).

E. Schillebeeckx. *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*. 2 volumes. New York: Sheed and Ward (1965).

See also Lawler, et al. *Catholic Sexual Ethics*. Our Sunday Visitor (1985), Chapter 2, *The Biblical Teaching on Sex*.

Catholic teaching through the centuries

Catholics are heirs to a long theological tradition. From apostolic times to the present, that tradition has taught, and continues to teach, that the union of man and woman in marriage is good and indeed holy. It teaches that the virtue of chastity is necessary for all persons, male and female, married and unmarried, so that they may fully have self-possession and not be controlled by lustful forms of sexual desire. It teaches that some specific forms of sexuality activity —

namely, adultery, fornication, and sodomy, for example — are incompatible with the form of living appropriate to a person who has become one body with Christ through Baptism. It teaches what the Church learned from Scripture and has always taught: All acts of marital love should be open to life, and so respect the very meaning and purposes that God has given to sexuality. Hence those forms of family planning that are contraceptive are wrong. They deliberately seek to destroy the life-giving power of acts of marital love.

The Fathers drew their sexual teaching from the Scriptures, and applied it to the pastoral problems of their times. Against Gnosticism, they taught the holiness of marriage, and because of its anti-life spirit the Fathers stressed the procreative purpose of marriage. In a pagan world they extolled the greatness of a virginity generously lived for the Kingdom, but it had to be always rooted in the context of reverence for marriage and the family. The misery experienced in the pagan world as a result of a lust that destroyed homes and the hope for enduring love led the Fathers to develop more fully scriptural teaching on the fallen state of the human person: Sexual appetite, while itself good, had been notably wounded by sin.

The important work of the medieval, modern, and contemporary scholars in developing the Gospel vision of sexuality can be studied in some of the works cited in the bibliography section at the end of this chapter.

Magisterial teaching

Catholics believe that Christ Himself continues to teach in His Church. Catholics believe that Christ Himself continues to teach in His Church. He commanded those He sent to proclaim the Gospel and His saving precepts to all nations. He promised that He would remain with them always in their teaching. The Church believes that the pope and bishops, successors to Saint Peter and the other apostles, teach moral matters authoritatively, and sometimes infallibly, since Christ teaches through them. Moral teaching is infallible not only when it is solemnly defined (very few moral matters are so defined), but also through the ordinary teaching of the Magisterium, when all the bishops and the pope teach in one accord something in morals that is to be held definitively (Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, n. 25). What the Church teaches infallibly, we are to accept with firm faith; what she teaches authoritatively, we are to accept with internal religious assent, and to follow that teaching in our lives (*ibid.*).

Early councils taught firmly the goodness of marriage. The Second and Fourth Lateran Councils defended the goodness of the marital union against the challenge of medieval neo-Gnostics. The Council of Florence affirmed that marriage is a sacrament, and proclaimed Augustine's teaching on the three basic goods of marriage: 1) the begetting of children, and educating them to love God; 2) the faithful love of husband and wife for each other; and 3) the indissoluble union of the spouses, mirroring Christ's indissoluble love for His Church. Councils did not need to define the constant teaching of the Church on the sinfulness of adultery and other sexual sins that were part of the ordinary teaching of the Church everywhere, and hence decisively part of faith's teaching.

The moral teachings of the Church touching sexuality were presented by the bishops and their priests, and received by the people, as the teaching of the Lord. When Christendom was divided at the Reformation, the new Christian communities continued to teach the moral teachings, so rooted in Scripture and so familiar to the people of God. Obviously, not all were faithful to these teachings; but their authority was not rejected. But as philosophies alien to Christianity became more influential in the thought and practice of the world, authentic Catholic teaching had to articulate with greater care the message it had received and had a duty to teach. Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI, for example, set forth the Christian vision of marriage and of sexuality in a number of encyclicals.

But in our own time, facing strong attacks on the family, misunderstandings of chaste love, new forms of hedonism and of moral skepticism, the Church has sought to hearten her people with strong defenses of Catholic teaching about marriage, the family, the meaning and purposes of sexuality, and the gifts God gives to make possible living the excellent ways that guard indispensable human goods. The Second Vatican Council spoke forcefully of the whole Christian vision in this matter, and later Church documents have further illumined and defended the Catholic vision of love and sexuality.

Church directives to theologians, pastors, catechists, and pastoral leaders regularly and rightly insist that authoritative teaching is to be faithfully adhered to even if one should have certain difficulties with it at times. The *Instruction* from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith entitled *The Ecclesial Vocation of Theologians* (1990) gives excellent advice for pastoral practice when these kinds of difficulties occur. Two things remain important: to be faithful to the teachings of the faith, and to be gentle and helpful to those who have been scandalized or who have erred. One strives to help them recapture the vision of faith.

Bibliography: Selected Church documents in sexual ethics include:

Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution. *The Church in the Modern World, Part II, Chapter 1: On Upholding the Dignity of Marriage and the Family.*

_____. Declaration, *Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis)* (1965). Nn. 1-3 treat some principles of sexual education.

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation. *The Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)* (Nov. 22, 1981).

_____. Encyclical Letter, *The Splendor of Truth (Veritatis Splendor)* (1993).

Pope Paul VI. Encyclical Letter, *On the Regulation of Birth (Humanae Vitae)* (July 25, 1968).

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Declaration, *Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics (Persona Humana)* (1975).

Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (1986).

_____. *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation* (1987).

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_____. Pastoral Letter, *To Live in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Reflection on the Moral Life* (1976).

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SUMMARY

Doctrinal teachings

1. We are created in God's own image. God made us male and female; our sexuality is good because it is from Him, and it serves basic human goods, especially spousal love, and newness of life.
2. God is the author of marriage. It did not flow from merely human choices or cultural conditions. God also wished marriage to have certain essential traits needed to guard spousal love and other human goods: unity, indissolubility, exclusiveness, openness to life, sacramentality.
3. Christ has raised marriage to the dignity of a Christian sacrament. Marital love should reflect the qualities of God's love for His people and Christ's love for His Church. As a sacred sign, matrimony is a gift through which God promises assistance to His people, assuring them that despite the many trials married people may face, they will be able to be faithful to God in their marital commitment if they seek His gracious help.
4. The marital act is good and sanctifying when in marriage it is an expression of marital love. But the proper place for sexual intercourse is *always* within marriage.
5. Christian teaching is good news for the family. Its doctrinal and moral principles serve to strengthen marriages and homes, and through these the happiness of people, who need secure marital commitments and faithful love within the family if their lives are to have the happiness they seek.
6. All valid and sacramental marriages have an indissolubility; it is not within any human person's power to dissolve them. Faith teaches, however, that God grants the Church authority in certain cases to dissolve marriages that are not sacramental (e.g., the Pauline privilege) or that are not consummated. Sacramental marriages that been consummated are entirely indissoluble. God does not grant even to His Church the power to dissolve such marriages for any reason. Declarations of nullity are not divorces or dissolutions of a marriage. They are judgment that an apparent valid marriage was, in fact, because of serious cause (e.g., the inability of one of the partners to consent to the marriage), never a truly sacramental marriage.

7. In the sacrament of matrimony, and in the other sacraments, and in the gifts flowing from prayer, God offers to His people the power to lead lives of faithful love in marriage. God makes it possible for people to lead excellent lives in marriage, so that their hopes for lasting love, and for divine assistance in caring for their children, and for living peaceful lives in divine grace may be realized.
8. Sexuality is a gift of deep importance to human life. It is not a trivial reality, and needs to be treated with reverent care. Christian teaching on sexuality guards indispensable human goods: the hope of enduring love, the protection of children and the procreative good generally, the defense of the basic social unit, the home, the care for the sacramental dimensions of human love.

Christian teaching is good news for the family.

Moral teachings

Objective norms

- *The excellence of sexual love in its proper context.* Conjugal love “is uniquely expressed and perfected through the marital act. The actions within marriage by which the couple are united intimately and chastely are noble and worthy ones” (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 49). While spouses are indebted to each other in this matter, they should engage in such acts freely and willingly, in ways that show mutual respect, and further the ends of marital love.
- *Sins against marital values.* Those acts which involve choices directly against the basic values toward which sexuality is ordered are always objectively sinful. Thus, acts of adultery, fornication, homosexual actions, masturbation, and the like are gravely sinful if they are engaged in with sufficient knowledge and freedom (*Persona Humana*, n. 10). Similarly, acts intended precisely to stir up sexual arousal (e.g., lustful forms of kissing or fondling) in circumstances unrelated to marital love are gravely disordered.
- *Contraception and sterilization.* The Church is certainly aware of the many complex problems which couples in many countries face today in their task of transmitting life in a responsible way. However, consideration in depth of these problems offers a new and stronger confirmation of the importance of the authentic teaching on birth regulation repropounded in the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 51) and in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14. See also Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 31. Hence there must be excluded as intrinsically immoral “every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or a means, to render procreation impossible” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 14). (See also what is said below under “Pastoral considerations,” nn.1-3.)

Natural family planning . . . may be used without fault in proper circumstances.

■ *Natural family planning.* This does not mean that all family planning is excluded, however. Providentially, effective forms of natural family planning have been developed, which in their moral structure are radically different from contraception (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 32). These may be used without fault in proper circumstances (ibid.) The Catholic community has a duty to make accessible to its people the assistance that natural family planning can provide for living a chaste life.

■ *Artificial generation of children.* Although the Church commends those who seek to help the apparently infertile to have the children they desire, it points out the inhumanity and wrongness of some forms of generating children, notably, artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization. Human life should come to be as a fruit of an act of interpersonal and fully human love, as the fruit of an act of marital love. It should never be reduced to a technological “making of a child, even if this producing of a child has good motivation. (See *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin* [1987].)

Pastoral considerations

■ *Importance of moral truth.* Many circumstances in the contemporary world make it difficult for the faithful to recognize the truth of the certain teachings of faith in this area. Hence, it is important that those who teach Catholic sexual morality seek to present “the biblical foundations, the ethical grounds, and the personalistic reasons behind this doctrine” (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 31). Since the Church teaches a revealed morality, and the faithful are powerfully moved by their confidence in the teaching of Christ, the certainty that this is the teaching of Christ in His Church is to be made as clear as possible. But other kinds of reasons are also needed. It is important to show that the teachings of faith are not merely laws imposed by the Lord or by the Church; they are moral teachings that point out excellent ways of living, and guard

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human goods of indispensable importance for human happiness. It is necessary also to show that the Lord indeed makes it possible for His faithful to live in this excellent way. Moral teachings, moreover, are never imposed by force. They are addressed to the freedom of persons, and they enhance the personal dignity of those who willingly live by them.

■ *Subjective considerations.* Sins of lust, such as fornication and masturbation, are objectively gravely sinful. This does not mean that those who perform such acts always sin mortally. It is quite possible in this field that those who perform such acts may be excused from grave sin because of failures to realize the gravity of the matter or because they substantially lack freedom in the actions performed. Pastoral wisdom is needed in giving guidance especially to the young in these matters. One should be realistic in estimating moral responsibility.

Modern psychology has much that is valid and useful to offer on the subject of

masturbation. It is helpful for gauging responsibility more accurately and for directing pastoral action along the right lines. It can enable one to understand how adolescent immaturity, which sometimes outlasts adolescence, the lack of psychological balance, and ingrained habit can influence a person's behavior, diminishing one's responsibility for one's actions, with the result that a person is not always guilty of subjectively grave fault. But the absence of grave responsibility must not always be presumed. To suppose that would involve a failure to recognize the human person's ability to behave morally (*Persona Humana*, n. 9). The principles noted here are, of course, applicable to other sexual sins as well.

■ *Objective truth.* Pastoral care is concerned with more than subjective guilt or innocence in this matter. Catholic moral teaching speaks the truth about how we are to live and please God, and guides us correctly toward the excellent forms of life which are needed for human happiness and which will lead to holiness of life. Lustful actions are really harmful for human beings, even if they are not known to be bad and even when they are not morally imputable to the one performing the action. God has taught us how we are to live, and has instructed the Church to teach the faithful in His ways, because they are good. And because it is good to walk in the light of the Lord, "To diminish in no way the saving teaching of Christ constitutes an eminent form of charity for souls" (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 7).

Young people often need specific help in understanding ways to conquer temptation....

■ *Providing gracious assistance.* Pastoral teaching does not merely instruct the faithful in their duties, but also offers them the practical helps that enable them to experience that the excellent ways of living are not excessively burdensome (cf. Matthew 11:28-30). The experience of confessors has long been that those who come to a personal desire to do God's will faithfully in these matters find that God does not fail them. In fact, they become able to keep His precepts without overwhelming difficulty. They need to realize that God's grace is very strong, and that prayer and the sacraments are powerful supports to a chaste and self-possessed life. Practical assistance is greatly needed: Spouses need to have excellent instruction in natural family planning that is readily accessible. Young people often need specific help in understanding ways to conquer temptation; they need assistance in psychologically sound ways to overcome problems that underlie their moral difficulties.

■ *Social dimensions.* Difficulties with chastity often have social dimensions. Pastoral care must teach the faithful, especially the young, ways to overcome the pressures of peers and of the media. It is important that the faithful realize the naturalness and goodness of a life of self-possession. We must help them realize how many people do live chaste lives in tranquility and joy.

■ *Self-esteem.* Education in chastity requires that we assist people to have a right self-esteem (which is entirely compatible with humility). Indeed, it is awareness

of the goodness that God has planted in their hearts, and the greatness that they have because of the love of Christ, that heartens people to pursue excellent forms of life that serve the most indispensable of human goods. Although we teach the grave sinfulness of certain disordered sexual acts, we do not teach people that they are worthless because they have sinned. Rather, we must constantly hearten people to trust in the powerful grace of the Lord, and to have confidence that He will give them power to live as the sons and daughters of God that they are called to be.

■ *Conscience.* Catholic sexual ethics must be taught in a context that respects the general moral teachings of the faith. Thus, it must be supported by sound teaching on conscience, and on the duty to form conscience properly. It is necessary to teach it in a context that recognizes the ability of people to live, with the assistance of God's grace, by His saving precepts, even when they appear difficult. Catholic teaching on mortal sin must be respected. Mortal sin is a tragic evil. By it persons whom Christ died to save can separate themselves from the love of God and the secure hope of eternal life. A mortal sin is a gravely wrong kind of act (an act like adultery, fornication, or perjury) which is done with sufficient reflection and with full consent of the will. Venial sins are acts that are not so gravely wrong, or are performed without sufficient knowledge or freedom. To enable the faithful to grasp clearly and to appreciate moral teachings of the Church involves notable difficulties in our contemporary age. But the teachings of faith are strong defenses for good human lives and person happiness. They hearten people to acquire the generosity that the Gospel calls for in those who seek eternal life. To teach well such matters is a great work of love.

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V. EDUCATION

The Catholic program speaking of education in sexuality should first of all assist us in understanding what faith itself teaches us about our sexuality, about our being men and women. It presents the insistent teaching of faith that sexuality, made by God, is good, and serves excellent purposes, although, like other good realities, it can be abused and treated sinfully.



Our attitudes towards sexuality and right moral conduct are deeply affected by cultural pressures. The media today bring to our homes and to our lives factors that deeply affect our convictions and our conduct. Christians need to learn to handle these media intelligently. In a fallen, sinful world sexual misconduct is not rare and many are inclined to despair of attaining self-possession and the freedom which self-discipline brings with it. A good sexuality education makes clear the many resources that God has given to make really possible for us a life of fulfillment and happiness, a life of chaste self-possession and freedom.

Sexuality education speaks also of various kinds of harm to be avoided by intelligent self-discipline and good living. Thus, it treats the bitter problems of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancies, abortion, broken homes and families, and other physical harms that often follow from using sexuality unwisely. But its focus is on the richness of life that God intended human persons to have in the right use of sexuality, and on heartening people to lead their lives in ways that direct them toward genuine fulfillment.

Different sense of “sexuality”

Sexuality itself has different senses. At times “sexuality” has a very *broad meaning*. We are sexual beings. Our being male or female is deeply rooted in us, and concerns far more than our inclination to distinctively sexual activities and matters closely related to them. All the dimensions of our life are affected by our being male or female. The dynamism associated with being sexual in this broader sense extends to all areas of life. In this broader sense, sexuality speaks of all the emotional and affective ties that tend to bind human beings together in many kinds of friendships and affectionate concerns.

In its *narrower sense*, sexuality refers either to the biological aspects of being male or female (i.e., as a synonym for one’s gender) or activities, emotions, feelings, or indeed anything clearly related to genital sexual activity or sexual pleasure. Some documents prefer to reserve the word “sexuality” for the broader sense noted above, and to use the word “sex” for this latter sense of the word (cf. USCC, *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective* [1990], p. 9).

Diverse aspects of sexuality education

Sexuality education is concerned with sexuality in both the broader and narrower sense. It speaks of the morality of sexual activity: its moral goodness in the committed love of marriage; its moral badness when it is separated from the committed faithful love, and the openness to new life that it should express. It speaks of the reasons why a chaste life can be an excellent and full life, and it addresses both the general and the distinctively Christian motives for leading a chaste life.

Even in its narrower sense, sexuality education speaks of the great goods for the sake of which God gave human persons sexuality: the good of enduring personal love that heals the loneliness of the human spirit; the procreative good which makes fruitful in the child the love shared by spouses; the rich goodness of the family; and the blessings that flow from keeping the family strong. It is in terms of the good things to which sexuality is ordered that the truth of Christian moral teachings about sexual activity can be properly understood.

VI. FAMILY

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These *Guidelines* wholeheartedly support the traditional Catholic teaching that parents are by right the primary educators of their children, in teaching about love and sexuality as well as other areas. The Christian community owes parents assistance in their task of providing a good education to their children.



Pope John Paul II emphasized the principle that parents are called to be the primary educators of their children:

The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others. In addition to those characteristics, it cannot be forgotten that the most basic element, so basic that it qualifies the educational role of parents, is parental love, which finds fulfillment in the task of education as it completes and perfects its service of life. As well as being a source, the parents' love is also the animating principle and therefore the norm inspiring and guiding all concrete educational activity, enriching it with the values of kindness, constancy, goodness, service, disinterestedness, and self-sacrifice that the most precious fruit of love (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 36.)

The Pontifical Council for the Family has emphasized this point in its document *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*: "This right also implies an educational duty. If in fact parents do not give adequate formation in chastity, they are failing in their precise duty" (n. 44; see as well nos. 37-49).

Parents especially are called to hand on the faith and the Christian pattern of life to the next generation. To do this well, parents must be adequately formed in the faith. The more securely parents themselves possess the Catholic vision of love, the more effectively they can pass it on to their children. The National Directory for Catechesis stresses the importance of the home in all areas of education and catechesis.

The vital influence of parents on the social and religious development of their children must be more widely recognized. Family life needs to be strengthened so that children and youth will derive their values from the home, rather than from potentially undesirable sources outside the home. The Church, especially through the parish, should provide an intensified support system for family life (89809 *Sharing the Light of Faith*, n. 25).

Parents must make every effort to educate children in the essential values of human life. The “positive and prudent sexual education” that the Second Vatican Council called for (*Declaration on Christian Education [Gravissimum Educationis]*, n.1) requires the loving communication of the concept that sexuality is a gift that affects all the dimensions of our life. Since human sexuality education “is realized in full in the context of faith” and should be provided in the context of human and family relationships and experiences, it must be penetrated with concern for Christian love, self-esteem, and reverence for self and others (Congregation for Christian Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, n. 43).

Good parents wish their children to have such an education. However, the circumstances of the times, the pervasiveness of the media, the contradictions of the surrounding culture, the awkwardness of communication with young people often dominated by their peers, and the innate sensitivity of the task all serve to make this responsibility of speaking about sexuality with their children very difficult at times. Parents have a right to expect from the Church community assistance in this task; not an assistance that replaces their role, but one that fortifies them and enables them to do this important parental task well.

As “a community of persons bound together by love” (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 18), the family seeks to form both the mind and heart of its young members. This education of the heart, this guidance given to feelings and affections as well as to the mind, is also stressed in these *Guidelines*. Full personal development requires growth in understanding of our own feelings and affections and in learning how to shape and direct our affections in ways that are faithful to those we love and to all that is good and helpful in directing our lives wisely.

It is in the home that his affective education is best provided. Each person is unique, and the attentive (but not dominating) care of those who love the young is needed to help them integrate their deeply felt feelings with intelligent and faithful love for the goods that faith and intelligence grasp. No one can become more helpful than parents in assisting children to realize in concrete circumstances what the Lord expects of them in these matters.

The United States bishops continually stress the centrality of the family in shaping the whole person and in instilling values. The bishops note the value of the good family’s witness as a sign of fidelity and hope:

For the believer the family is the place where God’s image is reproduced in his creation. The family is the community within which the person is realized, the place where all our hopes for the future person are nourished. The family is a learning experience in which fidelity is fostered, hope imparted and life honored; it thus increases the moral resources of our culture and, more importantly, of the person. The family is a sign to all mankind of fidelity to life and of hope in the future which becomes possible when persons are in communion with one another; it is a sign to believers of the depth of this fidelity and this hope when these center on God; it is a sign to Christians of the fidelity and hope which Christ communicates as the elder brother of the family of the Church for which he died (*Human Life In Our Day*, 1257, pp. 356-357, USCC Publications Office [1968]).

“Like every other reality, the family, too, is called upon to develop and grow” (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 65). It is called to shape well the intimate depths of its members, and to urge them to faithfulness in their broad social responsibilities as well. The *Guidelines* acknowledge the importance of the ongoing education of the family, which is challenged to form persons in love and also to practice love in all relationships, so that it does not live closed in on itself, but remains open to the community, moved by a sense of justice and concern for others, as well as by a consciousness of its responsibility toward the whole of society (The Sixth Synod of Bishops, *Message to Christian Families in the Modern World*, October 24, 1980, n. 12).

VII. INTEGRATION

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These *Guidelines* provide a broad general plan for an authentically Catholic education in love and sexuality. Many people share the task of carrying out this educational program. Parents are to be the primary teachers of their children; pastors are to be witnesses of faith teaching to the whole community; at various levels, teachers in marriage preparation programs, in adult Religious Education programs, in schools and Religious Education programs, and in other contexts, are to assist in this important task.



Parental tasks and tasks of religious educators

The education of children in sexuality is primarily the task of their parents. But parents deserve and often need the assistance of others in carrying out their responsibility.

When parents speak to their children about sexuality, they speak in personal tones, supported by their more intimate understanding and love that they have for those to whom they are close. They speak out of their faith and out of their personal experience and wisdom. Hence more intimate and personal direction is ordinarily better given by parents themselves or by those the parents choose to assist them in this necessary task.

But parents deserve and often need the assistance of others in carrying out this task. Religious educators also speak to their students out of faith and love, but theirs is the voice of the family of faith, a broader witness helping students to realize together that what they have learned from their parents is not something singular. The voice of the parents is a familiar one, concrete and sensitive to all the individual sensitivities of the child. The sensitivity of religious educators has a different focus. It is seeking to cast the light of faith on a dimension of life that is not only deep personal, but also an important part of social life. Consequently the believer needs the communal witness of facilitators and teachers of faith. The religious educator helps young people to get another kind of grasp on the teaching first received from parents, and helps to deepen young peoples' grasp on what the Gospel invites them to realize.

What the religious educator teaches about love and sexuality

Many things concerning love and sexuality are part of the essential teaching of faith. Catechesis must present a Christian anthropology — a sound vision of what it means for us to be men and women. It must teach the transcendent dignity of each individual, the truth that God is the author of sexuality, which is good and ordered to the flourishing of enduring love and of the family and of other indispensable human goods. In the face of alien philosophies that penetrate the media and challenge the Gospel, Christian catechesis must provide a solid and true account of the meaning of the sexuality God has given us.

Part of any complete catechesis must be moral instruction. We must teach courageously that many forms of sexual behavior often defended in our society are morally wrong, inhuman, and harmful. We must teach both the young and the mature how to acquire that strong freedom which flows from chastity. Moral teaching must be presented in ways that realistically help the young both to avoid harms which often follow immoral sexual conduct and to achieve the kind of good life that God wishes them to have.

Characteristics of an education in the Catholic vision of love

The program being implemented in the Diocese of Pittsburgh integrates essential teachings about sexuality into the catechetical program as a whole. There are certain real advantages in this. It stresses the universal importance of this education: It is providing material that a rounded teaching of faith must provide. Clearly, for Christians, sexuality education must be an education in Christian values and in the Christian vision of what human persons are. But the time in fact available for courses in Christian values is plainly finite. If parishes would wish to have both regular Religious Education and special programs in human sexuality education, it is very likely that many of the students would not take both programs. In planning what is important for all students to have, it seems best to integrate the education in a Catholic vision of love into the catechetical program as a whole. This approach ties this education in with the basic truths and central values out of which such study should grow, and helps young people to feel that the proper matrix for understanding so central a reality is in the study of the whole faith and life to which Christ invites us.

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Catholic documents on sexuality education tend to stress certain factors: the dominant role of parents, and the need to assist rather than replace them as teachers; the importance of giving good and needed knowledge, but the importance also of not excessively stimulating curiosity or of making intimate matters of sexuality seem to appear appropriate objects for casual talk. Care should be exercised by parents in being “attentive to ways in which an immoral education can be passed on to their children through various methods promoted by groups with positions and interests contrary to Christian morality” (*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, n. 135; see also nos. 135-42).

The emphasis in such a program is very different from that of secular programs in sexuality. The aim is not to teach “all you ever wanted to know” about sexuality, or to assist people in coming to think and to feel about sexuality as something commonplace, to be discussed in all its intimate details without any concern for an appropriate modesty or without appreciation for the emotional resonances associated with sexuality.

The focus of a catechetical program is not on biological aspects of sexuality, yet it certainly does not fear these realities. Faith indeed provides a right perspective for

studying the biological dimensions of sexuality. It surely wishes to stress the goodness of all the body, and the importance of sensitive care in speaking of intimate sexual matters. As children grow, they need to know more things about sexuality; and often they need the warm help of one very near them, especially in ways that counter fears and timidity, and help them grasp information with maximal emotional tranquility, and in ways that gently help them to understand what they learn with a concrete feeling for the values that are relevant. That is, they need to obtain the knowledge they should have in a context that makes it easier for them to grasp what they learn within the total vision of a living faith.

At times parents find it almost impossible to speak in satisfactory ways to their children, but if they can be helped to do so, much good can result. In cases where parents cannot or will not provide the elements of sexuality education that best come from parents, those who have pastoral care for children and adolescents may need to cooperate with parents in other ways: Perhaps, with parental consent, finding surrogate parents (perhaps grandparents or other good people the parents can rightly and fully trust) to speak with children in the personal and sensitive ways that young people generally need at certain stages of maturity.

VIII. ADULT EDUCATION

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Adults especially need to be well educated in the Catholic vision of love and sexuality. Their lives are more complex than the lives of young people; they have had more experiences. They are capable of a fuller and freer adherence to the teaching of faith. They need an excellent education in the Catholic vision of love also because faithfulness to right ideals is often difficult. They deserve help in countering pressures from our culture to adopt positions hostile to the vision of faith.



Moreover, adult understanding of and adherence to the Catholic vision of love have exceptional importance because of the many *responsibilities* that adults have. Adults, as *parents* and *teachers* and persons of significant influence in many ways, deeply affect the lives of younger people, and, indeed, of the whole community. Those who are shaping and guiding others need to be well informed themselves.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has, then, reminded us of the reasons why religious education of adults, not least in understanding the Catholic vision of love, is of central importance:

The continuing education of adults is situated not at the periphery of the Church's educational mission, but at its center. . . . The adult programs should reflect the three interrelated purposes of Christian education: The teaching of doctrine, the building and experiencing of community, and service to the other. . . . In seeking to instill this understanding of the Christian family's role, family life education must employ such means as premarital instruction and marriage counseling, study, prayer and action groups for couples, and other adult programs which married persons themselves may plan and conduct in collaboration with the Church leadership (*To Teach as Jesus Did*, n. 43, 1972).

Parents have the task of handing on to their children the Gospel pattern of love. All adults, single, and celibate people as well as parents, have the responsibility of handing on to young people generally, to a young and growing generation, the saving message of Christ's love that all need to possess to find fulfillment.

Education for young adults

Young adults deserve special attention from the Church. The years after high school, that for some are years in colleges and universities, while others are early years in various levels of employment, are critical years of Christian formation. In these years young adults can easily drift from Catholic ideals and practices, or learn to take fuller possession of them. Many will soon be entering marriage, with all its responsibilities. They have a need for, and a right to, a Catholic education in love and sexuality that meets their specific circumstances.

College and university contexts

In college and university contexts *campus ministry leaders* are entrusted with the responsibility of providing excellent education for young adults. An important part of their teaching must be a sound education in the Catholic vision of love. Catholic centers on campuses must provide our young people with intelligent support for chaste living. Whenever possible, courses on the family should be made available to them, so that as they approach the time when they shall marry, they may have a better vision of the Catholic form of living the married vocation to which they are called.

Parish contexts

Parishes too must provide for the needs of their young adults, whether or not they attend a college or university. The future of the parish depends upon young adults so strongly that parishes must keep close contact with them. Their priest must help them realistically to grow in their faith and in a Christian way of living their personal and moral lives, if they are to have the help and strength they will need to enter securely into the full responsibilities of adulthood and parenthood.

Things to be taught to young adults

The Catholic vision of love needs to be taught in a context of intelligent faith. Often remedial work needs to be done. Many young adults seem to possess personally few intelligent reasons for being Catholic Christians, and they need to be assisted in recapturing strong personal faith, if they are to appreciate adequately the Catholic vision of love.

**The Catholic
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What faith teaches about love and sexuality is of great interest to young people. When it is well taught, it is recognized as the blessing it truly is. Obviously education in love and sexuality is not a matter of proclaiming duties to be blindly accepted, but the answer to the real questions, serious problems, and earnest hopes that our young people have experienced in their own lives.

We should be teaching young adults a vision that enables them to understand more clearly how great is God's gift of sexuality. We are seeking to share with them an understanding we ourselves have grasped: that the generous patterns of love taught in the Gospel are not burdens to life and love, but sources of freedom, and they support the good things human hearts and homes need so deeply.

Hence education in sexuality is not simply education in rules, but in the ways in which enduring love is made possible, in the importance of the home for human happiness, and in the ways in which personal love and the family can be enriched. A Christian study of sexuality is focused especially on the good things sexuality serves. But it does realistically point out how much life is harmed when sexuality is badly understood and lived, and why those sexual acts that faith rightly calls immoral are also hostile to one's own fulfillment. Christian moral principles are not taboos. They are insights into the ways one must live if one wishes life to work well.

Important in such education is the *witness* of other young adults who have willingly led good Catholic lives, and who can speak to their peers with entire honesty of the good fruits that Christian principles have had in their own lives.

Social teaching is a large part of an education in love and sexuality. We must speak plainly of what faith says about divorce, homosexuality, contraception, and related world problems today when the secular culture preaches a vision of life sharply contrary to the Gospel. The Catholic vision of love is a powerful and bracing one, and those who are taught it well are given strong supports to their own lives. During this time of life the realism of Catholic moral principles needs to be taught effectively.

Natural family planning must be understood by our young people, at least in its foundational principles and in the humane nature of its practice, if they are to realize that faith does indeed work in human life, and bears surprisingly good fruits. Often young Catholics become embarrassed by the teachings of their faith, when in various courses they are taught that it fails to face the grave problems of our times. But when they are well instructed in the Catholic vision, young adults are heartened by the realization that both secular concerns and personal and moral interests are served splendidly by the Catholic vision of life.

Textbooks and resources. Those who teach in this field should choose resources wisely. Many excellent textbooks are available; and experts to assist in every aspect of this teaching are near at hand as well. But leaders of programs should be careful that textbooks and persons chosen to teach are able and disposed to serve the authentic Christian ideals defended in these *Guidelines*.

Marriage preparation programs

Remote, proximate, immediate. There are many stages of preparation for marriage and family life. All of the young years of a person's life can be seen as a *remote* preparation for their vocation to married life. But here we speak of the *immediate* preparation for marriage, that is, of the guidance and instruction given to couples in the time immediately preceding their marriage (see *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 66, and *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage*).

Those who provide immediate marriage preparation. Such marriage preparation programs can be provided in a variety of ways. Pastors and others who will preside at weddings have a responsibility to see to it that the kind of preparation faith calls for is in fact provided. It can be provided in parish, deanery, or diocesan programs. Programs are at times provided by special groups, by Cana Conferences or Engaged Encounter programs, or by couples specially prepared to assist other couples in this way.

All programs should be carefully coordinated by parochial and diocesan leaders who are charged with seeing to the adequacy of such programs. The good of families and of the whole Church is at stake; the matter is too important to permit programs that do not provide well the Catholic guidance and support such programs must always have.

**We are seeking
to present the
better vision that
faith offers....**

Realism in these programs. Marriage preparation programs must be excellent to be truly helpful. We are seeking to present the better vision that faith offers, but the unbelieving world presents a vision of sexuality that has its own strong attractiveness on certain levels. The vision that faith offers cannot be effective in our times if it is not presented intelligently and with evident affection and concern for those who are instructed.

Restoring faith. Marriage preparation courses must respect fully the dignity of those they address. It is foolish to speak to those preparing to marry of the precepts that flow from faith if we have not first assisted them, when this is needed, to get a firmer personal grasp on their own faith. Many people today do not have good reasons for believing what the Gospel teaches and what faith presents to us. In some way, we must provide a context that helps those preparing for marriage to realize the good reasons they have for living in a Christian way. The motives one appeals to in encouraging a renewal of faith must be those that speak warmly and authentically to those whom we address.

**We are
calling them
toward that
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love that
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make their
marriages
and lives
secure.**

The time of marriage preparation is, to be sure, a time of many distractions and concerns. But it is also a time of special grace. The people about to marry should be given reasons that make sense to them for taking seriously the vision faith offers. Commonly they do have a serious desire to have the love of their marriage last. They foresee being parents, and want to be good parents to their children, and to have resources to guide them to happy and rich lives. Devoted teachers can appeal to motives that really rest in the young adults' hearts. These teachers can often help the couple to realize how friendship with God and a life of grace can assist them greatly in becoming the kind of persons they long to become. This can be more effectively accomplished to the degree in which these teachers themselves have tasted and seen how much faith does to enrich their own lives and the lives of others, especially the young adults to whom they are ministering.

Witnesses. In all education of adults the witness of those who have found the ways of Christ good is critically important. It is useful, when possible, to weave into courses the witness of the lives of those who have found their faith a strong support to their own married love and to their homes.

The assistance of witnesses is especially important when one is speaking of those elements of a Catholic vision that are likely to seem unrealistic to contemporary young adults who are deeply affected by the vision of sexuality furthered by secular electronic media. For example, when teaching the Gospel requirements of chaste love in marriage, it is important to show in the experience of real people that what the world declares too difficult is not found too burdensome by those who earnestly seek to fill their married lives with the kind of love Christ has taught us.

Again, in teaching the benefits of natural family planning, two kinds of presentations are needed. The objective advantages must be taught clearly:

the fact that this form of family planning is, when it is well taught, effective for all couples; that it has no bad physical side effects; that it has many kinds of personal advantages, advantages so strong that the divorce rate for couples using natural family planning is far lower than it is for other couples. But beyond this objective teaching, *personal witness* is needed from those who have found that what is said of natural family planning is very true in practice, that it is not a heavy burden, and that the blessings it brings to a Catholic life are very rich indeed.

Faithful teaching. It is important that Catholic teachers offer young people the whole Catholic vision of love, of sexuality, and of the family. It is easy to understand how some are pressed by the media, and by the power of secular voices in our midst, to turn aside from some of the excellent elements of the Catholic vision, for fear that they may prove too burdensome. Some tend to drift toward ambiguity: to saying dubious things about moral requirements of faith, and about the nature of conscience. But we owe our own people more than this. We are calling them toward that generous love that alone can make their marriages and lives secure. We must give them the strong and vibrant support of the authentic message of faith, and fortify this, as it deserves to be fortified, by the witness of those who have lived in Catholic ways, and found such ways to be very good.

Programs for young parents

Assisting the family. The family has a great dignity. It is to be a school of faith, a school of love, a school in which the deepest and most personal lessons of life are taught and learned (*Familiaris Consortio*, Part III).

Even in very ordinary matters, young families deserve the assistance of the Church community. Young parents often need assistance in very basic things, sometimes even for food and medical help in times of emergency. They may also need the assistance of others in basic parental teaching roles: in learning effective and good ways of teaching children to pray, of helping them wisely guide children in the use of the media, in defending them in difficult circumstances from the special dangers young people face today.

The Church willingly recognizes her responsibility to assist families, especially young ones, as they face the difficult problems that can arise in the active sharing of family life. The "larger family," the Church, must assist the "small Church," the family; for the Church cannot flourish if the family is not strong. Helps given to the family must be provided with reverent attention to the needs of the family. They must be provided by competent people, who are able to integrate the vision of faith with the human skills that are needed to serve the family well (*Familiaris Consortio*, nn. 69-70).

Sources of this assistance. Assistance is to be given to the family from many sources. Often the best assistance is given by other families, by couples who have experienced and mastered the difficulties that are met frequently

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today. Groups like the Confraternity of Christian Mothers and the Christian Family Movement were created to make it possible for parents to assist one another in the important tasks that homes regularly face.

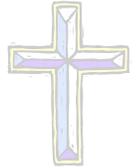
Many kinds of expertise should be placed at the assistance of the family. Pastoral leaders are not expected to have all these skills, but often they are able to recruit the services of skilled professionals to serve the family. Religious leaders themselves should assist those in various professions to integrate the vision of faith into the work that they are doing in the service of the Christian family.

The resources of the Church are limited, but they can be enlarged by the gift of Catholic professionals who are able and willing to put their skills at the service of faith, and of the families that are the future of the Church and of the world. Our professional leaders should be invited to take an interest in meeting the problems of young families in areas in which they are themselves especially skilled.

In a special way pastoral leaders need to assist young parents in overcoming problems that are a threat to their lives of faith. Natural family planning should be made readily accessible to young couples. Many who did not realize the importance of this at the time of marriage come by the experience of married life to realize how precious family planning that is fully in accord with their faith can be to them. Pastoral leaders should seek to become aware of and to make accessible to young couples the many counseling resources that are available. In addition, these leaders should be able to give advice on which resources can be confidently used because of the respect that the practitioners have for the faith and the values of those whom they assist.

IX. CHILD EDUCATION

Children can begin to learn from their youngest years that life and love are precious gifts. They can begin to realize that some forms of behavior do not honestly express what love calls for. Hence, parents do well in educating their children and forming in them ways of living that stress the centrality of love.



In teaching children not to behave immodestly, and not to watch television shows or go to movies that offend Christian ideals, they should know that they are not simply being negative. For in these important matters they are indeed teaching children what love should be like, and what true love must do and what it must avoid. All teaching of commandments is rooted in love. That is why the book of Deuteronomy urges us to be concerned with the commandments:

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your hearts, and with all your soul, and with all might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your head, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Time and patient persistence are needed in teaching love and in shaping lives in the ways of love. Teaching children how they should guide their affections and discipline their pursuit of pleasures takes strong and gentle direction, as Deuteronomy suggests and parents experience. Children need to love and to be loved; but they are also attracted to things and experiences that simply please them. Therefore, they need to learn how to direct their drives in the service of what they gradually realize is required by love. This is foundational in sexuality education. With little children, genital sexuality need not be much discussed, but the principles that will help them direct their love, feelings, and free choices need to be sown.

Before we learn to live as love requires and to direct our drives wisely, we tend to be torn. We wish both to love and be loved, and also to have gratifications and express hostilities that militate against love. Growth is toward integration: toward finding ways in which all our affective responses need to be integrated, in the service of the love in which we seek to grow.

If parents and educators are to lead children toward this kind of personal integration, they themselves need to have learned to direct their own emotions, drives, and feelings, putting them in the service of what authentic love requires.

These teachers should have the mastery of their love and their drives, not in repressing them, but in having possession of them and the ability to integrate their love, feelings, and drives in ways that reverence the teachings of faith and the inner requirements of honest love.

Catholic parents wish to help their children lead lives in accord with their faith. To be helpful guides toward a life in accord with faith, parents must themselves have taken possession of their own faith, and have learned to lead their lives in the good ways that faith teaches. Children will hardly believe that they must resist strong pressures toward unchaste ways of living if their parents seem to have judged that such efforts are not required of themselves. Hence, education in chaste living for the young must be rooted in Christian families and in a Christian community that seeks to understand and live in the light of faith.

Parental role in educating children

Parents and other family members play essential roles in helping children realize that they are deeply loved and that their own love for parents and others is precious. Family members help the child gradually realize that emotions that sometimes seem to turbulent can gradually be brought under personal control and put in the service of love.

Thus, it is within the family context that children absorb a sense of their own sexuality; that is, they are of their very nature inclined toward loving and being loved, toward having feelings and emotions that affect the innermost depths of their lives. In the home they learn that love and affection are good and not to be repressed. But love needs wise direction. Parents help children begin to grasp how love needs to be guided and how feelings need to be brought under personal control for life to have the goodness and joyfulness they seek.

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Important, too, are the attitudes that young children have toward their own bodies and toward being the boys or girls that they are. The intelligent and balanced attitudes of parents toward the sexuality of their children and toward their own sexuality shape the attitudes of children far more than any verbal instructions could.

All recent Church statements on education in sexuality for children stress the centrality of the parental role in this education. Hence the primary focus of these *Guidelines* lies with the family as the most appropriate setting for all children's education in the area of human sexuality.

These *Guidelines* have been prepared for parents and family members to apprise them of all the normal needs for education in human sexuality at various levels of physical growth and development.

In the diocese and in individual parishes, programs need to be shaped and resources need to be made available to assist parents in their important task of guiding their children well in these areas. The purpose of this education in human sexuality is by no means to replace the parents in the education of their own children, but to help them carry out their own irreplaceable role well.

The Church supports, assists, and encourages parents in their role as the primary educators of their children. The positive influences which parents have planted in the hearts of their children are most important. They are reinforced through the positive teaching of the Church about the meaning of sexuality, the responsibilities of chaste love, and the respect always to be given to human life and love.

Content specific to age level

Pre-Birth

Education in sexuality begins in a sense even before birth. Even unborn children are affected by the care given them. The ways in which the child is touched and formed by affection and tender love even before birth are still being explored, but the reverence and love shown for the child in the womb is certainly important.

Moreover, when parents realize that their “trinity-on-earth” (father, mother, child) reflects the divine Trinity, when they see that creative role as having sacred and creative dimensions, and when they reverence each other in the role they have had in bringing the child into being, they are preparing themselves to guide the attitudes and hearts of their children well. Their positive attitude toward their own sexuality, when they reflect on the greatness of having children, should continue through the years to have a happy effect on the children’s own psychosexual development.

Their own chastity and modesty affect the way they treat their children, and communicate to them, even in infancy, the attitudes and affections which are of great importance of their development.

Birth to Three Years

One of the most important means of shaping a child’s affective life well is enabling the child to realize how deeply he or she is loved. A child who has experienced love and care has received the strong foundation necessary to deal with stressful situations throughout life.

All the loving manifestations of parenthood: attending the needs, showing affection, playing with the child, guarding him or her from dangers both by action and by insisting on some kinds of conduct, serve to provide a balanced emotional growth. From the earliest days, the child’s moral development is enhanced by careful training even in such areas as motor skills and personal safety. The “No!” given to an action that is physically harmful is the precedent to the “No!” to actions that are morally harmful. Children can come to realize that even when they are forbidden to act as strong feelings might incline them, they are being loved, cared for, and protected by those who love them. Self-esteem need not be harmed by firm but *loving* instructions.

Self-respect grows as the child realizes that the efforts made in toilet-training and other forms of self-discipline pay off. The self-possession acquired and the esteem merited are early evidences of the advantages of guiding life intelligently. The first steps of control over the body taken under the parents’ loving guidance become early patterns for education in virtue.

A child who has experienced love and care has received the strong foundation necessary to deal with stressful situations throughout life.

Three to Seven Years

In these years the child should be helped to learn prayer, to begin to grasp the roots of a moral life, and to grow in a healthy attitude toward love.

Interest in sexuality in these days is on the simple level of early childhood. But children's questions about their reproductive organs, about the origin of babies, and about other related matters should be answered with the truth and simplicity that is proper for their age. We would not project on their questions the same meaning that the questions older children have. At a very early age children should gently be taught modesty. This is helped by the use of age-appropriate words for speaking of bodily parts and functions. What the parents aim at is helping children come to healthy attitudes toward elemental human things, not at an understanding beyond their age.

Seven to Ten Years

In these often relatively tranquil years before puberty ("the years of innocence" as described by Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 37), there can be much important growth in the child, much development in attitudes and convictions and traits of character that will serve them well in later times of stress. Parents in these years should seek to help their children grow in faith and in prayer, in self-possession (in learning and experiencing that one can master drives that could create turmoil in life), in awareness of their personal importance to God and to all who love them. Before adolescence, children must be deeply convinced that they are loved by their parents, and that his love is strong. Love often has to require and to help them not to do things that seem attractive but are in fact hurtful for them.

**The Christian
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these years.**

The Christian family atmosphere should protect the child in these years. Catholic homes ought not simply accept the cultural pressures that in various ways stir up unsuitable interest in genital sexuality or permit intrusion into the life of the child by media presentations of sexuality that do not respect human dignity and right values. Parental care should keep a concerned eye on the television habits of children as well as on the movies they see.

Parents should be concerned about the friendships their children have and the kind of language their children begin to use. Parents need to give calm guidance in years of premature tensions. There should be encouragement to achieve the normal strengths of these years: times when hobbies, appropriate friendships, and growth in ordinary interests of young boys and girls are allowed to flourish before the specific interests of adolescence create a new situation.

Without pressing children to be concerned about sexual questions that do not deeply concern them, parents can and should give right and appropriate answers to specific questions. If children are concerned with the physical developments that take place in those a few years older than themselves and are interested in their own future growth, simple and right answers should be given. These answers should not press further than the child's interest suggests. In our times, children often get very much information about sexuality at early ages from a variety of sources, and not always in helpful ways. Parents should be a source of tranquility for their children, helping them

to manage what they hear and to understand what they have concerns about, without seeking to stir up anxious concerns before the child wishes to be helped. "This period of tranquility and serenity must never be disturbed by unnecessary information about sex ... prudent formation in chaste love during this period should be indirect, in preparation for puberty, when direct information will be necessary" (*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, n. 78).

Ten to Fourteen Years

These years, too, can be good years of growth for children, especially if earlier years have been blessed by good guidance. During these years gender identity tends to be solidified, and there is great need that each child have the presence and support of both parents during this phase of growth. In an age of broken families, the Church needs to be a supportive larger family that helps single-parent families and other homes that have special burdens to find good and wise ways to give direction in circumstances that are not easy.

As adolescence approaches, difficult emotional problems often arise. As young people seek to establish their own identity, they can have hostility toward parents, excessive dependence on peers, and times of anxious rebellion. But these years also have their important strengths. Wise parents, getting assistance also from those who know well the ways of young people, can appeal to young teenagers' sense of fairness and idealism and to the faith that has been already implanted in their children's hearts, to maintain the love and the shared concern to help the adolescent master the problems of new times with a strong heart.

As friendships between members of opposite sexes begin, and young love begins to reveal itself, parents need to draw on the resources of their own mature and balanced sexuality to understand and to be able to help their children meet the complex realities of a new life with realism and unselfish goodness of heart. When relationships between children and parents are good, the concern and vigilance parents have for the important but delicate new dimensions of their children's lives can be accepted with a certain peace.

X. TEEN EDUCATION

Adolescence is a time of intense physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth. Young people are pressured by many influences in these years. Peers, media, and countless cultural forces exert their impact.



But adolescence is not simply a chaotic and puzzling time. It is also a time when young people can grow well and begin to integrate freely into their lives the values they have been taught even in earlier years. But adolescents need assistance from parents and others who love them, who seek to understand them, and who know how to speak to them wisely of the authentic human values that faith rightly commends.

Normal impulses and feelings experienced by adolescents, amplified by the media and other resources of an erotic age, could lead these young people toward sexual experimentation and expression in ways that are both morally wrong and personally disastrous. Parents and religious educators owe these young people assistance by their words and by the example of their own lives.

Parental teaching. Parents must help adolescents begin to understand personally the sensible and helpful things faith speaks to them about such things as dating, infatuation, physical affection, and sexual orientation. In an age that misunderstands sex so badly, parents should help their adolescent children to grasp well what sex is really all about, and why God has blessed us with our sexuality.

Parents should help their children understand that the moral teachings of the faith concerning sexuality are not irrational impositions, but intelligent defenses of realities that children themselves can see are important: homes, families, children, enduring love. Adolescents indeed need the support and cooperation of their concerned parents and of pastoral leaders. When intelligent efforts are made, parents are able to speak persuasively to their adolescent children of the value of personal modesty, the avoidance of sexually suggestive situations and entertainment, and they can lend their support and knowledge to adolescents as they enter and an age of difficult moral choices.

Parental example. But parental teaching also depends, as all teaching in lives of virtue and faith does, on the form of life of the parents. Parents' love for their children should strengthen parents themselves in leading lives of generous love and of chaste self-possession that will not only enrich their own lives, but also give their children indispensable helps in living with intelligent love in a disordered time.

Parents can serve as models of Christian marriage, and of the attractiveness of generous love. This strong parental example can help their children withstand pressures from some peers and from the contemporary world.

Since a chaste life is not easily lived without the supports of faith and grace, parents should see to it that their teens realize how important the practices of faith are to their parents. When parents themselves attend Mass

regularly, receive the sacraments devoutly, bring thoughtful prayer into the home, and reveal how much strength and satisfaction faith brings to their lives, they give priceless help to their children.

Catechists and youth ministers. Catechists and youth ministers can affirm and support for adolescents the Christian values of their parents. They can do this by instruction, by helping the young to find good role models, by assisting young people to be supports to one another, and by the example of their own faith and lives.

A primary task of the catechist-youth minister is wise *instruction* in the Catholic vision of sexuality, in the meaning of Gospel morality, and in the authentic nature of conscience and of sound conscience formation.

Christian morality is not merely a set of rules. It is rooted in personal love, in appreciation for the priceless value of each person, and in the human goods needed for personal fulfillment. Christian sexual morality is not a matter of repression and taboos, but of understanding how indispensable are the great human goods that sexuality was made to serve (such realities as enduring and generous personal love, the family, the value of children, the understanding of God, and of the meaning of life that flows from an intelligent grasp of sexuality).

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attractiveness of
generous love.** Youth ministers assist the young also by helping them to find good *role models* and in *supporting one another* in taking possession of an intelligent view of love and sexuality.

The world is by no means devoid of good models. Young people often need the help of strong role models to realize that they are by no means alone in wanting to have a form of life that is compatible with the vision of the Gospel. Education should not be entirely abstract. It should make known the stories of thoughtful and strong people who live vigorous Christian lives in a wide variety of ways. It should provide help toward discovering the literature and entertainment that assist young people to experience the reality of the excellent kinds of life not often featured by the mass media.

They assist the young people also by their own strong love for them, and by the courage with which they hearten young people to become responsible for shaping their own lives and to support one another in larger peer groups.

Specific areas of guidance and instruction. Catechists and youth ministers have much to say about a Christian vision of sexuality to assist adolescents.

They should teach students in early high school years what is most needed to help them live chaste lives. They should teach them clearly and sensitively what faith teaches us about the meaning and purposes of sexuality, and how sexuality is related to communicated and enduring love, and to the family. They should teach such matters as Catholic teaching on masturbation, premarital and extramarital sex, and contraception. But such education should be accompanied by a realistic explanation of the kinds of supports faith provides, so that what is taught is rightly seen as entirely possible, human, and a real defense of their personal dignity and of fundamental human goods.

They should be helped to acquire a Christian understanding of such contemporary issues as AIDS and homosexuality. They should be taught their right not to be exploited or victimized. They should be helped to see the equality and complementarity of the sexes.

Teachers should help adolescents realize the good sense of the Christian vision of sexuality. Sexuality is clearly not a trivial matter. It enters deeply into our very being, and into the meaning of our lives. Sexual activity is not intended to be a casual and passing pleasure, indulged in thoughtlessly. Rather it is made to go with enduring love, with the promises, the generosity, and the responsibilities of marriage. It is intimately connected to the gifts of God that enable love to be responsible and lasting.

In late high school years they should be given excellent education in the family. They should be taught the meaning of marriage, the importance of the home, and the rewards that chastity brings in enduring love, in guarding children, and in serving generous and deeply rewarding forms of life.

This education on the family and the home must be concrete and persuasive. Catholic teaching on marriage and its precious goals, the tragedy of divorce, and the helps given to life by the sacrament of marriage need to be presented with concreteness and persuasiveness. One can speak of such things in an age of broken homes and single-parent families without any lack of reverence or respect for those whose home lives are not ideal. Charity finds ways of speaking strongly but graciously all that is needed to encourage young people to pursue patterns of life that really work.

Adolescents need to be taught forcefully the truth that every person's life is meaningful. God has a personal concern for each one, and each has a *vocation*. The married life is itself a sublime vocation, and in teaching it one can come also to teach realistically the other vocations to the priesthood and religious life or to the single state. These other vocations too are given by God as supports to the lives of ordinary people, to the home, and to the young, and to the support of the whole Christian family in the vision of love that all need to have lives illumined by the Gospel.

A challenging but rewarding task. Adolescents are becoming more capable of serious thinking and challenging argumentation. To teach them is to teach people whose thoughts and interests are far more complex than those of children. Their lives are becoming richer. They want more intense and focused guidance from parents and catechists at a complex time in their lives, but they also want more freedom and greater independence.

Happily, genuine freedom and the intelligent guidance derived from the Gospel go well together. To help young people see that the ideals we draw for them are what their own hearts long for may not be an easy task. But serious parents and teachers know that the young people they keep close to are capable of great things. With the assistance of friends in the faith young people today can take personal possession of the vision that faith makes possible for them.

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XI. SPECIAL NEEDS

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***The Catholic Vision of Love* is a catechetical program for all children. This program therefore includes children with disabilities and developmental delays. The preceding chapters were written about *The Catholic Vision of Love* as it applies to "typical" children. The material presented in those chapters on young children through adolescence is also written for the child with special learning needs. The information contained in those chapters may need to be adapted or modified for special children, but the message is the same for all young Catholics.**



As a parent or catechist presents the lessons of *The Catholic Vision of Love* to children with developmental delays, special emphasis should be placed on self-respect and self-esteem. A strong sense of self-respect and self-esteem will equip the children to deal with the many challenges they must face in today's world.

A parent or catechist will also emphasize God's unconditional love for the child. The special child may experience ridicule or rejection by typical peers. It is most important that the parent or catechist remind children of God's personal and unconditional love for them. Children need to be told that they were created in love by a God who loves them forever and unconditionally.

As the special child becomes more aware of God's unconditional love, emphasis can also be stressed on friendship with a loving God, and God's Son, Jesus. This may also be a time to introduce the care, solicitude, and friendship of Mary and the saints.

Since children with disabilities and developmental delays are among the most vulnerable in society, they also need to be taught ways to protect themselves from sexual abuse. A program entitled "Circles: The Right to Say No" will be used in this section of *The Catholic Vision of Love*. This program, which has been designed for children with developmental delays, gives the children a tool to understand appropriate and non-appropriate touching and improper advances toward them.

Many children with disabilities or developmental delays will not have the experience of a marital relationship, so it will be important to guide them in an understanding of the great value of human friendship and the lasting treasure of friendship with God. All throughout the guidelines, there will be emphasis placed upon friendship with God, the Blessed Mother, and the saints.

Education in human sexuality is as necessary for special children as it is for all children. Grounding the lessons in catechesis will give special children, as it will all children, a true understanding of the beautiful gift of human sexuality in all its various dimensions.

XII. FOR TEACHERS

Catholic teaching on love and sexuality is of immense importance for the shaping of good Catholic lives. Those who undertake the task of teaching *The Catholic Vision of Love* deserve not only gratitude, but also strong assistance in carrying out their responsibilities.



Right to sound Catholic teaching. Those who study the family, chaste love, or what faith teaches about sexuality in any of our Catholic diocesan or parish programs have, of course, a right to receive authentic Catholic teaching. In these times of spiritual confusion, it cannot always be assumed that persons of good will understand and accept all that the Church teaches about sexual morality.

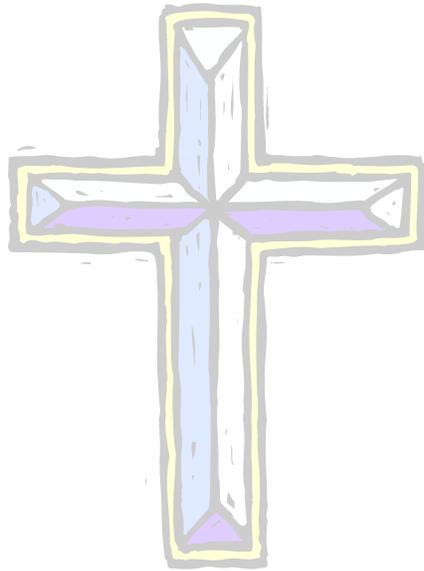
Careful selection of teachers. For this reason, those who direct schools, Religious Education programs, marriage preparation programs, or any other programs touching on sexuality or family education must see to it that the teachers are chosen carefully, and given sufficient preparation to perform their tasks faithfully and well. In all programs in the diocese in which there is education in the Catholic vision of sexuality, love, and the family, teachers should be selected from among those who are committed to sound Catholic teaching in this area, and who are willing to accept whatever in-service formation is judged necessary to do the task well.

Oversight of programs. Diocesan and parish leaders who oversee any programs giving instruction in matters effecting sexuality, chaste love, and the family have the duty to see to it that what is presented in such courses is indeed faithful to the *Catholic* vision of love and sexuality. The doctrinal and moral directives presented in these *Guidelines* apply to all programs in which this Catholic vision of love and sexuality is taught: in school and Religious Education programs, in marriage preparation programs, in youth ministry programs, in campus or young adult programs, and the like.

In-service classes for teachers. Those who teach *The Catholic Vision of Love* in Catholic schools and Religious Education programs must receive teacher preparation sessions in accord with current diocesan standards. All teachers will be required to participate in a five-hour in-service in Catholic doctrinal and moral teaching on sexuality. Teachers in grades five to eight will be required to take an additional five hours in which they will learn ways of teaching *The Catholic Vision of Love* to young people. While special emphasis will be placed on methodological and pedagogical concerns, efforts will be made to ensure that these teachers understand the importance of being true witnesses and role models for what the Church proclaims and teaches. They will also receive assistance in handling the diocesan materials for the program. Those who teach in all our educational programs must be taught faithfully the principles and policies that are articulated in these Guidelines. Eventually, components of this education in Catholic moral teaching in the area of human sexuality will be totally integrated into the various certification programs for all catechists.

Teachers are trained to be particularly sensitive to the fact that each child is a unique person. Teachers must be sensitive to each student's needs and developmental stage, working in close collaboration with parents in regard to the curriculum as outlined in Appendix D. (See *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, nn. 65-67).

XIII. APPENDICES



THE
CATHOLIC
Vision of Love
Diocese of Pittsburgh

APPENDIX A

The preparation of these guidelines



The Diocese of Pittsburgh convened an Advisory Committee on Human Sexuality Education on October 19, 1987, and charged its members with a twofold task:

- 1) To prepare an educational curriculum for all Catholics, particularly for parents seeking to instruct their sons and daughters in the area of human sexuality from a Catholic perspective; and
- 2) To make recommendations concerning the scope, content, and implementation of an education curriculum in human sexuality for the young people of the Church of Pittsburgh.

The Advisory Committee was comprised of more than forty members with diverse professional and experiential backgrounds: parents, clergy, educators, pastoral and legal counselors, religious men and women, diocesan administrative personnel, and medical professionals. The names of those who served on this committee are listed at the end of Appendix A.

To meet the varied educational and pastoral needs of the members of the Church in Pittsburgh, the Advisory Committee formed five subcommittees, whose tasks were to consider content, scope, and methods for successful implementation of a Catholic human sexuality education program. The five subcommittees treated:

- 1) Theological and Faith Issues in Human Sexuality
- 2) Human Sexuality Education for Children
- 3) Human Sexuality Education for Adults and Family
- 4) Human Sexuality Education for Adolescents
- 5) Human Sexuality Education for Persons with Disabilities

From the onset, this education in the Catholic vision of love and human sexuality was understood to be education in Catholic faith and life. It is formation in ways of living that are inseparable from the Gospel. Thus, this education is to be fully and totally integrated into the Religious Education curriculum.

In 1989 the Advisory Committee had completed a draft of the *Guidelines* to direct education in chastity in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. They were submitted to the Diocesan Theological Commission and other consultative bodies in the diocese for evaluation. It became clear that the program needed a director to guide the implementation of the program; that is, to oversee the selection and production of materials that would be needed by parents and by teachers, and to begin to put the program into effect.

In October, 1990, Reverend Douglas R. Nowicki, then Secretary for Education (now Archabbot at St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe), asked Reverend

Ronald D. Lawler, O.F.M. Cap., to serve as advisor to the project and to assist the Advisory Committee in the completion of the project.

Under the guidance of Dr. Rosemarie Cibik, Secretary for Education in the Diocese, the program expanded. Efforts were made to revise the *Guidelines* in the light of suggestions received from the Theological Commission and others. Curriculum materials were prepared for students in the fifth to eighth grade, together with extensive teachers' notes for effective implementation of the lesson plans. A manual was devised for parents to assist them in speaking with their children about the Catholic vision of love. Father Ronald Lawler; Father Kris Stubna; Monsignor Daniel DiNardo; Sister Ursula Kelly, S.S.N.D.; Carole Obrokta; Sister John Martin Sullivan, A.S.C.J.; and Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Garver and others assisted in the writing and editing of these materials.

Progress toward actual implementation of pilot programs for the education of elementary age children required the cooperation of many people. Dr. Kenneth Garver, Chairman of the Advisory Committee, and other representative members collaborated closely with Father Lawler and the Secretariat for Education as work progressed. Meetings were held with parents in each of the six parishes which were to have pilot programs beginning in the fall of 1991. Sessions for parents were designed to give them full information on the program, and to make clear how much the success of any such education depends on the parental involvement.

Detailed plans were made for the in-service classes for those who would teach the program. Ten hours of class were provided for all teachers to assure both their secure grasp of Catholic teaching in this area, and to help them find confidence in teaching the class materials for their students.

Meetings were held also in which pastors, parochial vicars, principals, and directors of Religious Education discussed the program with personnel from the Secretariat for Education. Meetings were also held within each parish to coordinate the input of all whose assistance would be needed to make the program work. Everywhere it was made clear that the program had to be entirely faithful to the teachings of the Church at all times. Parents were always to have central role in the program. Education in the Catholic vision of love through this program was always to be an education in chastity, in full accord with the guidance that the Church continues to give us.

Evaluations of the work done in the first year of the pilot program were favorable, but important suggestions for improving the program were made by parents, priests, principals, directors of Religious Education, teachers, and students. These suggestions were then incorporated into the program, as the program entered another expanded year of pilot programs in 1992-93. Father Kris Stubna, Assistant Secretary for Education, took over supervision of the program in the fall of 1993. Further development of the program, with one entire deanery entering the pilot program, went on in 1993-94, with another deanery scheduled for piloting in 1994-95.

All those who guided the pilot programs were encouraged by the warm cooperation shown everywhere by parents, parish leaders, teachers, and all involved. Evaluations continued to be overwhelmingly favorable. Parents,

teachers, and administrators alike expressed their satisfaction in the way this material was helping young people to acquire a better understanding of what God teaches us about sexuality and chaste lives.

With the positive evaluations from the pilot programs, the program has continued to expand. Under the leadership of Father Kris Stubna, the current Secretary for Catholic Education, *The Catholic Vision of Love Guidelines* and program for implementation were finalized, presented to the consultative boards of the diocese, and approved by Bishop Wuerl. By the 1996-97 academic year, all parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh became responsible for implementing *The Catholic Vision of Love* in all facets of parish life.

In light of recent diocesan and national policies on child safety, the *Catholic Vision of Love* program received acknowledgment from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as the program in place in the Diocese of Pittsburgh for the safety of children. In the Fall of 2010, at the request of the auditors from the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, Safe Environment Committee, a lesson on Personal Safety was added to each of the CVOL student lessons (grade 5 – 8). Additionally, lessons on Personal Safety were created for children in Kindergarten through grade 4.

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Reverend Ronald Lawler, O.F.M. Cap., General Editor and Consultant
Dr. Rosemarie E. Cibik, Secretary for Education
Archabbot Douglas R. Nowicki, Former Secretary for Education
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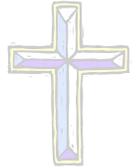
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APPENDIX B

Using media with *The Catholic Vision of Love*



Today we are all bombarded with media messages that are contrary to Catholic teaching. Media literacy education in conjunction with *The Catholic Vision of Love* provides an opportunity for the catechist or parent to teach as Jesus did. It is important to recognize teachable moments and to capitalize on the young person's own knowledge and involvement in the media world that surrounds him or her.

A proven approach to media literacy utilizes a four-step process (The Pastoral Circle) that includes: awareness, analysis, reflection, and action. The Pastoral Circle helps us to confront, challenge, and change the way television and all of mass media controls our lives and those of our young people.

Awareness — Generally, most people don't realize the impact of the mass media on the formation of values. It is virtually impossible to remove oneself from the influence of mass media. The only solution to the situation is to become media literate. Ask yourself questions regarding the messages that are being conveyed. For example: Are most of the people portrayed as young, thin, and rich? Are the elderly shown as burdens instead of sources of wisdom? Are people valued for their material possessions? Are disabled people even included?

The *Awareness* step opens the door for growth in understanding and the ability to change.

Analysis — Secondly, we must begin to teach our children at home and in school how commercial interests determine the content and appeal of programming. Sponsors target different segments of the population and gear their programming accordingly. For example, Saturday morning cartoons target children and sell toys, sugar cereals, and candy. Developing skill in this type of analysis allows us to be more cautious in accepting what we see and hear on television.

Reflection — It is at this point that we begin to integrate our faith dimension into the everyday exposure of media. With Scripture and the tradition of the Catholic faith, we have the necessary tools to discover what values we can call upon to make choices. Jesus brought us the truth and taught us how to live. In that light, how we see marriage and family living portrayed on television might be in direct opposition to what we know as right and wrong. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them; for to such belong the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mark 10:14). We cannot determine the faith commitment of our young people, but we can structure the media environment in our homes so that the faith that *is* present will be nurtured and fostered appropriately.

Action — Appropriate action might be as simple as consulting the TV guide to monitor the evening's entertainment. On the other hand, direct confrontation such as phone calls or letters to the television station when offensive material is broadcast might be a solution to the problem.

(Although the steps described above relate primarily to television, mass media also include movies, music, magazines, billboards, the internet, etc. and this process is adaptable for all forms of media.)

Proper utilization of catechetical media

It is imperative to utilize catechetical media properly in our technological age to compete with all the values communicated by the secular mass media (television, movies, music, print, the internet).

Unfortunately, many catechists look at media utilization within the catechetical learning experience as a waste of time. Actually, research has proven and experience has confirmed the fact that children and adults learn far more readily from a multisensory and imaginative presentation than from the catechist's voice alone. There is no doubt that the investment of planning time is greater when media are utilized properly, but the benefits always outweigh the work.

The following steps are offered as a guide in planning:

1. Assess the goal of your lesson

It is important to analyze the core of the lesson. The *Catechist's Notes of The Catholic Vision of Love* will help one to determine the key concepts to be communicated to the student.

2. Consider the students

Be sensitive to the developmental, educational, emotional, and sociological level of the student. Keep in mind the length of the media in respect to the learning experience time. How familiar is the student with the subject matter? A review of materials is certainly different from first-time exposure. How well do the students in the class know each other? Is it the first year of catechesis in a new setting or have they been together since first grade? All these factors are important to take into consideration. One must choose the media involved accordingly.

3. Consult a specialist

After one has the key concepts in mind, consult a media specialist to help select the best media to fit the specific needs. Be open to suggestions and read catalog descriptions to discover the options.

4. Preview the media

Everyone has a different style of teaching, and no two groups of people will react the same every time to a particular media piece. A video that seemed to fit the lesson perfectly last year might not evoke the same response this year. Ideally it is better to view the media selections a couple of times to prepare questions and related activities, and to prepare yourself to conduct discussion on the concepts communicated.

5. Make a decision — choose

We all make mistakes; everyone has a story about the audiovisual that flopped. On the other hand, remember the learning experience that made a significant effect on the students and the feeling of accomplishment you felt. Trust your good judgment; planning is ninety percent of the process.

6. Integrate the media

Examples: set a mood — visual prayer — present a life experience — tell a story/parable — relate facts and information — present opinions of others.

Determine a position for the integration of media into the learning experience. Is this video factual and informative regarding respect life issues? Is the film posing a personal situation that will cause a heartfelt reaction? All of these questions and more are needed in the planning of the learning experience.

7. Know how to operate the equipment

Be sure, for example, that the DVD player is in good working order. Do you need an extension cord or adapter? Do you have an extra bulb for your data projector? Murphy's law always applies — what can go wrong, will. *Be prepared!* Make sure you block-out the light in the classroom for a better picture quality. If possible, have the equipment set up and ready to operate so that valuable teaching time is not wasted.

8. Follow-up

Provide time after showing the media for reflection on the experience, perhaps aided by appropriate music. A video, for example, may be stopped before the ending to create an open-ended situation for the students to determine a solution. Allow the students to share their reflections and insights with each other in groups or to the class as a whole. Providing discussion questions is always a good idea to assist in promoting feedback.

APPENDIX C

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Content focus — Grades K through 4



Our goal is to integrate these themes into the religious education curriculum, in- self. No separate lesson plans will be written for kindergarten through grade four. Rather, some foundational principles for a Catholic understanding of the human person, family, and love will be emphasized and highlighted.

1. Jesus and our homes: why Jesus lived so long in an ordinary home. Homes are places where people can be most happy: Why is this true? Homes are places where we learn how to love. We can help our homes be happier places. How can we do this?

2. Praying at home: finding a quiet place for prayer at certain times. Being willing to pray: at meals, in the morning, at night. Letting parents know we like to pray with them sometimes. How prayer helps us to know how important everyone is, and how much each one should be loved and respected.

3. Television: handling it with care. Sometimes television is very fine. But parents naturally want to control it. Our homes are too special for television to be invading them too much, or at wrong times. Sometimes television can keep us from learning to know and love each other better. It can prevent us from doing good things with each other, spending time with one another. We need to be careful about our television, music, and what we read, so it makes us more like Jesus wants us to be.

4. Talking with our parents: having happy times to talk with our parents. Learning to talk about things that are not always easy to begin talking about. Why parents want to know so much about you! Parents are really special kinds of friends. We need to trust them, share with them lots of things about ourselves and our lives. We need always to turn to our parents first.

5. Modesty: gentleness and goodness of modesty. Why being modest is a way of being kind and respectful. Television — friendly at times, but not always Christian, not always modest. Not wanting to be exactly like everybody else in the world, the specialness of being a Christian, and the specialness of being you. Joy in remembering the nearness of Jesus, and the dignity of our bodies, which are temples of God. This demands that we choose wisely the things we wear, what we say and do, so as to respect our bodies!

6. Saying no when we should: happy and good hugging, but touches and hugs are not always good. Why parents don't want us to let just anybody give us hugs. Kinds of touches that disturb us, and why we should not put up with them. Why parents do not want us to get into cars with or enter the homes of people they do not know, and do not give us permission to enter.

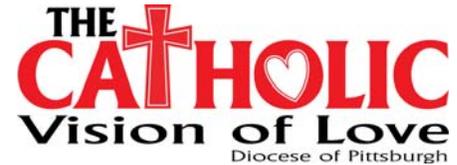
7. Our families and our friends: the very special importance of our homes, and our parents, and our brothers and sisters, even when we begin to have friends ourselves. Why our parents want us to talk with them about our lives outside the home, about those who are our friends and all that we are doing together. The joy of having life at home and outside the home fit well together.

8. Cruelty of words: words that hurt. Words that are called bad or dirty, or impure words that forget the importance of everyone, and the goodness of our bodies, and the nearness of Jesus to our lives. Why parents care very much about the words we use, and why we should too.

9. Everybody does it! Thank heavens everyone isn't the same! Why you are special, and not everything everyone does is for you. Why Christians are special, and do not do things that many people do, if they love and honor Christ. "I want to do what my friends do!" The value of being with friends, but the foolishness of wanting too much of this. Letting our friends be what God wants them to be, and becoming ourselves what God wants us to be.

10. Changing and growing: As we grow older, our bodies slowly change and develop, our minds become better and sharper, our whole lives begin to mature. We are becoming the person God plans for us to become. We need to recognize the changes, understand them, and not be embarrassed or afraid to talk about how we are changing or how we feel with those we trust. We need to talk with our parents, grandparents, and teachers. They will help us to understand.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON OBJECTIVES



KINDERGARTEN and FIRST GRADE

Lesson 1:

The students will:

- a) Listen to the teacher's explanation of how we are children of God and special; b) Orally tell how they are special by telling his/her own characteristics.
- Listen to the teacher's explanation of why/how God made us special.
- Draw pictures of themselves identifying his/her own unique characteristics/specialness
- Identify/demonstrate ways to get along with others by a) playing a game following the rules; b) responding to teacher questions recognizing how rules keep us safe and why rules are fair.

Lesson 2:

The students will:

- Orally recall what they learned about using rules and why rules are fair.
- Listen to the teacher connecting the concept for obeying rules and how rules help us show respect for God's people and other people's things.
- Respond to question about how we respect our bodies.
- Respond to questions demonstrating the ability to connect the concept that there are good rules to follow to show we respect our body.
- Do the face activity to demonstrate the ability to recognize different feelings and to respond to teacher questions about recognizing feelings.
- Respond to closing questions by telling what they would do when recognizing different feelings in friends to demonstrate their comprehension of the concepts taught.

Lesson 3:

The students will:

- Review what they learned about rules and how to recognize feelings by responding to teacher questions and doing the Handout K-1B.
- Role play to demonstrate the ability to identify and manage proper playing by the rules and respecting others' feelings.
- a) Listen to teacher reinforcement of proper management skills and proper reactions to stressful situations; b) Respond to teacher questions to demonstrate understanding of the concepts.
- a) Listen to the teacher expand the concept of responsibility and being in charge on one's own body; b) Listen to how to report to someone when something doesn't feel right or when something or someone makes one feel uncomfortable.

Lesson 4:

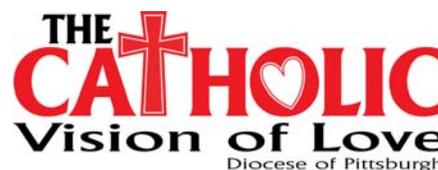
The students will:

- Demonstrate assertiveness with respectful responses in safe situations with older children and adults (e.g. "I HAVE TO CHECK FIRST"— check with a parent, guardian, or other trusted adult first) by orally responding to the "practicing the rules" activity.

(Grades K-1 continued...)

- Demonstrate assertiveness in unsafe situations (“SAY NO,” “GET AWAY,” and “GO TELL”) by participating in the “Practicing the Rule” activity and practicing what to say.
- Describe and role-play what to do when approached by a stranger/non-stranger or on the telephone by participating in the “Practicing the Rule” activity and using the pretend phones.
- Identify who to tell if there is a touching problem by orally responding to a short story and b) responding to teacher’s questions.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON OBJECTIVES



GRADES TWO and THREE

Lesson 1:

The students will:

- Identify the goodness of rules that keep us safe by discussing why the family, school and society have rules and laws.
- Describe positive characteristics they like about themselves and others by picking out good qualities from a list on Handout 2-3A.
- Identify that all things have a purpose by naming good things they can do with items like apple, sun, house, person, and body parts like nose, ears, feet, teeth.
- Identify what makes a good friend by naming that a friend always wants what is best for you.

Lesson 2:

The students will:

- Identify non-verbal communication skills by naming feelings acted out by the teacher and other students.
- Name how showing their emotions in a good ways helps us get along with others.
- Discuss how some things and people change by describing changes from a group of pictures.
- Describe and discuss how he/she is a unique and special person by naming choices they have made and ways they have grown from a baby till now.

Lesson 3:

The students will:

- Identify positive (good effects) and negative (bad effects) of peer pressure through the use of balloons, pictures and stories.
- Describe his/her uniqueness as a person who is continually growing and changing.
- Demonstrate appropriate ways to react in a stressful situation by responding to questions about stories.
- Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings by reacting to situations in pictures and stories.

Deeper:

- Demonstrate that he/she recognizes non-verbal communication skills by answering questions related to situations and/or pictures.
- Demonstrate respect for the rights and feelings of others by answering appropriate questions.
- Identify skills necessary to build enriching friendships by participating in the exercise on "Peer Pressure."

Lesson 4:

The students will:

- Name rules that keep them safe.
- Explain what makes something public and what makes something private.
- Explain the bathing suit rule.
- Name the fact that no one has a right to touch their body without permission.

Lesson 5

The students will:

- Name people who can help keep them safe.
- Practice detective skills to be able to help in emergency situations (review things & people as observed for homework for last lesson, describe the visitor to the classroom).
- Identify safe responses to situations where they may be separated from an adult family member or when someone unknown approaches them.
- List and role-play appropriate behaviors that assist the individual in maintaining his/her personal safety (e.g. "SAY "NO," "GET AWAY," "GO TELL").

GRADE FOUR

Lesson 1

The students will:

- Demonstrate respect for the rights and feelings of others by listening to/reading the story about St. Therese Liseux in the *Catholic Safety Agent* booklet and participating in the exercises.
- Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings by participating in the exercise about feelings and playing the game to determine someone's feelings.
- Differentiate between behaviors that contribute to a positive attitude and those that contribute to a negative attitude by acting out what they read on the *Feeling Cards* exercise, and by naming the feeling and what caused them to feel a certain way.
- Identify self control skills by participating in the lesson on page 4 of the *CSA Notebook* regarding behaviors and feelings.

Lesson 2

The students will:

- Demonstrate self control skills by acting out situations that the teacher gives them to show self-control.

(Grade 4 continued...)

- Identify behaviors that may cause conflict or stress and ways of dealing with them through discussion about safe situations and situations that cause stress.
- Name appropriate ways to react in stressful situations by participating in the brainstorming session about a "*stranger at the door*" and discussing appropriate ways to deal with the stressful situation.
- Identify personal strengths and weaknesses and their impact on others by completing the exercises on page 6 and 7 of the CSA booklet – *knowing our strengths and weaknesses*.

Lesson 3

The students will:

- Name behaviors that show a positive attitude and those that show a negative attitude by listening to/reading the story about St. John Bosco and how he treated others.
- Show healthy ways to have fun by acting out (through the game of Charades) fun things they enjoy doing with a friend.
- Identify peer influence on his/her feelings, behavior, and decisions by participating in the exercise on "Peer Pressure."
- Identify characteristics of a friend by participating in the exercise on "*what is a good friend*" and reading about good friends on page 9, "*A Friend is Someone Who,*" and page 10 of the CSA booklet.
- Name what Peer Pressure is by participating in the exercise and answering the teacher questions on peer pressure, and completing the exercise on Peer Pressure on page 11 of the CAS booklet.

Lesson 4

The students will:

- Name the steps to making appropriate decisions by completing the exercise on page 12 and 13 of the CSA booklet.
- Practice refusal skills by participating in the *Safety Agent – Act 1 game*.
- Identify behaviors that may cause conflict or stress and ways of dealing with them by looking at situations on the Act 1 cards and naming the proper way to handle each situation.

Lesson 5

The students will:

- Demonstrate the ability to accept responsibility and consequences for their actions by participating in the *Act – 2 Situation Cards – "Stressful Situations."*
- List and role-play appropriate alternate behaviors that enhance personal safety: SAY "NO, GET AWAY," and GO TELL.
- Demonstrate assertiveness with respect in response to a safe situation through the group exercise with the *Act – 2 Situation Cards*.
- Practice communication skills by acting out ways of communication – by phone, e-mail, hand signals, and body language.

(Grade 4 continued...)

Lesson 6

The students will:

- Describe ways of preventing abuse: emotional, physical and sexual through review of previous lessons and through group discussion about the people we can rely on to keep us safe (parents, older siblings, police, firemen etc.) and family rules and guidelines for safety.
- Demonstrate assertiveness in response to an unsafe situation by practicing with the teacher, *"No, Get Away!"* after each situation presented.
- Name interpersonal situations that may pose a threat to his/her personal safety (secrets, bribes, tricks) by repeating each clue after the teacher: 1. They want you to keep secrets; 2. They always want to be alone with you. 3. They try to offer you bribes; 4. They always want to hang out with kids and never seem to want to be with people their own age.
- Identify ways to help others as sources of help by participating in the exercise on things that make a place or situation safe.

APPENDIX D

Curriculum outline — Grades 5 through 8

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GRADE 5, CLASS 1:

Self-respect: Acknowledging why you are so important

General aim

This lesson seeks to help the students realize how immensely important each one of them is, in truth and before God. It helps them see how important their lives are, and how important are the things that deeply affect their lives. In a special way, it helps them see the importance of their sexuality, and of responding to the gift of sexuality in the light of the Lord's teaching, and in ways that respect how things really are.

Specific objectives

1. To assist the students in realizing personally — in the light of faith and their experience — how very important each one of them is, and how important it is that they lead their lives wisely and well.
2. To recall the problems that arise for people who are wrongly persuaded that they are not worth much, and are not very much loved.
3. To help students realize that thinking and feeling rightly and wisely about sexuality is very important for them.
4. To help the students realize that sexuality has important purposes. God created sexuality to serve the wonderful and lasting good things He wishes it to bring to our lives.

GRADE 5, CLASS 2:

Understanding the changes we experience

General aim

To help the students to see that the many changes that come with adolescence should not be sources of anxiety, but are meant by God to be steps toward a richer fulfillment in life.

Specific objectives

1. To help students appreciate that it is good that our life advances in stages, that the good things of earlier years are meant to be fulfilled by better things as time advances.
2. To help students realize how many aspects there are to maturing. We are to grow not just physically (which we cannot help doing) but also emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually.
3. To show that in God's plan everyone is special. Each one is different in a variety of ways, and that is good.

4. To make clear that it is all right to be different! We mature at different rates, and that is fine. Different people have different natural strengths and weaknesses; none of these make us unable to have great and good lives.
5. To show that sexuality is a gift from God, and that the physical growth that reveals our maleness and femaleness is a good thing.

GRADE 5, CLASS 3: Friendship, love and life

General aim

This lesson seeks to help students understand what friendship is, and why it is so precious a gift. Friendship makes life much happier, and enables us to be better persons. The lesson seeks to explore the truest kind of friendship, and see why it lasts longer and is more rewarding than less perfect kinds of friendship. In a special way it treats romantic friendships, and what characterizes true and lasting friendships to serve life well.

Specific objectives

1. To understand the reasons why friendship is both so attractive and so important for our lives.
2. To be able to tell the difference between *true friendships* and less solid kinds of friendships.
3. To reflect on how Scripture praises true friendship, and why Christ wants to be a friend to each of us.
4. To think about a special kind of friendship, romantic friendships, and to understand why God wanted friendships like these to be.
5. To understand how important it is that we have truthful, generous, and pure hearts in all our friendships.

GRADE 5, CLASS 4: Christ in my home and in my life

General aim

This lesson speaks of the importance of the home. It speaks of the ways in which Christ taught us to love the home, and encouraged us to make our homes the happy places He wants them to be. The Lord meant homes to be schools of faith and love, places where our hearts learn life from people who deeply love us. It recalls how Christ wants us all to have happy lives, by tasting first the joy of being loved by generous parents, and the joy of loving those in our homes, and so learning the goodness of real love.

Specific objectives

1. To assist the students in realizing how important homes are; how glad we should be for the good things God wants us to find in our homes; how true it is that all of us must do all we can to make our homes places of generous love.
2. To recall the things Christ did to call homes to be faithful to what God wants them to be, and how much He wants each of our homes to be happy and good.

3. To show that even homes that are broken, and have many trials, can be healed and helped by closeness to Christ.
4. To show that everything the Lord teaches us about sexuality is aimed at helping us learn that generous kind of love that can make homes and lives happy; impure acts are wrong because they undermine real love, and makes homes suffer.
5. To urge students to thank God for their parents and their homes, and to pray that they themselves will have love generous enough to make their homes happier places.

GRADE 5, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Relationship Boundaries: Stranger danger, Respecting ourselves, Respecting our bodies
- Lesson Outline:
 1. Introduction and opening prayer
 2. Teaching on Friendship and Respect, focus on Relationship Boundaries
 3. Activity – Talking about boundaries using scenarios
 4. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic social teaching and the dignity of the human person
 5. Closing prayer
- Lesson Background: Human life is sacred.
“Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (CCC 56)

GRADE 6, CLASS 1: Vocation

General aim

This lesson seeks to strengthen in students a sense of vocation, a realization that their lives are important, that God has a great role for each of them to play in life. It seeks to show that reflection on what we are meant to be is important for the fulfillment and happiness of our lives.

Specific objectives

1. To understand again the general idea of having a vocation by reflecting on the vocation of Christ to be our Savior.
2. To help students to realize that each one of us, without exception, is important to God, and each is called to an important and special vocation by the Lord.
3. To show how it is that one comes to realize what his or her special vocation is.
4. To reflect on various kinds of vocations, and how God calls each person to a kind of vocation in an entirely distinctive way.
5. To point out how chastity is important for every kind of vocation.

GRADE 6, CLASS 2: Being responsible for our own lives

General aim

To help students understand the great gift of freedom, and to be able to tell the difference between “things happening to them” and “things they do.” It is always important for young people to realize that life is not just something that happens to them (though many things happen beyond our control). Life is most of all something we live, and the free actions that we do. Many people want to be good, but get discouraged, forgetting that Christ is strong even when they are not. Christ will help them to use their freedom well if they really want to take charge of their own lives, and not let the world dominate them.

Specific objectives

1. To help students realize that they are responsible for their own lives, and that it is a good thing for them that they are.
2. To help students see for themselves why the excuses we make for the bad things we do are often silly and irresponsible.
3. To help students realize that even though it is often very sad when bad things happen to us, doing bad things is really much worse.
4. To help students see that in the turmoil of the world, where impure thoughts and attitudes and acts can often seem impossible to escape, their lives are in their own hands. They have the freedom to live good and responsible lives. Christ will protect their freedom if they wish to guard it.
5. To help students realize, in a world that seems not to know what sin is, that doing things that are really bad not only offends God, but also makes us feel miserable and unhappy.

GRADE 6, CLASS 3: Life is worth living

General aim

This lesson had a very basic message. God made us to live! To live great lives! (See John 10:10.) He made us to live happily and well in this life we now have on earth, and so deserve to have an even better and richer life with Him and one another in eternal life. Our life now works best, and feels worth living, when we try earnestly to get things right and do things well. In special things, like sports and games, we see this clearly. Things go well when we put our whole hearts into them. And this is even more true of the big things of life. Life is dear to us when we realize what it is about, and try to live it well. Large things like love and sexuality will be blessings to us, if we understand them for what they really are, and follow the wise teaching of Christ.

Specific objectives

1. To help students see that all the things we do in life — like playing musical instruments, or taking part in sports — are much happier and dearer to us if we can do them well.
2. To help students understand that doing anything well — even cooking, or using a computer — can be important and rewarding. But it is much more important to live life well — to know what it is really about, and to begin to live with style and great hearts.

3. Of course it is true that not all of us can be great athletes, or great mathematicians. But Christ promises that anyone can live a great life, with the help of God's grace, if they deeply want to, and come to Him for help.
4. To help students understand that some coaches and teachers — in sports and other skills — are better than others. In learning to live well, Christ is the best of all teachers. He is the Lord, and we are His disciples.
5. To help students understand the moral life as new life in the Spirit.
6. To see that love and sexuality are important parts of life. But they can be confusing, and sometimes they are badly taught. We need good teachers for such important things.
7. To understand that many people in today's world try to teach us what sexuality is all about. But Christ the Lord is the best teacher of these things because He created them. He also knows us best, and cares about what we say and do. The teachers who teach us His ways are very important.

GRADE 6, CLASS 4: Learning how large love is

General aim

This lesson aims at helping the students understand the central message of Christ: that genuine love is the most important of all things. All our duties flow from the most important duty of loving God and of loving one another with generous love. And all our hope flows from love; only when we are willing to learn what true love is can we have happy homes, deep and lasting friendships, fairness to the weak and the poor, and greatness and joy.

Specific objectives

1. To explain why Christ is the best teacher of how great love is (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) and of how we learn to find honest love, in a world which so much wants honest love, but suffers because so many confuse real love with phony love.
2. To show that Jesus teaches us that generous love is necessary to save all the best things of the earth: homes and friendship, and every great and good thing our hearts long for.
3. To make it clear that generous love guards life in all the world. It guards the weak and helpless, the old and weary, and it guards all our hopes to be fair and good people. From people who love with true generosity, like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, we learn why abortion and euthanasia are so cruel.
4. To show how love gives people power to have pure hearts, and to be truthful and generous in their dealings with one another. All the Lord's teachings about chaste living are teachings about loving rightly.

GRADE 6, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Practicing Boundaries – home, school, and online safety guidelines for children.
- Lesson Outline
 1. Introduction and opening prayer
 2. Teaching on human dignity and communicating boundaries
 3. Activity – talking about boundaries using scenarios

4. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic Social Teaching and the Dignity of the human person
5. Closing Prayer

- Lesson Background – Human Life is Sacred
“Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (CCC 56)

GRADE 7, CLASS 1: Vocation — God’s call

General aim

This class is planned to help the students realize the goodness of our vocation: our call to be Christians, and our call by God Himself to an important life. It could be a call to a religious kind of vocation, or it could be a divine vocation to enter marriage with a very special person, and to have children. We are all called to find our way to heaven by doing great things on this earth in ordinary circumstances.

The whole idea of vocation is explored here: God’s deep concern for everything in our life, how we plan our lives, and the ways we learn to put all that we are as boys and girls into becoming men and women.

Specific objectives

1. To recall the first vocation we have: to be personal friends and followers of Christ, and to shape everything in our lives in ways that are faithful to the Lord.
2. To think about our special vocations: how God cares very much about the life each one of us will live. To explore the kind of life God invites us to and the kind of life that each one of us decides to live.
3. To understand how vocations work: God calls us freely to something important, and we freely decide. There is a call, a consecration, and a commitment.
4. To survey kinds of vocations, and to invite the students to think about, and to pray about, what kind of life they wish to have before God.
5. To study the relationship between our sexuality and our vocation, and how every vocation calls on all the gifts that God has given to us.

GRADE 7, CLASS 2:

Modesty — A strong and thoughtful virtue

General aim

To help students grasp the meaning of modesty and appreciate its attractiveness and goodness, and to help them understand why Christ wants us to have modesty in our hearts and in our lives.

Specific objectives

1. To help students see why modesty is an important virtue in our times too, because it is so closely related to self-respect and reverence for other people, and because it helps us to face sexuality more sensibly.

2. To make clear that the most important dimension of modesty is modesty in our minds and in our heart.
3. To explain why modesty in speech and in dress may important good fruits.
4. To show how modesty affects everyday life.

GRADE 7, CLASS 3:

Reconciliation in our years of growing up

General aim

This lesson seeks to help young people to make good use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in ways that will help them most in their years of growing up. At this time of their life this sacrament is a necessary support for their life of faith and grace. It offers the help they need especially now, even though this is also a time in which they are especially tempted to neglect this sacrament. Temptations at this time of life are more disturbing, and sins are most embarrassing, and life, in general, gets more confusing. They need now certain special helps from the Lord, so that as they grow up in many ways, they may grow also in the life of faith. Regular use of this sacrament will help them to get a strong hold on their faith and on their will to live in ways Christ calls them, even in times of great confusion and stress.

Specific objectives

1. To show why, in the chaotic years of adolescence, when faith may begin to feel less important to us, and our friendship with Christ seems to fade, this special sacrament is so strong a help in renewing and deepening our friendship with Christ.
2. To show the many specific good things that an intelligent use of confession does for us as we are growing up.
3. To show how a thoughtful use of confession helps young people face problems regarding sexuality much more sensibly.
4. To help young people learn again how to go to confession with tranquility, and without embarrassment.
5. To help young people understand that we receive the grace of conversion only after the Holy Spirit asks us to seek it.

GRADE 7, CLASS 4: Christ and the courage to be pure of heart

General aim

This lesson helps the student know what the beatitude "Blessed are the pure of heart" means, and realize how true it is. It helps them see why it takes courage to have a pure and honest heart, but that life is badly hurt if we become cowards in this. For love is the most important of all things, and a pure heart is one that makes love be true to itself. The pure heart does not confuse selfish and lustful mistreatment of self and others with love, but knows that love really cares for the ones we love, and wants them to have what is truly good.

Specific objectives

1. To show that pure love (love not mixed with selfishness and dishonesty of heart) is the strongest and most burning love, just as pure gold is better than gold mixed with lead.

2. To clarify the differences between real and pure love, which shines in people who really care about us and want us to be happy and have what is surely good; and false love, seen in people who pretend to care about us, but are only pretending, or looking out for themselves.
3. To show why the world that does not know Christ, or the goodness of the generous love He teaches, also is an impure world. Love was made to be pure, to be true love, and so generous and truthful and a blessing to all. But the world mixes the love it longs for with many kinds of selfishness, and so turns its broken love into something false and the cause of much pain.
4. To show how, just as impurity and dishonesty about love hurt everything, so a pure heart helps everything, because it cares honestly about generosity in love, and about lasting love, and homes, and the care of children.

GRADE 7, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Communication Boundaries – texting, touching, and talking about ourselves and others.
- Lesson Outline
 1. Introduction and opening prayer
 2. Teaching on respect, focus on the dignity of the human person
 3. Activity – talking about texting, touching and taking responsibility for our words
 4. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic Social Teaching and the Dignity of the Human Person
 5. Closing Prayer and activity
- Lesson Background – Human Life is Sacred
“Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (CCC 56)

GRADE 8, CLASS 1:

Your vocation: To make the world a better place

General aim

This class seeks to stress for students the importance of accepting our responsibility for making this world a better place, for seeking to overcome abortion and the injustices involved in poverty, and to enable them to realize how necessary chastity is for overcoming abortion and social injustice.

(Note: Despite the second word in the title, this is not a class about “vocations.” Rather it is a class about responsibility to make the world a better place. The idea of “vocation” is in some way relevant, for our vocation as Christians includes the call to make this world more of a presence of the Kingdom of God. But vocations as such and their relation in our sexuality, are treated in other places in this course.)

Specific objectives

1. To help students understand how the Holy Spirit assists us in discerning the Father’s will for our lives.

2. To help students realize their social responsibilities in this world: "We are all really responsible for all!"
3. To show students why they should be firmly on the side of life in the abortion controversy, and to show how un-chastity leads to abortion.
4. To help students see how seriously the Gospel requires us to care about justice for the poor.
5. To help students realize why they will not become just and merciful if they do not also have self-control and chastity.

GRADE 8, CLASS 2: Living in a world that suffers from AIDS

General aim

This lesson seeks to help young people understand some of the bitter evils that have arisen from the misuse of sexuality. It speaks of AIDS, and of other sexually transmitted diseases, and of other serious harms. Sexuality is a gracious gift of God. But we invite tragedy when we use excellent things badly. It is never good and never safe to abuse sexuality. Still, the physical harms that come from abuses of sex are not the worst of its bad effects, and fear of these evils is not the best motive for being chaste. Treating sexuality intelligently is itself good; it makes friendship and all of life richer and happier. Chastity is not terribly difficult; we do not have to advise people to rely on the highly unreliable forms of "safe sex" foolishly taught by some today. There are secure ways of really being safe, and of having really good lives. Something as important as sexuality deserves to be treated intelligently!

Specific objectives

1. To remind people that Christ calls them to good and happy lives: the ways that He teaches securely guard us from the great harms that sinful activity causes.
2. To give a truthful picture of AIDS, how tragic it is, how common it has become, and what are its causes.
3. To show how so-called "safe sex" (deciding to use sexuality casually, while making use of unreliable devices to keep sinful activity from doing us physical harm) simply does not work.
4. To point out how easily one can escape AIDS if one so wills.
5. To remind students of the many other sexually transmitted diseases, how sin can have physically bad results. And these are not even the worst effects of sexual sins!
6. To show how unnecessary it is to commend insecure defenses against such terrible disease and the many harms they cause. A better way is readily possible. Chastity is not too difficult; it alone is really "normal." Chastity is possible with God's grace.
7. To recall the practical things we need to do to make an intelligent and chaste life easier and more attractive.

GRADE 8, CLASS 3: Christ and my conscience

General aim

Years of adolescence are often years of confusion. But young people do want to be good. They have high standards for others, and they want to be honest, and live by high standards themselves. Yet the world does much to confuse their ideas of right and wrong, as it does for all people. Often they let themselves be led astray, and feel that it is all right to do things that their peers do, because they don't feel bad about doing such things. This lesson is intended to help them in something of greatest importance to their lives: in coming to realize what conscience really is, and how they can be radically honest in facing what is truly good or truly bad in the shaping of their own lives.

Specific objectives

1. To help students get a clear and honest understanding of what conscience is, and of the importance of a good conscience.
2. To help them appreciate that what Christ teaches us about conscience is really true, and that my life will be more honest if I allow the Holy Spirit to guide my conscience.
3. To show how a good conscience keeps one from painful confusions, and tragic decisions, touching sexuality.
4. To explain that knowing how to confess embarrassing sins can be a great help for us in keeping our lives honestly in order.
5. To show the distinctive ways in which a Christian conscience helps our lives.
6. To show how the Holy Spirit prompts us to seek repentance and conversion.

GRADE 8, CLASS 4: The Eucharist and love

General aim

This lesson seeks to show how the Eucharist is a gift of God's most generous love, and shows us how to be generous in love in every part of life, and so wise in living. Jesus gave us the Eucharist the night before He died willingly for us, to remind us how much He would always love us, and to give through this sacrament the real power to love each other generously and strongly. The Eucharist constantly calls us to strong and true love, for Christ, and for each one of our brothers and sisters; and so the Eucharist calls us to live free from sin (which is the enemy of love) because we are so near to Christ, who is perfectly good, and calls us to be good to one another.

Specific objectives

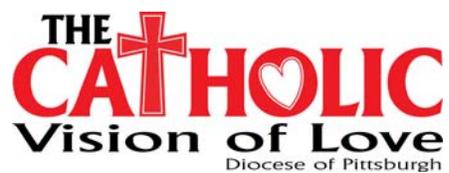
1. To help us see why the Eucharist is a gift of pure love: love that is generous and honest, and give warmth of life.
2. To recall that Jesus gave us this sacrament, so we could love purely too: to have honest love for the Lord and for each other.
3. To remember that must be free from the selfishness of mortal sin to receive Communion well. We must be in the state of grace, seeking honestly to love God and one another, and so to make all the world a richer place.

4. To see why it is true that impure acts, which are such powerful forms of selfishness, and turning from what is really good, especially make the joy of Communion fade.
5. To help the students see why we should trust Christ, and to know that He will make it very possible for us to have generous and truthful hearts, if we come to Him with honest and truthful hearts in Communion.

GRADE 8, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Body Boundaries – what we wear and what we do.
- Lesson Outline
 1. Introduction and opening prayer
 2. Teaching on respect, focus on the dignity of the human person
 3. Teaching on modesty and chastity as safe body boundaries
 4. Activity – talking about what we wear and what we do
 5. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic Social Teaching and the Dignity of the Human Person
 6. Closing Prayer and activity
- Lesson Background – The Vocation to Chastity

“Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man’s belonging to the bodily and biological worked is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Article 2337)



Section Two

**CATECHIST'S NOTES
for Grade 7**

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Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

This class is planned to help the students realize the goodness of our vocation: our call to be Christians, and our call by God Himself to an important life. It could be a call to become a priest or religious, or it could be a divine vocation to enter marriage with a very special person, and have children, and find our way to heaven by doing great things on this earth in ordinary circumstances.

The whole idea of vocation is explored here: God’s deep concern for everything in our life, and how we plan our lives — the ways we learn to put all that we are as boys and girls into becoming men and women.

Specific objectives

1. To recall the first vocation we have: to be personal friends and followers of Christ, and to shape everything in our lives in ways that are faithful to the Lord.
2. To think about our special vocations: how God cares very much about the life each one of us will live — the kind of life He invites us to and that we decide to live, and all the special circumstances of the life He invites each one of us to have.
3. To understand how vocations work: God calls us freely to something important, and we freely decide. There is a call, a consecration, and a commitment.
4. To survey kinds of vocations, and to invite the students to think about, and to pray about, what kind of life they wish to have before God.
5. To study the relationship between our sexuality and our vocation, and how every vocation calls on all the gifts that God has given to us.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. Each of us receives a sacred call from God through our baptism.
2. Our baptismal promises represent our response to our vocation as Christians.
3. Christ calls each of his baptized followers to a certain individual vocation.
4. Every vocation involves a call, a consecration, and a commitment.
5. Every vocation requires a chaste heart.



Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

A certain profound faith statement can be made at the beginning of this class:

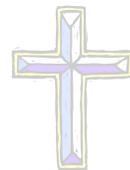
God made us entirely. He made us male or female, boys or girls. His reasons are deep ones, and they are tied with the purposes he has for us in life. We are not on earth only for fun, though life should be full of fun and deep happiness — if we live our lives wisely, as God invites us to. Whatever vocation we have, our being a boy or girl will affect the vocation deeply. Obviously only a girl can have a vocation to be a mother and only a boy to be a father. But even if one decides to be a religious, one would become a sister to give all of oneself — all the feminine grace and emotions and ways of being that God give us — to serve the family of God in a special way. And a boy would become a brother or priest to use all he is, all his masculine traits and all his feelings and talents, to serve God in a special way. God made us entirely, and He wishes us to bring all we are to whatever life He calls us.

If the catechist begins with some thoughts like these, the prayer for vocations (at the end of this set of notes) may be more meaningful for the students.

1. Baptism: Our vocation to be Christians

There are many ways of going through this lesson. The catechist should read the lesson plan over carefully, and not the points he or she wants to stress. Sometimes it will be useful for the catechist to read parts of the lesson, at other times asking the students to share the reading. At any point the catechist should be prepared to press the students to *think*: “Have you often thought of this: God Himself has you personally in mind, and He has plans for your life? Have you tried to think about what God wants you to be and to do with your life?” Or: “Your first vocation is to be a Christian. Do you think you are doing a very good job at that? Are you living the kind of life that your baptismal promises call you to?”

The first section goes through two major points: A) an account of our call to be Christians; and B) our baptismal promises to live in a distinctive way, as followers and friends of Christ. Enough time should be given to this to help the students realize: I ought to be different from many people. We all share a single vocation, and we all have special vocations. All of us have first vocation to be friends of Christ. This is the first our calls: to know the Lord, to have the light of faith; to be called to learn to love each other, as Christ loved us; and to live in ways that please God and make us worthy of eternal life. All of our duties: to be truthful, and just, and merciful; to be pure and to be modest, are related to the personal promises we make to our Lord in deciding to be His disciples.



2. Baptismal promises: Our response to our first vocation

The promises as given in the student text should be studied and discussed at this point. They may also serve as a fitting closing prayer.

3. Special vocation within our Christian vocation

The Lord cares very much about your life, and He invites you to great things. He calls you:

- A) To live as His personal friend, as a true Christian.
- B) To live a *special kind* of life that He knows will be a good life for you to live.
- C) To live this life in *very special* circumstances. Everything about your future is important to God.

Some people think vocations are only for particularly religious kinds of life. But this is not true. One of the chief points of this lesson is to show that *everyone* has a vocation from God, and *whatever God calls us* to is best for us.

One of the most important kinds of vocations is the vocation to get married, to become a father or mother, to found a home, to have children, and teach them to know this world and the Lord in ways that lead both those they love and themselves into friendship with God and to everlasting life.

We never understand sexuality well just by studying anatomy or sexual behavior. What sex is really for is accomplishing great and good things: like bringing children into the world and building a kind of love that is faithful and lasts, and making homes generous and happy places.

Every vocation, not only that to marriage, requires that we give to our lives all that we are. What we are as male or female, as a boy or a girl, is important to our vocation. Even a vocation to be a religious requires that one give all of oneself. A girl remains very much a girl when she becomes a religious sister. Her being a real woman, with the feelings and sensibilities and special gifts of women, will be important in all she does. And a boy must bring all his being, all his masculine traits and gifts and strengths to whatever vocation he comes to.

The Lord calls you both also to a special *kind* of life, and He calls you to live this life in a *most special* way. For example, if you have a vocation to marriage, God's concern extends to everything. He cares about whom you marry, and what and how many children you have, and the details of your life. Everything affects your happiness on earth, and forever, so everything enters into God's plans for you. And you too need to be concerned with everything.

ACTIVITY

Chart on vocations — Perhaps it would be best to ask the students to go through this longer activity at home. But in class take time to show them how they are to fill in the chart. If they have looked this chart over a bit, some of the points made in the next two sections below will be a greater interest to them.



4. Call, consecration, commitment

These are the “three C’s” for vocation. In speaking of these, we speak of the dimensions of vocation. God really *calls* me to a life best for me, and it is wise for me to pray and to think earnestly so that I discover what my call in life is. But to enter a vocation is free *consecration*. God does not demand that we choose this form of life; He invites us. And every vocation requires *commitment*. We make great promises, like the baptismal promises, when we choose any special vocation. And life works only when we are faithful in carrying out what we have promised.

There should be some effort to go through the kinds of vocations. Young people sometimes think of wanting to be a doctor, or teacher, as the heart of their vocation. We should suggest to them that it is really important that we decide what we want to *do* with our lives. But one of the first things is to decide what we will be. Ask them to notice in their own families, for example, that one’s father or mother may be a teacher or a truck driver or a doctor. But even more important than the kind of work or profession they have is the way that they arrange the entirely basic things of life. It is more important for a father to be success as a good husband and father than to be successful in teaching or in business. Vocation is first about the central love that our life has, although the kinds of things we do are important too.

5. Vocation and sexuality

Reflection on vocations points out to us the importance of thinking clearly about our sexuality. We cannot plan well what our lives should be if we have not reflected on what we are, and how all of our being is to find its place in God’s world.

Tying things together

At the end of this lesson, it could be very useful to bring together the various parts of the lesson, as listed on the student’s sheet.

Prayers for vocations (from the National Catholic Vocation Council)

Creator God,
 Life is your gift to me.
 Through Baptism, you invite me to share the gift of my life in service to others.
 Be with me as I choose each day to show your presence in our world.
 Give me the courage and generosity to respond to your love, to your call.
 I pray especially for those who serve you as priests, brothers, sisters, deacons, and lay ministers.
 Keep them close to you.
 Open the minds and hearts of many other men and women that they may accept your challenge to build the Kingdom. Amen.

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1-3; 542-543; 900; 914-919; 925-933; 1142; 1461-1467; 1516; 1536-1553; 1562-1568; 1572-1576; 1601-1624; 1638-1658; 2337-2350.

MODESTY — A strong and thoughtful virtue

.....
Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

This lesson aims to help students grasp the meaning of modesty, to appreciate its attractiveness and goodness, and to help them understand why Christ wishes us to have modesty in our hearts and in our lives.

Specific objectives

1. To help students see why modesty is an important virtue in our times because it is so closely related to self-respect and reverence for other people. Modesty helps us to face sexuality more sensibly.
2. To make clear that the most important dimension of modesty is modesty in our minds and in our hearts.
3. To explain why modesty in speech and in dress has important good fruits.
4. To show how modesty affects everyday life.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. Modesty, like courtesy, is a kind, thoughtful, and generous virtue.
2. Modesty of heart and mind will lead to modesty in life.
3. Modest persons recognize the need for proper and pure talk about sexuality.
4. Modest persons know that the kinds of clothes they wear reflect their respect for self and body.
5. Modest persons are guided by their faith in selection of media, style of dance, and physical signs of affection.

Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

Read or have a student read Philippians 4:4-9. Then explain these thoughtful words a bit to the class:

The words of St. Paul in this passage speak forcefully of how joyful lives spring from hearts and minds that rejoice in good things. The tone is not all negative. The stress is not to avoid bad and dangerous things; rather, it cries out: Fill your minds and



hearts with what is good, what gives gladness and stirs up generosity of heart. You need not be troubled with things that wound and bruise our lives. Have your minds filled with what is true and noble and pure, with good things that make us glad and are worthy of praise. Then the God of peace will be with you.

If the catechist reflects on these words before the class, it will not be difficult to find ways to help the students appreciate what is being said.

1. Modesty and courtesy

One can go through this first session easily. Perhaps you can have the students read the material. The first paragraphs speak about modesty in unfamiliar ways. Modesty is not just a matter of “keeping rules.” We are dealing with something far deeper, with the respect that we need to have for ourselves and our bodies, for the people we are with, and for the Lord who is in our midst always. Make clear that we are not saying that modesty just refers to ways we talk and dress. These are just signs of something much deeper, of a modest and thoughtful heart.

Certainly many young people do not understand modesty. Television tends to make fun of it. And people who are carried along by what television says sometimes think that modest people are inhibited. They are squares! We want the students to see something else, and that is why there is the comparison with courtesy. Here we are not so much talking about courtesy for itself, but speaking of it so that they may understand modesty better. (Still, if the students are helped to appreciate the kindness involved in real courtesy, that is an important plus.) The lesson itself explains what needs to be said: Love is more important than courtesy, but if we love people, we will care about them enough to show them the kindness of true courtesy. And pure hearts and serious self-control are more important than the gracious gestures of modesty. But if we have pure hearts, and do respect people, we will be glad to show it by the reverence that modesty means.

This continuation of the first presentation strikes at the important elements of virtues like courtesy and modesty. Neither courtesy nor modesty is chiefly concerned with being fussy about rules; both are concerned with having one’s right heart express itself in thoughtful ways of behaving. It is easy for students to understand that being a loving person within is not enough. We have to show our caring by the kind ways that we speak and act — and this outer kindness is the chief mark of courtesy. So also it is not enough for us to be, hidden within, decent and good people. We have to show our respect for ourselves and others also by the ways that we act.

DISCUSSION: Thinking about modesty and courtesy

The questions in this section can lead to good discussions. The students can be helped gently to see that as Christians they should not just go along with the world in everything. At times TV and the media make fun of modesty and pretend that modest people are somewhat stupid, artificial, and inhibited. Now



there are some people like that, of course; but modesty really is a healthy and happy virtue. People do not have to act constantly shocked to be modest, and they do not always have to be criticizing others. Most good people are not like that at all. The teacher should plan ahead with discussion points such as these and be ready to stress the questions judged most suitable for this class.

DISCUSSION: Learning how to be in control

This discussion develops an important idea from this section: having pure hearts and modest ideas keeps us in charge of our own lives. When we have unchaste hearts, and dress and talk immodestly, it is easy for things to get out of control. Our lives should be led intelligently. We should go in the directions that our minds and our hearts know are good, not as if we were out of control, driven by hormones or passions we cannot understand or control.

2. Modesty in heart and mind

The presentation goes through several aspects of the virtue of modesty. The first and most important form of modesty is that which becomes rooted in our hearts and minds. Then we have: modesty in speech; modesty in dress, and modesty in action. These different aspects of modesty fall together very well.

Modest hearts and minds can appeal to young people. For Christ, the important things are those that touch the heart of our being, not just external words and acts. It is a lesson in inwardness, in opposing phoniness — a lesson which appeals to young people. But it leads to a call for consistency also. If we want to be friends of Christ, and to have lives that are decent and unselfish, we cannot fill our minds with the kinds of images and ideas that are calculated to drive people to act selfishly and impurely. We have to watch what we put into our minds, what we watch on television, and in movies, and in other things. This is not a matter of being nervous and timid; it is good sense. If we fill our minds and memories with trash, what is within will, as Jesus says, break out in our acts in harmful ways.

3. Modesty in speech

The material in the lesson plan can be very helpful here, but the teacher should go over it very carefully before the class.

4. Modesty in dress

If some young people seem to have no sense of modesty at all in the way they dress, it is hard to blame them very much. The media, and much of the modern world, give them very bad examples. So in going through this we need a right tone. We are not blaming people, but helping them to be thoughtful, to see what Christ wants them of them in this, and to understand why.

5. Modesty in action

Three points are stressed in this section. A) We need to be thoughtful in what we allow into our minds. Good people do not let their minds be

Grade 7



Class 2

saturated with movies, TV, and other entertainments of a kind that lead toward unchaste thoughts, attitudes, and immodest behavior. B) Modesty does not mean we cannot have fun. Dancing, and all kinds of good times, are really much more fun (as St. Paul suggested in the meditative prayer that the lesson began with) when we do not mix up wrong and ugly things with the good times we wish to have. D) Being a Christian is something very good, and it is something very happy. But it costs something to be a Christian. We need to stand for something, and live as if we do, or we lose wonderfully happy gifts of the Lord.

DISCUSSION: Modesty and a life of faith

This discussion points toward making “applications” in life from what we have studied. The main themes of the lesson are drawn on here. Since modesty is a virtue of respecting persons well, we reflect on how Christ cares about and will help us in acquiring modesty. The final question goes into applications; the stress here should be friendly. “Let us not raise ideas in ways that point fingers at others, or judge them.” If we want to help each other have a kind and reverent attitude that helps others, what aspects of modesty can we encourage to change public attitudes for the better? Does our manner of speech really make much difference? Should we be thoughtful about how we dress, when we know that the world’s attitudes toward dress often come from a spirit unfriendly to Christ?

Tying things together

At the end of this lesson, it could be very useful to bring together the various parts of the lesson, as listed on the student’s sheet.

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1832; 2337-2350; 2354; 2520-2524.

RECONCILIATION in our year of growing up

.....
Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

This lesson seeks to help young people to make good use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in ways that will help them most in their years of growing up. At this time of their lives, this sacrament is a necessary support for their life of faith and grace. It offers the help they need especially now, even though this is also a time in which they are especially tempted to neglect this sacrament. Temptations at this time of life are more disturbing, and sins are more embarrassing. Life, in general, gets more confusing. They need certain special helps from the Lord, so that as they grow up in many ways, they may grow also in the life of faith. Regular celebration of this sacrament will help them get a strong hold on their faith and on their will to live in ways Christ calls them, even in times of great confusion and stress.

Specific objectives

1. To show why, in the chaotic years of adolescence, when faith may begin to feel less important to us, and our friendship with Christ seems to fade, this special sacrament is so strong a help in renewing and deepening our friendship with Christ.
2. To show the many specific good things that an intelligent use of confession does for us as we are growing up.
3. To show how a thoughtful use of confession helps young people face problems regarding sexuality much more sensibly.
4. To help young people learn again how to go to confession with tranquility, and without embarrassment.
5. To help young people understand that we receive the grace of conversion only after the Holy Spirit asks us to seek it.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. Jesus gave us the Sacrament of Reconciliation to help us grow to be the best we can be.
2. The Sacrament of Reconciliation does several good things for us.
3. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a help in dealing with our questions and confusions over sexuality.



Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

The opening prayer could have two parts: a reading from St. John's Gospel account of the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and a brief prayer reflecting on it.

Reading: John 20:19-23.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, during Your Passion Your disciples, overcome by fear and weakness, abandoned You, and denied they even knew You. On the day of Your resurrection You did not reproach them, but gently forgave them, and gave them Your peace and forgiveness. You gave to them, and to those who would be their successors in handing on the faith, the power to forgive our sins and bring us back to peace. Help us to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with great faith and confidence in You, and to experience the peace and strength You wish us also to have. We ask this in Your name. Amen.

1. A sacrament for our years of growing up

The first section of the lesson speaks of strong and important matters. The catechist might read the first lines, and perhaps ask questions to invite the students into reflection.

As we grow up, there are greater problems we must learn to overcome. The world pressures young people to live in ways they know are foolish, but the temptations are great. The world invites us to fall into the use of drugs and alcohol. It invites us to pity ourselves rather than get a good grasp of our lives. It invites us to forget what life really means, and to drift into daydreams of lust with movies obscene magazines and websites. It inclines us to live in ways that make us forget who we are, and what God made us to be, so that in passing moments we are tempted with gratifications that ruin our lives.

The catechist must lead the discussion toward remembering how Christ helps us to overcome all these problems. The disciples of Christ in the Gospels were also threatened and for a while overcome by the world. But Christ was a faithful friend. They abandoned him rather shamefully in His passion, as we have abandoned Christ when we have sinned deliberately. But He cares enough to call us back to friendship, as He called the apostles back to His friendship. Recall that Christ Himself is really very new us, and He touches our lives. He sends His Holy Spirit to encourage us in our repentance. It is Christ we come to when we go to confession, and He really cares about us, forgives us our sins, and gives us power to be His close friends again. Is your friendship with Christ alive? Will Christ always be a friend to you?

Be prepared to present this part of lesson in ways that seem useful for your class. For example: "We are all Catholics. That is supposed to mean that we have found Christ, and He is our friend. It is not good to be phony about so important a thing as faith. Let us check on two things: A) Are we really true friends of Christ? B) Do we keep the friendship alive? Then go through the designated sections with the students.



2. Good things the Sacrament of Reconciliation can do for you

There are several important things this section notes that his sacrament does for us. You might note on the board brief descriptions of these good things, and then go through each one of them:

- A) Our sins are forgiven.
- B) We receive the power to overcome temptation.
- C) Our Communion and our lives become more honest.

Talking about A): People can commit mortal sins, like having deliberate impure sexual acts, using drugs, and so on. The *only way* to get rid of mortal sins, and come back to grace and friendship with Christ, is by his forgiveness — which comes only with this sacrament. One must be *seriously sorry*, united with the honest *intention to come to this sacrament* when we are able to.

Talking about B): Reconciliation protects our future. When Christ forgave the apostles on Easter morning, He not only took away their sins, but also gave them power to be able to be good and faithful friends for the times ahead. Things will often seem too tough for us, if we do not come to Christ in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He is with us in this sacrament, and when we come to Him, He gives us power to get control of our lives.

Talking about C): Sometimes people commit sins they know are mortal sins. Then they fail to go to confession. To complicate matters further, they go to Communion with unforgiven mortal sins. Knowing this is a very bad and dishonest thing, and a great sin. They pretend to be good friends of Christ. These people are refusing to be sorry before receiving the Eucharist. Lives get very mixed up, and faith becomes very weak, because of sins like these. But Christ will readily forgive even this if we go promptly to confession while we still care. Let us try to see to it that we keep our lives honest before our Savior, who knows us and cares about us.

3. Reconciliation helps us face sexuality honestly

This section could be a bit demanding for students. The catechist should be prepared to present the material gently but clearly. It covers things that students who are serious about their faith need to hear, and want to hear, but they cannot be expected to volunteer to speak out too much about these things. A sensitive catechist can help the class very much by letting them realize that the problems that can drive people from being religious in adolescence are common ones, ones other people have had too, and problems they can overcome if they wish.

A) *Reconciliation and sins of impurity* — This section is one that the catechist should stress with the students. It can be read to them thoughtfully, and the catechist should not “improvise” too much here. If the catechist wishes to add things to what is presented in the lesson, the material should be well thought out in advance.

B) *How does one confess embarrassing sins?* — This section is also one the catechist should present, rather than require students to read on their own.



The students may have important questions here, and the catechist should be prepared to answer them.

C) *Yes, but what do we say?* — The material here is crucial to understanding. The catechist should have much experience regarding the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we urge other people to do the courageous things faith requires, we need to have experienced how helpful this is for our own lives.

Toward the end, the catechist should add something like this: “God made us male and female. He gave us sexuality, for good and important reasons in life. Sexuality is a good thing that works out well in our lives when it is used well. But if we are pressured to handle sexuality badly in our thoughts and actions, many things will go very wrong. Christ in the Sacrament of Reconciliation give us power to face sexuality in a way that will not make our whole lives go toward chaos.”

OUTLINE: Remembering the “how” of confessing

This exercise is very important. By the seventh grade, many students have forgotten how to go to confession. This should be presented in an encouraging spirit. Make sure you stress point D), the *importance of sorrow*, and the *intention of reforming our lives*. Perhaps writing the five points on the board will be helpful to the students. This is not so stressful a thing to teach, but the young people need your witness: Confession is a good and important thing! You can profit a lot by celebrating it regularly. (If they ask: “How often?” tell them once a month is a good rule. But young people have a right, and sometimes *need*, to go for special occasions: when something has gone wrong, when we have done something we know is seriously wrong, — then we should get to confession as quickly as we can. But we should go confidently, knowing that going to Christ is going to the source of greatest peace and strength.)

Tying things together

At the end of this lesson, it could be very useful to bring together the various parts of the lesson, as listed on the student’s sheet.

Concluding prayer

This “Act of Contrition” is included on the student’s page:

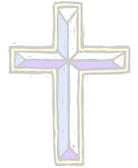
O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend You, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

Remind them that the “Act of Contrition” is a good prayer to have securely in memory. There are many times we need this prayer, and it ought to be a part of our night prayers every day. This prayer is a reminder of how important we are to God, and of how merciful and forgiving He is.

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1385; 1420-1470; 1854-1861.

CHRIST and the courage to be pure of heart

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

This lesson helps the student know what the beatitude “Blessed are the pure of heart” means, and realize how true it is. It helps them see why it takes courage to have a pure and honest heart, but that life is badly hurt if we become cowards in this. For love is the most important of all things, and a pure heart is one that makes love be true to itself. The pure heart does not confuse selfish and lustful mistreatment of self and others with love, but knows that love means really caring for the ones we love, and wants them to have what is truly good.

Specific objectives

1. To show that pure love (love not mixed with selfishness and dishonesty of heart) is the strongest and most burning love, just as pure gold is better than gold mixed with lead.
2. To clarify the differences between real and pure love — which shines in people who really care about us and want us to be happy and have what is surely good — and false love, seen in people who pretend to care about us, but are only pretending, or looking out for themselves.
3. To show why the world that does not know Christ, or the goodness of the generous love He teaches, also is an impure world. Love was made to be pure, to be true love, and so generous and truthful and a blessing to all. But the world mixes the love it longs for with many kinds of selfishness, and so turns its broken love into something false and the cause of much pain.
4. To show how, just as impurity and dishonestly about love hurt everything, so a pure heart helps everything, because it cares honestly about generosity in love, and about lasting love, homes, and the care of children.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. Pure hearts make the world a better place.
2. Courage is needed in relationships of pure love.
3. Selfish, non-courageous love can lead to that lust which destroys dreams.
4. A life of chastity is the proper consequence of our sexuality.



Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

The catechist may remind the students that through the centuries young people have learned from the great goodness of Mary how important, how good and generous, is purity of heart. Purity is not a nervous and weak virtue. It is strong, and courageous, and full of peace. Pure love is the strongest kind of love, as pure gold is the richest kind of gold. Friendship with Mary helps us realize how great and good it is to have a generous and pure heart. We begin the class by saying together the “Hail Mary,” asking Mary to help all of us to have strong, generous, and pure hearts.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

1. Pure love versus selfish love

This first section is thoughtful, but not too hard for the young people to understand. They can see very easily why pure food is better than food mixed with dirt. They might like making humorous remarks about this. And they know well that pure gold is better than gold mixed with cheap materials. When they think of this, they can begin to get the real idea of pure love. It is not a phony love, but love that has all the fire of love and nothing else. Nothing ugly or bitter is mixed with it.

The students can be told: When Christ praised love, he was praising real love, pure love, love that is just love. He never thought much of fake or dishonest love. It is good to have someone in the class read the short quotation from I Corinthians. The words of this passage are beautiful. The class can be asked what they think of love like this. Do they like seeing love like this anywhere in their lives?

Love that is not pure. It is important to help the students think through the ideas in this lesson. The first two sections — dishonest love and selfish love — can be going through quickly. But time should be given to let the students speak of kinds of love like this that they know from stories.

The idea of “lustful love” takes a bit more time. What we are aiming at is helping the students *feel* how deceitful and ugly the lustful love in the little story really is. The catechist might tell them the story, and stress the details that reveal the deviousness of “love” that really does not care about the person being used. A presentation of this story with some feeling makes them see for a while how false is much of the “love” badly thrown into young people’s entertainment these days.

Happy and good sexual activity goes only with marriage. Catholic faith never forgets that *God* created sexuality. Certainly sexuality is not bad; God made it good. But it is an important good thing, and God made it for precious purposes. What is bad is treating something precious, something that needs to be treated with truthful love, as if it were a trivial toy that could be exploited “just for fun.” Treating sex that way is foolish and wrong, and causes much



bitter pain. God made sexuality for important purposes.

When we think of marriage, we see what God made sexuality for. It was not a toy for immature people, but a great gift able to strengthen and preserve forever the generous love of marriage. One is not ready for sexual activity until one is ready for the generous promises of marriage. Even to see lustful gestures in movies or television, when people are treating sexual feelings as trivial fun, is to see how dishonest lust is. It pretends a love and a generosity which it by no means has. Lust pretends to say: "I love you and will always love you." But it does not really love. Rather it wants cheap pleasure for itself. The pleasure of selfish love is cheap, because it forgets the important thing sex is really made for — love that lasts and is generous, and gives everything to make love last, and homes strong, and gives children the strength of love in strong homes. Lust does not give the whole heart; rather it wants to use the other selfishly. Pure love is the love that makes husbands and wives love each other a whole life long, that makes their homes strong; it is a love that makes homes strong enough to be safe for little children. Impure love rather is looking for pleasure NOW, pleasure that quickly fades and disappoints. Pleasure without generous love is not very deep and not very lasting.

But the world refuses to understand how important and good are the things sexuality was made for. And so it encourages people to treat sex, which God made as precious and important, as if it were a cheap toy. And when it does this, it makes it harder for love to last, and for homes to be happy, and for children to be safe.

2. Relationships and pure love

First make sure the students understand the idea of courage. They are often teased into doing stupid or wrong things, by being told they are sissies or cowards if they do not. But they are able to understand what courage really is. It is worth the time to help them see this clearly.

The lesson explains the difference between courage and foolish but dangerous activity. But to make this vivid, it is good for the catechist to show some cases of courage: the sacrifice of martyrs, or the immense bravery good soldiers sometimes show, or the courage that heroes who save the lives of people whom they love show. Then show some cases of foolish bravado of people who drive with stupid speed in dangerous circumstances and hurt or kill people. Anyone can then see the difference between courage and foolish, rash acts.

Questions. Some time should be taken with the questions. The students should be given a chance to show that they do see the real meaning of courage and to give examples themselves.

3. Selfish love, sexuality, and broken dreams

Courage is important for being good and decent people all the time. The catechist should go through the story of the boy who is tempted to sell drugs and make vivid the point of the story. If we want to do good things in this world, we often have to be very courageous to do so. Students can see and feel

Grade 7



Class 4

how often people act like cowards because they are afraid of being called cowards. Is it better to be a coward, or to be called one? Once they see how courage is needed for being good and decent in other matters, they can see also why courage is needed to remain pure in heart and in activity.

We do not need to remind the students of the consequences if we treat sex as something trivial and cheap, the way the world often does. They know how MTV and many movies and television shows rather tease one into thinking and acting in ways we know are bad. And what is worse, as the lesson says, is that so many people we would like to be friends with often push us toward cowardliness, teasing us that we are cowards if we will not do what we know is bad and harmful. There is a traitor in my own heart too, as the lesson suggests. It will take courage to have a pure heart, in a peaceful and strong life.

4. Sexuality and its consequences

This section should be prepared well in advance. We want the students to know and be convinced: Christ is able and will give them the courage to lead the good kinds of life they need to please God and to make their lives decent and happy ones.

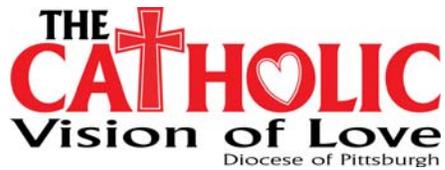
Take a bit of time for the *questions* about Christ: about how He experienced very well the teasing and mockery that good people often get. He went through humiliations in the passion, but He was brave, and came out looking far better than those who wanted to humiliate Him. Try to draw out of the students' remembrance of this part of Christ's life. This helps them to see how great a thing courage is, when it is the courage defending what is more precious.

The catechist should take time to make clear how Christ really promises us that He will not let it be too difficult for us to be pure of heart or generous. We may be very weak, but He is very strong. And He promises to make it possible and easy for us to live the kind of life He wants us to. Be sure to discuss the various ways that we can receive God's grace in our lives today, especially through Mass and the Eucharist; Reconciliation, and our own prayer.

Typing things together

At the end of this lesson, it could be very useful to bring together the various parts of the lesson, as listed on the student's sheet.

For further reference and background, the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 574-575; 608-609; 1638-1658; 1805; 1808; 1831; 2030; 2331-2356; 2360-2363; 2517-2527.



Section Three

STUDENT'S LESSONS for Grade 7

Directions for Use

This section contains the blackline masters for each of the five lessons. Each lesson is numbered individually. The blackline master for each lesson can be removed from this notebook, copied, and returned to the notebook until the next use.

The lessons are:

CLASS 1: Vocation — God's call

CLASS 2: Modesty — A strong and thoughtful virtue

CLASS 3: Reconciliation in our years of growing up

CLASS 4: Christ and the courage to be pure of heart

CLASS 5: Personal Safety

VOCATION — God’s call

CLASS 1

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality

Introduction

In this lesson we will reflect upon our first call by God to become followers of Jesus through baptism. We recall our baptism each time we renew our baptismal promises. Within the Christian life, each person tries to hear God’s call to a particular kind of life: marriage, priesthood, religious life, or single life. Once we accept a call, we commit to a closer way of life and are consecrated by God. We need chaste hearts regardless of the particular vocation we choose.



These are the things we will talk about in this first lesson:

- Each of us receives a **sacred call** from God through our baptism.
- *Our* baptismal promises represent our **response** to our vocation as Christians.
- Christ calls each of His baptized followers to a certain **individual** vocation.
- Every vocation involves a call, a **consecration**, and a commitment.
- **Every** vocation requires a chaste heart.

Baptism — Our vocation to be CHRISTIANS

Each of us received a sacred call from God through our baptism: “Come to the fullness of life!”

God called us to be His own sons and daughters. He invited us to a better life: a life filled with faith, confident in hope, and strengthened by honest love.

He invited us to live a joyful life, filled with faith and love, a life that would make us worthy of sharing God’s life forever in heaven.

Baptism called us to walk in the ways of Christ. “Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (Ephesians 4:1).



Every vocation involves a call from God. It involves also a willingness to consecrate ourselves to the life to which He calls us, and an enduring commitment to live in the ways God calls us to live.

If we were baptized as infants, we could not ourselves speak the promises involved in committing ourselves to God. So, others spoke for us. But we need to make this **commitment** personally and freely. Therefore, we are invited to renew this commitment, the "baptismal promises," at our First Communion, at Confirmation, at the Easter Vigil, and at the celebration of the Easter Season.

In reading the baptismal promises below, reflect on what your vocation to be a Catholic Christian means. Do you think much is expected in this relationship with Christ?

Baptismal promises: Our RESPONSE to our first vocation

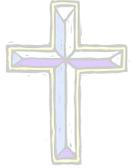
- † Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's children? *I do.*
- † Do you reject the glamour of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin? *I do.*
- † Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness? *I do.*
- † Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth? *I do.*
- † Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father? *I do.*
- † Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting? *I do.*
- † The Church prays for us after we make these promises: "God, the all-powerful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and has forgiven all our sins. May he also keep us faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen"
(Liturgy of Easter Sunday).

SPECIAL vocations within our Christian vocation

Christ first calls all of us to be His followers and His friends. Then He calls us to a certain *kind* of life.

He has an *individual vocation* for each person He calls by name.

There are four general *kinds* of vocations we should think about.



Marriage

Priesthood

Religious life

Single life in Christ

Each of these has many forms, and Christ calls us to one of these vocations in a very special way. Each call is very personal and shaped by a love of God that cares about everything.

Activity

Look at the chart on vocations on page seven of the lesson, and follow instructions on using the chart.

- ❶ Complete the spaces by writing in the names of familiar persons.
- ❷ Discuss this information.



Call, CONSECRATION, commitment

Every vocation involves a *call*, a *consecration*, and a *commitment*.

God offers us the grace to recognize our calling. Each person receives a *call* that will be deeply fulfilling.

God knows the kind of life that will be best for us and which will be most pleasing to Him.

Few things are more important for us than this: coming to realize what kind of life God invites us to live.

We should come to a firm decision, and *consecrate* ourselves to the Lord in the work to which He calls us.

We make an enduring *commitment* to be faithful to Christ, and to all those we love, in carrying out our decision.

MARRIAGE — a precious vocation

Most of us have grown up in families, and know something of what marriage is like.



The *call* to a married vocation comes gradually, as it does in other life vocations. There is much good and much happiness in a generous married life. And fathers and mothers have great tasks to carry out for each other, their children, and for the world in which they live. What are some of the good reasons one would have to accept a call to enter marriage?

The *consecration* of marriage comes when the man and woman make the generous **marriage promises** to each other in the presence of Christ's priest or deacon, and so confer the Sacrament of Matrimony on each other.

Christ calls us to a certain kind of life. The grace of the sacrament helps them to live a lifelong commitment, faithful to each other, as they establish a family and home blessed by the Lord.

Vocation to the PRIESTHOOD

The *call* to a priestly vocation has many stages. There is a quiet call in a man's heart, planted by God. One hardly recognizes it until he gets to know what it is that priests do. Once a boy or man gets to know some priests as friends, he begins to recognize that he too might like to live such a life. What are the things that priests do that seem attractive to you?

The *consecration* of a priestly vocation comes in ordination by the bishop, the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Only a man may be ordained to the priesthood.

And the *commitment* of a priest comes in living out his **promises** to care for Christ's people, to help them have strong faith, and to have courage and generosity in living lives dear to the Lord, and lives that are blessings for everyone.

Vocation to RELIGIOUS life

A *call* to religious life also comes quietly. Young people meet a sister or brother or a religious priest whose life and whose spirit seems very good to them. Sometimes they gradually realize how much they would also like to do the kinds of things that person does. They want to live a life as close to the Lord as that person seems to live. They, too, would like to teach, or care for the sick and homeless, and do it with the **freedom** one has when one has given everything to the Lord.

The *consecration* of religious life comes when one publicly vows to give all of life to the service of the kingdom of Christ through vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity.

And they show the *commitment* this vocation requires by living the generous form of life that is a close discipleship in Christ within a particular religious community.



Vocation to SINGLE LIFE in Christ

There are many forms of single life in Christ.

The *call* to this life is also often far from dramatic. One comes to the conviction: Christ wants me to do certain things with my life that are important. Sometimes they are rooted in the love of a person who needs much care. Sometimes they are rooted in **devotion** to a kind of work which requires all their attention. They decide that neither marriage nor a religious life is the way of life for them. However, as for all, a life close to Christ is necessary.

They *consecrate* themselves to this service of Christ as they offer, gladly, the kind of life they judge God wishes for them.

And their *commitment* is carried out in the years of living a life not tailored for their own pleasure, but for doing good things for those they love, and for all God's people.

Vocation AND sexuality

Every good life is lived with the whole heart, and with the energy that grace and love give us. Every vocation is rooted in love. One does not cease to be a real man or a real woman in following any certain kind of vocation. The special gifts and interests that flow from being a male or female should enter into the warmth and goodness with which every person lives a vocation.

Every vocation requires a chaste heart. But the form of a chaste heart differs with different vocations. No one can live a vocation of any kind without the freedom and self-control that **chastity** brings. People who marry need chastity to keep them faithful to each other and their children. Those who have never allowed or permitted self-control to rule their own hearts and lives find that every kind of commitment becomes too difficult. Without commitment they cannot have great love or great happiness.

Priests, religious, and single persons are called to embrace *chastity*. They can lead full lives without the physical sexual union that belongs in marriage. Their sexuality is expressed in other healthy ways in a chaste commitment to God.

No one should ever fear that he or she cannot be chaste enough to lead a generous and a happy life. The world urges people to care too much about pleasure and not enough about what love calls for, especially if that would require some **sacrifice**.

But no life is happy without love and generosity. Learning Christ's vision of love is important in learning how to live any kind of call that we recognize and choose.

Activity



Give concrete examples of how a vocation to each *kind* of life can develop:

- ? *Observing* other people living this vocation, *what would attract* you toward each type of vocation?
- ? In what ways does God's *grace* help us: ways in which God can help me to become convinced that this is the right kind of life for me, and this is what God calls me to?
- ? In what ways you can *prepare to answer* God's call, and come to *consecrate* yourself to that vocation?

TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

1. In baptism we received a call from God to enter the life of Christ and His church.
2. The praying of our baptismal promises renews our call to follow Christ.
3. Each Christian is then called to live out a particular vocation through a chosen way of life.
4. Call, consecration, and commitment are the three components of each vocation.
5. Chastity of heart and life are a requirement for each vocation.

	Married	Priest	Brother	Sister	Single
Identify someone you know:					
What are some of his/her characteristics?					
What do you see him/her doing that you might want to do?					
What questions could you ask him/her?					

MODESTY —

A strong and thoughtful virtue

.....
Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

You can tell modest people:

- ✘ By the way they *talk* (the type of language they use).
- ✘ By the way they *act* and physically present themselves (in body language and style).
- ✘ By the kind of people they *are*.

These are the things we will talk about in this second lesson:

- Modesty, like courtesy, is a kind, thoughtful, and generous **virtue**.
- Modesty of heart and mind will lead to **modesty** in life.
- Modest persons **recognize** the need for proper and pure talk about sexuality.
- Modest persons see that the kinds of clothes they wear reflect **respect** for self and body.
- Modest persons are guided by their **faith** in selection of media, style of dance, and physical signs of affection.

Modesty and COURTESY

Modesty is a kind and thoughtful virtue. Modest people treat their own bodies and minds with respect. They remember that God made us, and wishes to live in us, as in a temple.

Modesty respects other people too. It knows that other people are also dear to God, and should not be treated badly. They should not be spoken to as if they enjoyed impure words and ideas.

Modesty means not letting our language and our ways of dress and our behavior get out of hand. Modesty means not using foul language or behaving in a suggestive or indecent manner. Modesty guards **pure hearts** and honest feelings of caring about the importance of others.



Modesty is a generous virtue like courtesy. You know what real courtesy means. Courteous people want to treat others kindly. They do not want to ridicule or hurt others. When we care about people, we *show* this by being kind and gracious — that is, by being **courteous** to them. Modesty shows we have pure hearts.

Courtesy is a sign of love and caring. We like it when people who have good and kind hearts also show this in the everyday acts of their lives.

Modesty, like courtesy, is a good sign of something very good within. It is the sign of a pure heart. It is the sign of a person who respects others. Such a person knows that love, human feelings, and sexuality deserve respect.

Discussion: Thinking about modesty and courtesy

Real modesty is a grown-up virtue. It shows we know how much we are worth, and how much other people are worth.



- ? Can you tell the difference between a kind or courteous person and a phony one?
- ? Have you met people who consider you important, and honestly want to treat you as someone special?
- ? Is there much kindness and courtesy among your classmates?
- ? Does using dirty language show that a person is “grown-up”?

? Does going to movies or playing video games that have really ugly violence, and sexual scenes that encourage impurity, increase our respect for other people?

? Do you think Christ cares about the kinds of thoughts and attitudes that we allow to grow in our hearts?

Modesty begins in a heart that cares rightly about things. Gradually, it gives us power to control how we talk and act.

People who are not chaste, who do not have pure hearts, do not have self-control either. They let themselves be **controlled** by their hormones and by thoughtless feelings. And they are also controlled by the pressures of other people.

Discussion: Learning how to be in control

Let's think about things or people that are "out of control."

- When a car is out of control, can the driver make it go where he/she wishes?
- People who are addicted to drugs or alcohol may say: "I am doing just what I want." But are they really free, and "in control"?
- Would you like your life to be under your own control?
- Will the Lord help us run our own lives?

Modesty in HEART and mind

Jesus taught us that it is the heart that counts most. If we have a really good heart, good words and good actions will flow out of it. But a heart that is impure leads to talk and conduct that is impure. "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication.... These are what defile a man" (Matthew 15:19-20).

It is first of all our thoughts and hearts that must be reverent and modest. Then everything will go well with us.

That is why our choices of movies, television, music and websites make so great a difference. It is important to care about what enters deeply into our minds, imaginations, and hearts. Impure thoughts at times come innocently into one's mind. The world is not always chaste! But it is **important** what we *do* with these thoughts!

Our minds and hearts are important. If we *deliberately* entertain impure thoughts, we are doing something very wrong. We are doing something that hurts us and that offends God, who cares about us. If we watch movies and television shows that are indecent, our minds will gradually be filled with attitudes opposed to respect and love. And then, as Jesus says, evil acts will come out of our hearts too.

Remember that what we put into our hearts and memories will shape what our hearts become. If we put good and generous thoughts into our hearts, good things will come out of our hearts. If we put selfish and impure images into our minds and hearts, ugly things will spring from our hearts. The movies you go to, the television programs you watch, the magazines you read, the websites that you visit — they will shape lives!



Modesty in SPEECH

Some kinds of language are out of place. Certain “street words” for people of certain nationalities or color are intended to be insulting, and are just outright hostile. Certain crude words which refer to intimate parts of the body are considered “street talk.” These words do not show the respect for our bodies that have been created by God for very special purposes.

Some street words for things that touch sexuality grow out of ugly attitudes toward sex. To use them is to suggest that sexuality is something base or cheap. The heart itself is wrong when it uses these words.

Discussion: Hurtful language

Modest people know how powerful language is. Have you ever been hurt by words? Explain?

Proper dialogue about sexuality

Obviously, not all “talk” about sexuality is wrong. We need to have right and good ideas about sexuality as we grow up. Some sexual “talk” is necessary for that.

Several points need to be kept in mind: ❶ Such talk should be with the right people. ❷ It is good to be able to talk with parents, grandparents, and other good people who really care about us, concerning these things. ❸ Sometimes it is good to talk to our doctors about these matters.

Why is proper talk about sexuality important?

It is important because when we study the faith, Christ teaches us about the gift of sexuality.

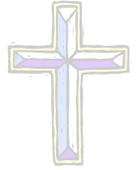
Have you ever thought of this point?

In the strong secrecy of the confessional, we should not be afraid to talk about things that worry us about sexuality. What if someone should treat you in sexual ways that seem improper, or if you are afraid that you are doing something sinful? You should not hesitate to ask the priest confessor for help. When we get the light of truth on something as important as sexuality, we feel much better about it. But casual talk about sex in corners or on the school bus, in snickering ways, in “street talk,” is childish, wrong, and immoral for us.

It almost always makes us feel even worse and more confused. Never hesitate to talk about sexuality with the *right* people: your parents, priests, and teachers who care about you.

Modesty in DRESS

The kinds of clothes we wear are often important signs. They tell people what kind of hearts and minds we have. They make it clear whether we respect ourselves and our bodies.



If our clothes are not expensive or stylish, that is not so big a deal. But if our clothes reveal that our minds and hearts are wrong, that would be important.

Modesty in dress reflects a good heart and good common sense. Different kinds of clothes are sensible and good for different kinds of situations. Much that would be very appropriate for recreation, swimming, and good times would be immodest in school and in church. Situations and occasions suggest appropriate clothing. Just as we have to **learn** good habits in eating, and good habits in sports, we have to *learn* good judgement in how to dress modestly. We learn from people who know how. Our parents, teachers, and older brothers and sisters often help us.

Modesty reflects a good heart and good common sense.

Some young people just like to wear what is "in." But then their parents may say that certain "in" clothes are not really modest. Sometimes you, too, may not quite understand and disagree. We should be willing to **listen**. Modesty and good sense in dressing have to be learned. Our parents do love us and care for us. And they share our faith, our thoughts, and our lives, far more than some fashion designers who make a profit from our purchases.

Modesty in ACTION

We ought to be intelligent and let our faith guide us in everything. Faith teaches us about love, sexuality, and being responsible. Our faith should help us to decide what music downloads to get, what movies to see, and what television programs to watch. Some kinds of entertainment make people think of sex as something trivial, a way to exploit others for fun. They are far from what Christ teaches us about sexuality, and about **unselfish** and chaste hearts. But the attitudes that Christ teaches are far better, and make our lives work out much better.

Dancing can be a happy recreation. It can even be a form of art. It is meant to be a pleasurable and good experience. However, there are kinds of dancing that are meant to stir up selfish and wrong sexual attitudes. These types of dancing offend modesty, and simply do not reflect a life of faith.

Also, if we hug or kiss people we love because we are glad to see them, that can be entirely right and good. But obviously it is not modest to hug or kiss in ways intended to stir up wrong sexual feelings.



In all these matters, we much have good sense. The world is filled with different kinds of people. Some know and believe the truth taught by Christ concerning sexuality. Others treat sexuality as something cheap and unimportant. It is good for us to have our **hearts** open to what those who love us have to say to us about these things. We need hearts ready to listen to our parents, and to our best teachers, and to Jesus. None of this will make life dull and uninteresting. Good ways of living make life full and happy.

Discussion: Modesty and a life of faith

We need to learn modesty well from Christ and from those who teach us about Christ. Modesty is a helping virtue that will keep our lives from getting confused.

- † Will faithfulness to Christ help us to be more respectful of one another?
- † What kinds of modesty do we need to think about, to help us have an atmosphere in our schools or with our friends that is more friendly to the spirit of Christ?

TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

1. Like courtesy, modesty is a virtue which reflects kindness, thoughtfulness, and generosity.
2. Modesty begins in our hearts and minds.
3. Prayer and pure talk about sexuality reflect modesty.
4. Modest persons carefully select the kinds of clothes they wear out of respect for self and body.
5. Use of media, type of dance, and physical displays of affection each need to be guided by the virtue of modesty.

RECONCILIATION in our years of growing up

CLASS 3

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

This class talks about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. First it points out that this sacrament is very important while we are growing up. Then it talks about the good things young people can get from going to confession. Finally, it talks about ways in which this sacrament helps us to face sexuality intelligently.

These are the things we will talk about in this third lesson:

- Jesus gave us the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** to help us grow to be the best we can.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation does several **good things** for us..
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a help in dealing with our **questions** and confusions over sexuality.

A SACRAMENT for our years of growing

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is especially helpful for more mature people.

Jesus gave this sacrament to help us grow up to the be best we can be.

For now the stakes are higher. As we get a bit older, Christ asks **greater**, better, and more difficult things of us.

When we enter adolescence, we have more temptations to fall away from Christ. The shadows and images of television and movies often invite us to live selfishly and impurely. The **world** presents strange dangers in drugs, alcohol, hostility, and sadness of life.

But Christ wants us to have good lives and be HIS friends. He wants to help us to lie our lives strongly well.

Christ's friends in the Gospels

We can notice the way Christ treated His friends in the Gospel. He knew each one of them from the heart. He made them His disciples, and He cared



about each of them from the heart. He knows you perfectly also, and cares about you. He wants you to be His friend and His disciple.

He knows that all who love Him, and want to be His faithful and **good friends**, sometimes fail Him. He knows that we are weak, and that we need His friendship and strength to live well.

All the apostles failed Christ at times. Some of the women who became his dearest friends had committed great sins, sins they came to hate. Jesus always forgave them with a generous kindness that would not let them be embarrassed by others (see Luke 7:36-49). Sometimes Jesus corrected friends firmly when they needed it (see Matthew 16:23). But He was always faithful to them, and let them know that He knew their hearts were **loyal**, even if they sometimes slipped. On the very night that they would all abandon Him, He looked instead into their hearts and told them how much He loved their friendship. "You are those who have continued with me in my trials; as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you" (Luke 22:28-29).

**We need
Jesus'
friendship
to live well.**

Jesus cares about each one of us immensely, and is determined not to lose any of those whom the Father has given Him. "I have guarded them, and none of them is lost" (John 17:12), except one who over and over refused to let Jesus save him.

Is your FRIENDSHIP with Christ alive?

Adolescent Catholics have many different kinds of relationships with Christ. Some are clearly and firmly His friends. They have never forgotten to pray. They have remembered the importance of keeping the commandments. They have realized that Jesus calls them to do great things in this world, and become worthy of eternal life.

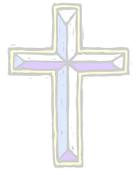
Others get mixed up as years go by. Some of them have difficult paths to walk. Sometimes their parents have unhappy times, and are not able to help them grow strong in prayer and faith, as would be best for them.

Some of them grow up in circumstances where temptations are very strong, and the forces of this world begin to capture their imaginations. They commit sin, and more and more fall away from knowing Jesus.

Will Christ always be a FRIEND to you?

However much we may have fallen away from Christ, He never abandons us. He will not give up on us, but repeatedly calls us back to His friendship and grace.

On Easter Sunday the apostles, close friends of Jesus, were together, behind locked doors. They were afraid, because they thought those who had crucified Jesus would come after them too.



They had been told stories that Jesus had risen, but they did not believe the stories. They were also a bit afraid of seeing Jesus, because they had abandoned Him when He was arrested, and were too embarrassed to even be seen by Him.

But Jesus came and said not a word about their sins. He said simply: "**Peace** be with you." Then He gave them His Holy Spirit. They knew that He knew their sins, and that He had forgiven them. He said to them also: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23).

He said this because He was thinking of you and me. We would also commit sins, and be tempted to fall away from Him, with no good and safe place to go. So He wanted us to know that we can be **forgiven** all our sins, get to know Christ much better, and have our faith and our hope become strong by the power of the Holy Spirit. We receive this forgiveness and strength by going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

GOOD THINGS the Sacrament of Reconciliation can do for you

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a very important sacrament for us. Some young people are a bit afraid of it (though it is a gift of peace) when they first experience it. Some people feel that it is useless for them. But this sacrament is most **important**, and perhaps more than at all other times in our adolescent years.

There are several things that the Sacrament of Reconciliation does for us. It takes away our sins. If we have committed really serious or mortal sins, it is the *only* way we have to get rid of our sins. It is the way Christ in his mercy has chosen for us as the way to get back to grace.

Even if we have no serious sins, Reconciliation does great things for us. It is a way of coming to Christ for courage and strength in all our trials. As we get older we may be seriously tempted to do really wrong things. But those who come to Christ in this sacrament often find the **courage** and grace not to fail Christ in difficult times.



Confessing makes our times of going to Communion more honest. Sometimes when we go to Communion our minds might be rather vague and unclear. We are coming to receive the Lord, who knows us perfectly. Sometimes we are not so sure about the state of our hearts and souls. We have committed sins, and let ourselves get vague and unclear.



But confessing through the Sacrament of Reconciliation straightens things out. When we confess honestly and thoughtfully, we tell Christ that we are sorry for things we know are wrong. His kindness gives us not only forgiveness, but also healing. When we confess regularly (perhaps once a month) we experience the great peace of Christ's friendship and **mercy**. And when we go to Communion then, we know that He knows us as His real friends.

RECONCILIATION helps us face sexuality honestly

Reconciliation and sins of impurity

Some people stop going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation when they grow into adolescence. Their minds often seem filled with impure thoughts. They say or do things of which they are ashamed. Sometimes they are not quite sure what is right or wrong. Instead of going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and getting their whole life straightened out, they just retreat into silence. In confusion, they may even dread going to Mass or Communion.

All of this anxiety is unnecessary. Confession is an **easy** and good thing. We ought to go to confession regularly if we want our faith to be strong, and our friendship with Christ to give peace of our lives.

How does one confess embarrassing sins?

This does take some thinking. But the problem can easily be solved.

First of all, we need to remember that when we go to Christ in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, he already knows everything. The priest to whom we confess serves as his instrument. Christ requires us to confess to his priest, so that we will be as willing to do something to get rid of our sins as we were to commit the sins. But Christ has made things easy for us. We can go to the priest with **perfect secrecy**. We can choose any priest we want. We can choose either face-to-face confession or go to confession anonymously, behind a screen. The priest has a most solemn obligation never to tell anyone, or to embarrass us, about what we say to Christ through him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Yes, but what do we say?

Actually this is not very difficult. Some things young people can say about the sins they have committed are, for example: "I let myself deliberately think of impure things many times." "I went to a movie I knew would be full of sex, and it filled my mind with impure thoughts." "When I was bothered with impure thoughts, I committed a sin of impurity by myself." "When I was with a boy (or girl), we touched each other in impure ways." "I committed a sin of impurity with another person."

Sometimes we can begin our confession by saying: "Father, I am a bit **confused** and embarrassed about some of the things I am going to confess. Please help me if I do not do it correctly." You can be pretty sure that he will want to do everything he can to help you if you say that. If you care about finding a particularly good confessor, that is usually easy. You might ask your catechist, or even your mother or father. Priests like to be kind to young people who are trying to be friends of Christ. They remember when they were young, and went through puzzling years, and they will want to help you.



Outline: Remembering the "how" of confessing

"I forgot how to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation." Well, it is very easy to learn again.

When you go to confession within communal penance services, prayers are said together in the beginning, and then people go to confession to any of the priests who are hearing confessions. All the steps for confession are usually repeated by the priest so you will remember.

In going to confession by yourself, in your parish, this is how you are to approach the sacrament:

- † *Pray* — Speak with our Lord, and ask him to help you make a good confession. You can be sure he will not refuse this prayer.
- † *Examine your conscience* — Try to think honestly of the more serious sins you have committed, pledging to confess even what embarrasses you (for Christ will make it easy and will give you peace). You should have a prayer book or manual that gives a helpful guide to examining conscience, or your teacher or catechist can recommend one. Take the time to tell our Lord you are sorry before you go to the confessional, as thoughtfully and honestly as you can.
- † *Confess your sins to the priest* — The way you do this can be in your own style. You could begin: "Father, my last confession was about ___ months (or years!) ago. My sins are: ___", and then tell him the sins you remembered in your examination of conscience.
- † *Pray an "Act of Contrition"* — Trying to speak from the heart. This is the most important part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Real sorrow means that we intend not to do the same thing over. If we have gone to impure movies, or skipped Mass on Sunday without a good reason, we should tell the Lord: "Help me, and I won't do that again."

It is always good to practice the "Act of Contrition" by saying it every night before going to bed.



ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend You, my God, who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

† *The priest gives you a penance* — Usually this is a number of prayers to say. But it could be some other thing, like reading a chapter of the Gospels. If you do not understand the penance, or think you may not be able to do it, tell the priest. You will be happy to see how understanding he is.

The priest speaks words of absolution and, as he does, Christ Himself forgives you your sins. You leave the confessional, and perform the penance you have been given.

TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

1. The Sacrament of Reconciliation assists our growth toward maturity.
2. There are many benefits which are attained from the celebration of the Sacrament.
3. The sacrament aids us in answering our questions and realizing our confusion over issues of sexuality.

CHRIST and the courage to be pure of heart

.....
Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

Jesus taught pure love as the kind of love that makes the world better and fuller. Relationships of pure love take courage. Courageous love is not the kind of selfish love which can break dreams and fracture hearts. Christ calls us to live out the consequences of our sexuality through a life-style of chastity.

These are the things we will talk about in this fourth lesson:

- **Pure love** makes the world a better place.
- Courage is needed in **relationships** of pure love.
- Selfish, non-courageous love can lead to that lust which destroys **dreams**.
- A life of chastity is the proper **consequence** of our sexuality.

Pure love VERSUS selfish love

Sometimes food is labeled “pure.” We know that this food can be eaten and enjoyed in safety.

Food is pure when it is not mixed with things that should never be in it. It is pure when there are no impurities like dirt or dead insects in it. **Pure** is better than impure.

Sometimes we see “pure gold.” Such gold is very precious and worth very much.

But sometimes what looks like gold is some cheap metal, just covered with a very thin layer of gold, or even only painted gold. Sometimes gold is mixed with cheaper metals, and then is not worth very much. Pure is better than impure.

Sometimes love is pure. Love that is pure is just love; it is not love trickily mixed with baser things. It is the kind of love that Jesus taught, the kind of love that makes the world happy, and heals things everywhere. Pure is better than impure.



Pure love is the love that shines in happy and good **friendships**. It is the love that gives joy of life.

“Love is patient and is kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude.... Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

There are many different kinds of impure love.

Sometimes impure love is love mixed with dishonesty.

People often say they love others and pretend to care about them. But they are dishonest, and simply do not love in truth. Have you ever found people who only pretend to be caring and good?

Sometimes cheap love is mixed with selfishness.

Imagine someone who wants to befriend another person, but not because he really likes him. He knows the other person has lots of money, and his family has many things he wishes he had. So he tells himself: I must cultivate this friendship, so I can get everything I can for myself out of this fellow.

Is this pure love? Is this guy a real friend? Have you ever seen “friends” who were like that?

Sometimes love is mixed with lust, with impurity.

Think of a boy who rather likes a girl, and finds it fun to be with her. But, because he has listened to what some other people say, or has seen impure tactics in movies, TV shows, and on websites, he decides not to love her with a pure love, with a **love** that counts her as important, and wants her life to be happy and full of good things. Rather, he decides to use her to get gratification for himself.

He decides that he wants to touch or kiss her in really impure ways, or do other impure things with her. Perhaps she does not want to, because she knows that playing at sexual love in this way is bad in many ways.

She knows this is a dangerous situation. One thing quickly leads to another. It twists the heart from the kinds of happiness young people need to share, and presses toward the kinds of acts that cause great trouble. Quickly it leads to bitter and broken friendships. Sometimes it leads more quickly than anyone imagined to the kinds of acts that cause pregnancy, and sometimes cause terrible diseases. But even worse than this, it leads at once to distorting what love really is, and mixes something lustful and wrong into what should be pure love. And so it is very sinful, and does disastrous things to our hearts and souls.

But the boy tells himself: I can get around her. If I play my cards right, I can pressure her, and make her do the things she says she does not want to do.

Is this a pure kind of love? Is it **decent** and right?

Happy and good sexual activity goes only with marriage.

Faith does not teach that sexuality is bad. Certainly not! It is God who created sexuality. And He made it something good and precious and joyful. But God calls us to respect His gift and use it rightly.



Sexuality is something dear and important, and made for important and **intelligent** purposes. It is not a game or an object to be toyed with.

God made sexual activity to go only with marriage. It must have the generous promises of marriage, made realistically by those able to keep the promises they make.

**Marriage
is a
lifelong
promise.**

People who get married are planning something precious, something that takes courage and generosity. Sexuality was made to seal a love promised to last all the way to death. People promise then that they will give themselves to each other, and be **faithful** to each other, no matter what. "For better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, with these vows," the married couple says to each other, "until death do us part." I will never forsake you, never leave you. No matter what might go wrong, I will belong to you until I die.

And they are planning also to serve life. They know that God made sexual activity also for having children. And they marry to honor God's plan and have children. They want **children** whom they will love with all their hearts, and care for in all the long years of life. God created the family to be a man and a woman united in marriage, with their children.

The pagan world, often reflected in TV, movies, lyrics and websites makes a game of sex. But it is a sick and bad game. This treating sex so cheaply is what makes so much pain in this world. It causes the endless divorces we see. It causes abortion, the killing of tiny unwanted babies. It causes homes to be selfish and full of hurt.

But keeping hearts **chaste** makes it possible to have the generous love that makes good and strong homes. It makes people able, when they marry, to love each other all their lives. It makes them glad to have children, and care for them with love always.

Pure love, chaste love: this guards homes, and young people in love, and little children, and all good things in life.

Relationships and PURE love

Courage is another name for bravery. It is a virtue, a good gift that God plants in the hearts of those who seek for it with all their hearts. We need courage to do good things that are hard to do, but which have to be done in order to save what is precious.



Courage does not mean never being afraid, or never having any fear at all, or never finding it difficult to do what is right. But **courage** means being determined, and able, to do what is good and right, no matter what it costs.

A brave father and a brave mother will do all they can to protect a little child being attacked by someone wicked. They will do this even if it is dangerous to do so. They will do it even if the person hurting the child is powerful, and may hurt or even kill them if they try to stop him. Good people do what is right and good even when they are afraid and it is dangerous. They are brave because they love so much the good people and good things that are at risk.



Brave people are the people with great hearts. They are the people who love generously, and will protect what they know love requires them to protect, not matter what.

Remember: **Bravery** does not mean being just bold, or doing foolish things that are dangerous. It means having a heart great enough to do the good things I should do, even if it is dangerous and very difficult to do so.

Discussion questions

- Have you known stories of different kinds of courageous people?
- Have you known any people whom you think to be very brave?
- How can we become brave?

Selfish love, sexuality, AND broken dreams

In this world, it always takes courage to have a pure heart for a whole life long.

One of the most important kinds of **courage** is the bravery to refuse to do wrong things, even if others tease or make fun of you, or threaten to hurt you if you do not.

Think of some cases:

Lots of people sell drugs in Joe's neighborhood.

He knows that drugs are a bad business. But to begin to deal with them can mean making much money. There can be intense pleasure in taking some drugs himself (even though they are also terribly dangerous).

To sell and use drugs ruins lives. Deep down, Joe knows that.



But bigger and tougher guys than he is want him to run drugs for them. If he will not do it, they will make fun of him: "Mama's boy!" "Afraid to do anything that is exciting." "There is no other way you can make money to get the things you want." "We know you might tell the cops on us if you don't help us; you are dangerous to us if you don't join us." "You do this or you will regret it."

Can it take courage not to do things that everybody does? Can it take a great heart to refuse to do things that are the sources of pain everywhere, even if people pressure us to do so?

To live with **pure hearts** also takes courage.

Many TV programs, movies, songs, books and websites are created by people who disagree entirely with Christ. They do not believe in generous love, but in lust, in getting for yourself the pleasure you want, even if other people, and homes, and little children are hurt deeply by the cruel and selfish kinds of lust they live.

But these are powerful people. They make money on lust. They use their power to make fun of people who live generous and decent lives.

And, what is worse, many people we like, who are basically good people, are deeply affected by them. Some people close to us also pressure us and drive us to do what we know is wrong.

And, even worse, there is a traitor inside my own heart. Though I know Christ is right, and that being generous and having pure hearts is needed to guard honest love, and needed to **guard** families and homes and little children, I sometimes feel myself urged to go along with things that are selfish and wrong.

It often takes much courage to have a good heart. And when we turn to Christ we will find that courage. He gives us His grace and help to do what is right. Our desire to turn to God is itself a result of grace.

? Question

? How can I find God's grace in my life?



Sexuality and its CONSEQUENCES

Christ is the one who gives us courage to be chaste.

He knows how hard it sometimes is to do what we know to be really right. He knows what it is to be made fun of, to be ridiculed, to be treated cruelly, for doing what is right.

Do you remember from the Gospels the times **Jesus** was made fun of? When people spat in His face? When they ridiculed Him in front of everybody, at especially painful times?

But Jesus also knows that a great and good life needs to be a courageous one. One of His most common words of encouragement to His friends was: "Do not be afraid!" He promised them, that if the odds seemed against them, and that it seemed too difficult to do what is really right and good, He would never abandon them.

Jesus promises us too. We need never be afraid that it will be too difficult to keep our hearts truthful and generous and pure.

The world will pressure us constantly to give up, and join the unhappy people who treat love as something cheap and wrong. But He will remain faithful to us, if we want to have hearts that are right.

We can be faithful to our friends, loyal to all that is good and generous, if we lean on the power of Christ's **friendship** and the grace He gives us. Remember, too, some of the places where we find Christ: in Communion; in prayer; in doing generous things for others; in confession.

A life of courage and pure love is the only proper consequence of our sexuality. All the temptations of the world cannot overwhelm us if we turn to Christ, follow His example, and ask for this help. It is possible — and it is far better — to live pure, chaste lives.

TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

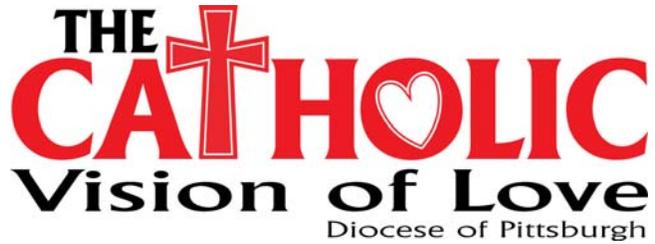
1. The world is made better by lives of pure love.
2. Pure love takes real courage.
3. Love which is centered on the self can lead to misuses of sex.
4. Our sexuality is meant to be lived through lives of chastity.

THE
CATHOLIC
Vision of Love
Diocese of Pittsburgh

Personal Safety
Curriculum



Grade 7



**Personal Safety
7th Grade Lesson Plans
Communication Boundaries**

Texting, Touching, And Talking About Ourselves And Others

LESSON OUTLINE:

- Introduction & Opening Prayer: 5 – 7 Minutes
- Teaching on Respect, Focus on the Dignity of the Human Person: 7 – 15 Minutes
- Activity—Talking about Texting, Touching and Taking Responsibility for Our Words: 20 Minutes
(This can be done by dividing the group and letting students talk about each scenario, then share with large group, or by facilitating discussion about each scenario with the entire group.)
- Wrap Up & Connection to Catholic Social Teaching and Dignity of Human Person: 5 – 10 Minutes
- Closing Prayer & Activity: 5 – 7 Minutes

LESSON BACKGROUND:

Human life is sacred: *"Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being."*

(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2258, Notation 56 CDF, instruction, Donum vitae, intro. 5.)

1. All life has dignity: *"The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God (article 1); it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude (article 2). It is essential to a human being freely to direct himself to this fulfillment (article 3). By his deliberate actions (article 4), the human person does, or does not, conform to the good promised by God and attested by moral conscience (article 5). Human beings make their own contribution to their interior growth; they make their whole sentient and spiritual lives into means of this growth (article 6). With the help of grace they grow in virtue (article 7), avoid sin, and if they sin they entrust themselves as did the prodigal son¹ to the mercy of our Father in heaven (article 8). In this way they attain to the perfection of charity."*

(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 1700 and Part Three Life in Christ: Section One—Man's Vocation Life in the Spirit, Chapter One the dignity of the Human Person)

2. Truthfulness in Speech: *“The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant.”* (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2464)

3. Charity is Christ-like: *“The Ten Commandments state what is required in the love of God and love of neighbor. The first three concern love of God, and the other seven love of neighbor.”* *“As charity comprises the two commandments to which the Lord related the whole Law and the prophets . . . so the Ten Commandments were themselves given on two tablets. Three were written on one tablet and seven on the other.”*
(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2067, Notation 27 St. Augustine, Sermo 33, 2, 2: PL 38, 208.)

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)

4. Respect and Reputation: The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly explains this: *“Respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury.277 He becomes guilty:*

- of rash judgment who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor;

- of detraction who, without objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them;278

- of calumny who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them.
(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2477)

“To avoid rash judgment, everyone should be careful to interpret insofar as possible his neighbor's thoughts, words, and deeds in a favorable way: Every good Christian ought to be more ready to give a favorable interpretation to another's statement than to condemn it. But if he cannot do so, let him ask how the other understands it. And if the latter understands it badly, let the former correct him with love. If that does not suffice, let the Christian try all suitable ways to bring the other to a correct interpretation so that he may be saved.279 (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2478)

“Detraction and calumny destroy the reputation and honor of one's neighbor. Honor is the social witness given to human dignity, and everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect. Thus, detraction and calumny offend against the virtues of justice and charity” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2479).

“Every word or attitude is forbidden which by flattery, adulation, or complaisance encourages and confirms another in malicious acts and perverse conduct. Adulation is a grave fault if it makes one an accomplice in another’s vices or grave sins. Neither the desire to be of service nor friendship justifies duplicitous speech. Adulation is a venial sin when it only seeks to be agreeable, to avoid evil, to meet a need, or to obtain legitimate advantages” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2480).

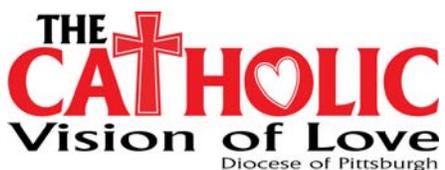
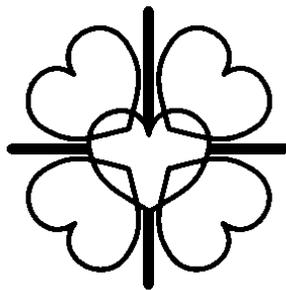
“Boasting or bragging is an offense against truth. So is irony aimed at disparaging someone by maliciously caricaturing some aspect of his behavior.”
(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2481)

“A lie consists in speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving.”²⁸⁰ The Lord denounces lying as the work of the devil: “You are of your father the devil...there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies”²⁸¹ (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2482).

“Lying is the most direct offense against the truth. To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead someone into error. By injuring man’s relation to truth and to his neighbor, a lie offends against the fundamental relation of man and of his word to the Lord”
(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2483).

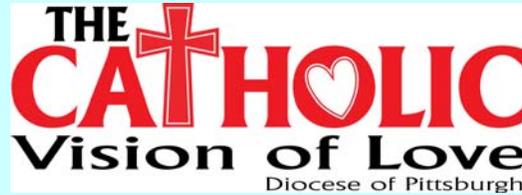
“The gravity of a lie is measured against the nature of the truth it deforms, the circumstances, the intentions of the one who lies, and the harm suffered by its victims. If a lie in itself only constitutes a venial sin, it becomes mortal when it does grave injury to the virtues of justice and charity” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2484).

“By its very nature, lying is to be condemned. It is a profanation of speech, whereas the purpose of speech is to communicate known truth to others. The deliberate intention of leading a neighbor into error by saying things contrary to the truth constitutes a failure in justice and charity. The culpability is greater when the intention of deceiving entails the risk of deadly consequences for those who are led astray” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2485).

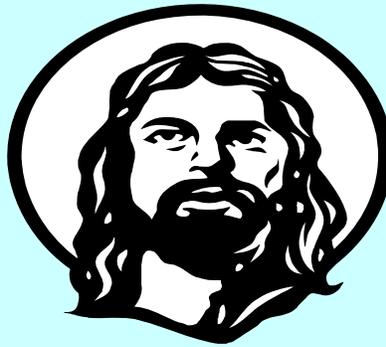


Introduction & Opening Prayer: 5 – 7 Minutes

Catechist



**COMMUNICATION BOUNDARIES
OPENING PRAYER**



Leader: We begin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reader: "Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long" (Ps 25:5).

All: "Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long" (Ps 25:5).

Reader: God, help us to know your truth, help us to learn to follow your ways, and to trust in all your words.

All: "Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long" (Ps 25:5).

**TEACHING ON RESPECT,
FOCUS ON THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON: 7 - 15 Minutes**

ACTIVITY 1 (Introduction Activity) WORDS, WORDS, WORDS Less than 5 Minutes

Materials: black construction paper, white chalk

Give black construction paper and white chalk to every student in the class and tell them that they have 30 seconds to write something negative that they have texted, messaged, written, or said. When the time is up, tell them that they have 30 seconds to try to get the chalk off of the paper and have them either hang their papers around the room for everyone to see, or just display them in their seats.

(Catechist Note: The students might be apprehensive about writing negative things on the construction paper—this is a good thing! However it makes this activity a little trickier. The point of this activity is to show the students that what is written, spoken, or typed cannot ever fully be erased.)

Ask: Did it work? Just like that white chalk on their paper, we can't ever really take back or erase the words that we speak, so it's important to remember that all our words should be uplifting, kind, good.

Explanation/Lesson Content: 5 to 10 Minutes

- From the activity, which was easier: putting words on the paper or taking them off?
- Were any of you embarrassed about what you had written?
- How does this relate to what you have seen in the past week or two at school or in the news?
- What are some of the ways that individuals can make their thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and opinions public? **(texting, emailing, facebook, email, notes, messages, speaking, etc)**

Our projected image is a culmination of all of the information that we show others: our words, our posts, the messages written on our t-shirts, how we speak, what we say, where we say it, who we talk about, and to whom we speak.

- How does God instruct us about our words and how we use them? **(get some responses from the class before entering into the teaching)**

“The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2464)

Refer to the background on this lesson (pages 1-3) for specific points to highlight about lying, gossiping, slander, etc. and cover them based on responses elicited from students.

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR WORDS!!!

(Have the students read the following words from the bible)

- ✓ “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles” (Proverbs 21:23);
- ✓ “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29)
 - Jesus warned us about the power of our words. He taught us that our words are so important that they will actually determine our condemnation or justification.
 - He said we will be held responsible for all our words, even our careless, idle words.

“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36-37).

Clean Speech: From Grandma to the Bible

- Can Grandma come to lunch? Think about it...how would Grandma react if she was listening to your lunch table or locker room conversation?
- What about if Grandma was reading your texts? Is Grandma a friend on Facebook?
- The “Grandma Test” helps to determine if what we are saying is appropriate. If you wouldn’t say some of this around Grandma, why not?

One of Jesus’ disciples had a lot to say about speech. Paul cautioned believers to guard their words and forbid any corrupt or worthless talk to come from their mouths.

Paul instructed that only those things which lift-up, encourage, and are gracious should be expressed to others:

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Eph. 4:29).

- Does that mean that we shouldn't be honest? No. It means that we should speak well, and be honest with charity and kindness.

Obscenities, profanity, cursing, dirty jokes, or making fun of others is not something that should ever be found in the mouth of a believer.

“Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving” (Eph. 5:4 NIV).

Even **sarcasm** can be harmful. The etymology of the word “sarcasm”

- comes from the Latin word, sarcasmus,
- and the Greek word, σαρκασμός (sarkasmos), - to tear flesh like dogs,
- from sarx, sark-, flesh
- the root word literally means "to cut a piece of flesh (from the targeted person)." (Liddell & Scott Greek-English Lexicon, 1996 Oxford University Press)

The tongue is a powerful weapon: *“It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”* (James 3:6)

- Today there are more ways than ever to communicate with others: talking, writing, emailing, blogging, posting, typing, texting, YouTube, facebook, instant messaging, webcam.
- With more ways to say what we want, we have to recognize the power in our words.
- Using good language and clean words is one way that we honor and respect ourselves and our God.
- Treating our bodies with respect is another way that we honor God.

***“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroy God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy”* (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).**

- Why did God give us the Ten Commandments? **(Allow the students to give some possible suggestions.)**
- God gave us the Ten Commandments to reveal our sins and show us a better way to live with each other, and to respect ourselves, each other, and God.

Some of the commandments speak directly to the issue of words, let's take a closer look:

DISCUSSION GUIDE ACTIVITY

20 Minutes

ACTIVITY 2—TALKING ABOUT TEXTING, TOUCHING AND TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR WORDS

Catechist/Facilitator Notes:

Talking with young people about boundaries is very important. This can be done in a couple of ways. One way to discuss this with young people is to divide them in to small groups to discuss each scenario, and then bring the entire group together and have the young people explain their decisions. Another way to do this is to read each scenario to the class and help them discuss what to do. Some things to ask, or to keep in mind:

“I don’t know....” While there are times that this response from a child means what they are saying, often they are ways to say, “I don’t want to express my opinion around my peers,” “I’m afraid to say what I really think,” or “I don’t want to think about this very hard.” Do not accept responses that avoid answering the question. In those cases, consider responding with, “How about we all talk with a partner about this for a minute and then share with the group,” “Oh, I bet if we all thought about it together we could figure it out,” or “Well, tell me a reason that you like one in particular....”

“Why do you think that boy is crying?” Emotions are often difficult to discuss—for everyone. But young people really need to practice empathy with their peers. Remember to ask open ended questions to clarify and help explain. Another great question to ask in conversations about tough topics, “What do you mean by that?”

It’s okay to say, **“This is complicated, so let’s really talk about it...”** Young people should be able to practice talking about their feelings, reactions, and experiences. This is a great way to open the door for conversations with their parents.

Set boundaries for this kind of discussion with young people (example: One person talking at a time; write down ideas and pass them to the front; get together with your group and discuss, etc).

Some considerations from this activity: This is an important activity to help teach children about sexual predators, exploitation, and groomers. Groomers use information that they gather about the victim to make them feel safe and liked.

Some of the scenarios discussed in the activities in this section look at tactics that kids can watch out for (these are themes for which there are many variations, let the kids know what they are):

1. **Let's go private.**" (inviting the child to leave the public chatroom and create a private chat or move to instant-messaging or phone texting)
2. **"Where's your computer (located, what room) in the house?"** (to see if parents might be around)
3. **"What's your favorite video game, television show, sports team?"** (questions like these tell the groomer more about their victims so that they know what gifts to offer – e.g., concert tickets; Webcam, software, video games)
4. **"I know someone who can get you a modeling job."** (opens a doorway for inappropriate photos)
5. **"You seem sad. Tell me what's bothering you."** (sympathy leading to a false sense of trust)
6. **"What's your phone number?"** (asking for personal info of any kind – usually happens at a later stage, after the target's feeling comfortable with the groomer)
7. **"If you don't... [do what I ask], I'll... [tell your parents OR share your photos in a photo blog / Webcam directory / file-sharing network]"** (intimidation – used as the groomer learns more and more about the target)
8. **"I have never loved anyone as much as I love you."** (playing on the emotions of the target, this sometimes will convince kids to do things that they normally wouldn't even think of)

JESUS
THE WAY, 
 **THE TRUTH,**
THE LIFE. 

DISCUSSION GUIDE ACTIVITY

1. TALKING ABOUT SITUATIONAL EVALUATIONS: 10 minutes

(Catechist presents each scenario to the large group, then students discuss in small groups for 60 seconds OR students discuss in small groups and then discuss with larger group)

Recommendation: Separate the class into groups of 3 or 4. Ask some of the questions to the class for general discussion then facilitate discussion on each question.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Yesterday you heard that a girl from homeroom made herself sick after lunch. When you saw her coming out of the bathroom today, you remembered that some kids called her bulimic, and also heard that she got called to the nurse's office. Today after school, your friends were talking about it and didn't know that she got called to the nurse's office.
 - ⇒ Should you tell them about what you heard or that you saw her coming out the bathroom?
 - ⇒ What are some of the possibilities for gossip here?
- A teacher always hugs you after everyone leaves the classroom and sometimes asks you really personal questions.
 - ⇒ Is there anything wrong with that, why or why not?

ENTIRE CLASS DISCUSSION

- Someone from a gaming site online wants you to send them a picture of you in your bathing suit.
 - ⇒ Is this ok? Why or why not?

NOTE: The possession or transmission of media with compromising or suggestive images of minors is considered child pornography and is against the law. This includes webcam and email, which has certain legal ramifications, as well as social, emotional, and reputational effects. Boundaries identify responsibilities. Crossing these boundaries, and crossing state lines with child pornography is a felony.

EITHER SMALL GROUP OR ENTIRE CLASS DISCUSSION

- A friend from online asks you for your address and tells you that they love you even though you've never met them.
 - ⇒ Is that ok? Why or why not?
- Your friend's dad offers to drive you home without your friend and takes a very long way to your house. When you mention this to your friend, she gets weird and very defensive.
 - ⇒ Do you talk to your parents about this, or just ignore it?
- You spent the night at a friend's house this past weekend and something happened that you're not sure about. Your friend's brother and his friends were there, and they had some alcohol. Your friend drank some of the alcohol with the boys. They also were watching things on the TV that you know your parents wouldn't like. When you got home, your mom asked you how the weekend was and you said, "OK". You thought that telling your parents about this might get your friend in trouble. Now, you feel funny about going back to your friend's house and your mom keeps asking you why.
 - ⇒ What do you tell your parents?
- A friend takes your cell phone into the bathroom and sends a text message to someone else with it.
 - ⇒ Is this ok? Why or why not?

Note: The phone is linked to who you are: whatever is sent or received on your phone is your responsibility. The possession or transmission of media with compromising images of minors is considered child pornography and is against the law. This is known as sexting and has certain legal ramifications, as well as social, emotional, and reputational effects. Boundaries identify responsibilities.

- ▶ Someone sends you a picture message on your cell phone of someone without their clothes on.
 - ⇒ Is this ok? Why or why not?
 - ⇒ Also, is this legal?
 - ⇒ What do you do and who do you tell?

Note: The phone is linked to who you are: whatever is sent or received on your phone is your responsibility. The possession or transmission of media with compromising images of minors is considered child pornography and is against the law. This is known as sexting and has certain legal ramifications, as well as social, emotional, and reputational effects. Boundaries identify responsibilities.

2. WHO DO I TALK TO? (And why/how could they help?) – 10 Minutes

+ Distribute student handout

(Catechist presents each person to the large group, then students discuss in small groups for 60 seconds if they need to, although some of these should be pretty straightforward – distribute student handout, Who Do I Talk To?)

Catechist Notes

WHO DO I TALK TO?

(And why or how could they help?)

Parent	Teacher	Trusted Adult (who's that?)	Priest
Doctor	Friend	Friend's Parent	Anyone else?

- ➔ What if my friend tells me that he/she is in trouble?
 - ➔ What if I know that my friend is doing something dangerous, even if it is online?
 - ➔ What if I think that my friend is doing something dangerous?
 - ➔ What if I think that someone is hurting my friend?
 - ➔ What if someone keeps sending me text messages that I wouldn't want my parents to see?
 - ➔ What if someone is making me feel uncomfortable online?
 - ➔ What if I sent someone to someone online or through a text message that is embarrassing now?
-

3. WRAP UP & CONNECTION TO CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON – 5 – 10 Minutes

We talked about a lot of really important things today. Let's review a few things:

1. What we say and how we say it makes a difference:

“Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil” (Ephesians 4:25-27); “A mild answer calms wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise pours out knowledge, but the mouth of fools spurts forth folly. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse one crushes the spirit” (Proverbs 15:1-4).



God is clear about the power of words, especially regarding the respect and reputation of ourselves and others.

From the Old Testament teachings and Commandments to the New Testament, we are held responsible for **rash judgment, detraction, calumny, boasting, lying, and flattery.**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains and clarifies:

“Respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury.”²⁷⁷

He (**we**) become(s) guilty:

—▶ of **rash judgment** who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor;

—▶ of **detraction** who, without objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them;²⁷⁸

—▶ of **calumny** who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them.
(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2477)

▶ “To avoid rash judgment, everyone should be careful to interpret insofar as possible his neighbor's thoughts, words, and deeds in a favorable way:

Every good Christian ought to be more ready to give a favorable interpretation to another's statement than to condemn it. But if he cannot do so, let him ask how the other understands it. And if the latter understands it badly, let the former correct him with love. If that does not suffice, let the Christian try all suitable ways to bring the other to a correct interpretation so that he may be saved.²⁷⁹

(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2478)

- ▶ “Detraction and calumny **destroy the reputation and honor of one's neighbor**. Honor is the social witness given to human dignity, and everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect. Thus, detraction and calumny offend against the virtues of justice and charity”
(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2479)
- ▶ “Every word or attitude is forbidden which by **flattery, adulation, or complaisance** encourages and confirms another in malicious acts and perverse conduct. Adulation is a grave fault if it makes one an accomplice in another's vices or grave sins. Neither the desire to be of service nor friendship justifies duplicitous speech. Adulation is a venial sin when it only seeks to be agreeable, to avoid evil, to meet a need, or to obtain legitimate advantages”
(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2480)
- ▶ “**Boasting** or bragging is an offense against truth. So is **irony** aimed at disparaging someone by maliciously caricaturing some aspect of his behavior”
(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2481)
- ▶ "A **lie** consists in speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving."²⁸⁰ The Lord denounces lying as the work of the devil: "You are of your father the devil...there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies"²⁸¹
(Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2482)
- ▶ “Lying is the most direct offense against the truth. To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead someone into error. By injuring man's relation to truth and to his neighbor, a lie offends against the fundamental relation of man and of his word to the Lord” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2483)

2. Sometimes we have to speak up:

- ▶ Especially if it involves dangerous behavior. What if a classmate brings a drug or a gun to school, or your friend tells you she's not eating until she loses 10 pounds? In cases like that, you need to tell a parent, teacher, or another trusted adult. Telling a grown-up who can help is **not** gossiping.
- ▶ Sometimes it's hard to determine what you should tell and what you should not tell. The best way to avoid being a part of the gossip problem in your school is to steer clear of kids who gossip, and if you hear a rumor, don't repeat it - and don't listen to it, either.
- ▶ Being a trustworthy and honest person means that when someone trusts you with a personal secret, keep it to yourself (unless someone is in danger).
- ▶ At first, you might not even realize that you're gossiping. But if someone gossips *with* you, he or she also might gossip *about* you. And it doesn't feel good to be on the receiving end. Talk with someone about this, like a parent, teacher, youth minister, or guidance counselor.

3. Remember, you have the power to change the way people view youth:

- ▶ Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. (1 Tim 4:12) When St. Paul wrote that to Timothy, he intended for all of us to **hear it, read it, believe it, and live it!**

4. So what if we have said something that we shouldn't have?

- ▶ Have respect for yourself too. It's not fair to "beat yourself up" over sins and weaknesses. God says to call *no man* a fool, including yourself: "...but whosoever shall say You fool, shall be in the danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:22)
- ▶ So, when you make a mistake or say something harsh, don't say to yourself: "You idiot! How could you be so stupid? I have to be the dumbest person in the whole world!" Instead, think about how you can change this.

5. Picture this:

- ▶ Gossiping and lying, saying harsh things, and using sarcasm that hurts others is like driving down the road and collecting dead bugs on the windshield. It makes things a little hard to see, but they are just little bugs on a big windshield.
- ▶ Going to confession can help clean the windshield and it gives you a chance to start over. But, if you refuse to acknowledge your sin (even if they are little or venial sins), the bugs on the windshield might become blinding, and then you won't see the really big things that can trip you up and kill you.

End the Class with the Closing Prayer:

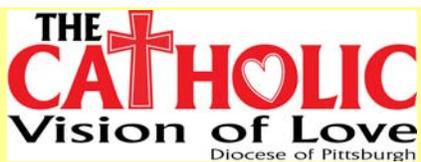
Interactive Prayer: Words, Hands, Hearts

Give white (or another color) construction paper, cut out in the shape of a hand, and permanent markers, to every student in the class and tell them that they have 30 seconds to write something positive that glorifies God and blesses others in every finger of the hand (five things total).

They may need to be prompted through this, so write some words on the board that fit: **awesome God, holy Lord, blessing, faith, hope, love, forgiveness**, etc.

Helpful Hint: Ask them to write down the words that they want to have more of in their lives.

Another way to work this activity: Explain the entire activity then play the song "*Give Us Clean Hands*" by Chris Tomlin for them to listen to and reflect on while they write on the construction paper.



COMMUNICATION BOUNDARIES CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: “Worthy are you, Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things; because of your will they came to be and were created.” Worthy (Revelation 4:11) Let us begin honoring God’s creation in our prayer today, as we begin all things,

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reader 1: “Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (I Cor. 3:16-17). God, we offer to you our bodies. Help us to glorify you in all that we say, write, and do.

All: Give us clean hands, oh Lord.

Reader 2: “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles” (Proverbs 21:23); “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29) God, help us to guard our words, our thoughts, and our reactions to the people around us.

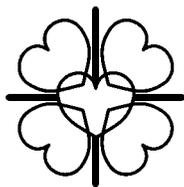
All: Give us pure hearts, oh Lord.

Reader 3: So give us clean hands and give us pure hearts, Let us not lift our souls to another. Oh God let this be a generation that seeks, Who seeks Your face, Oh God of Jacob. (From the song “Give Us Clean Hands” by Chris Tomlin)

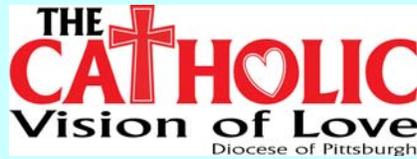
All: Jesus, help me to love myself and my neighbor today, as you have loved me.

Leader: Jesus taught us how to pray to His Father, so let us together pray the Lord’s Prayer:

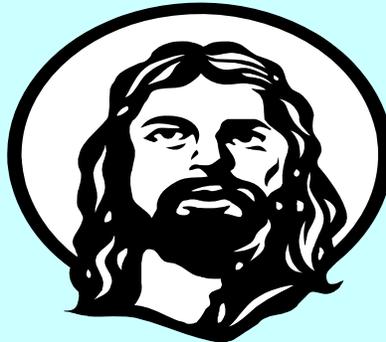
All: Our Father, who art in Heaven...Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



**Student
7th Grade**



**COMMUNICATION BOUNDARIES
OPENING PRAYER**



Leader: We begin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reader: "Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long" (Ps 25:5).

All: "Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long" (Ps 25:5).

Reader: God, help us to know your truth, help us to learn to follow your ways, and to trust in all your words.

All: "Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long" (Ps 25:5).

TALKING ABOUT SITUATIONAL EVALUATIONS

10 minutes

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Yesterday you heard that a girl from homeroom made herself sick after lunch. When you saw her coming out of the bathroom today, you remembered that some kids called her bulimic, and also heard that she got called to the nurse's office. Today after school, your friends were talking about it and didn't know that she got called to the nurse's office.
 - ⇒ Should you tell them about what you heard or that you saw her coming out the bathroom?
 - ⇒ What are some of the possibilities for gossip here?
- A teacher always hugs you after everyone leaves the classroom and sometimes asks you really personal questions.
 - ⇒ Is there anything wrong with that, why or why not?
- A friend from online asks you for your address and tells you that they love you even though you've never met them.
 - ⇒ Is that ok? Why or why not?
- Your friend's dad offers to drive you home without your friend and takes a very long way to your house. When you mention this to your friend, she gets weird and very defensive.
 - ⇒ Do you talk to your parents about this, or just ignore it?

Turn Page Over →

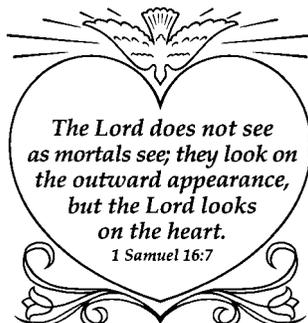
- You spent the night at a friend's house this past weekend and something happened that you're not sure about. Your friend's brother and his friends were there, and they had some alcohol. Your friend drank some of the alcohol with the boys. They also were watching things on the TV that you know your parents wouldn't like. When you got home, your mom asked you how the weekend was and you said, "OK". You thought that telling your parents about this might get your friend in trouble. Now, you feel funny about going back to your friend's house and your mom keeps asking you why.
 - ⇒ What do you tell your parents?

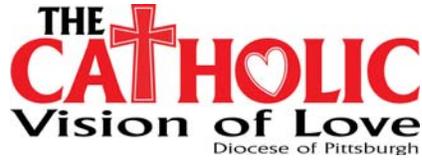
- A friend takes your cell phone into the bathroom and sends a text message to someone else with it.
 - ⇒ Is this ok? Why or why not?

- ▶ Someone sends you a picture message on your cell phone of someone without their clothes on.
 - ⇒ Is this ok? Why or why not?
 - ⇒ Is this legal?
 - ⇒ What do you do and who do you tell?



The phone is linked to who you are: whatever is sent or received on your phone is your responsibility. The possession or transmission of media with compromising images of minors is considered child pornography and is against the law. This is known as sexting and has certain legal ramifications, as well as social, emotional, and reputational effects. Boundaries identify responsibilities.

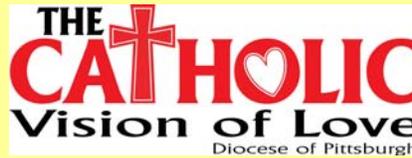




WHO DO I TALK TO? **(And why or how could they help?)**

Parent Teacher Trusted Adult (who's that?) Priest
Doctor Friend Friend's Parent Anyone
else?

- ➔ **What if my friend tells me that he/she is in trouble?**
- ➔ **What if I know that my friend is doing something dangerous, even if it is online?**
- ➔ **What if I think that my friend is doing something dangerous?**
- ➔ **What if I think that someone is hurting my friend?**
- ➔ **What if someone keeps sending me text messages that I wouldn't want my parents to see?**
- ➔ **What if someone is making me feel uncomfortable online?**
- ➔ **What if I sent someone to someone online or through a text message that is embarrassing now?**



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