

UNDERSTANDING: the changes we experience

CLASS 2

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

We grow throughout our lives. Even though we pass through predictable styles of growth, we do not all grow and develop at the same rate. Our growth is as unique and individual as we are. We grow in our emotions, mind, social life, and spiritual life in addition to our bodily growth. God has a special plan for each person. Our sexuality is a gift from God to be lived according to God's plan.

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

- There are different **stages** of life through which we grow.
- There are different kinds of growth and **development** which we experience.
- God's plan for **life** and for each of us includes these teachings:
 - ➔ It's all right to be different.
 - ➔ Sexuality is a gift from God.
 - ➔ It's important to have a correct answer to the question: Who am I?

STAGES OF LIFE

We are always growing and changing from one stage of life to another. It takes time for a person to grow and develop. It takes time, because we grow and develop in so many interesting ways!

Let's look at the stages of your **personal growth** and development.

Psychologists usually divide a lifetime up into different stages of growth and development.

Infancy — birth to about 2 or 3 years old

Childhood — 3 to about 10 years old

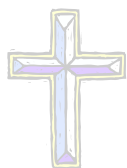
Preadolescence — 10 to about 12 or 13 years old

Adolescence — 12 or 13 through the teens

Young adulthood — about 21 to the middle years.

Middle adulthood — middle years of life

Senior adulthood — later years of life



Our growth and development in this life stop only when life itself comes to an end. Usually this is in the very late stages of life. But we know that death can come as a surprise at any time — by a fatal accident, a crime, or from a grave illness.

When our life on this earth ends, our life in the world to come begins. God made us to **live forever** with Him in the happiness and fulfillment of heaven.

Activity — What you can tell about life's stages

Describe briefly what kinds of things happen at each stage shown.



I — Infancy

C — Childhood

P — Preadolescence

A — Adolescence

YA — Young Adult

MA — Middle Adult

SA — Senior Adult

- In your own words, tell what *preadolescence* means.
- In your own words, tell what *adolescence* means.

Different KINDS of growth and development

There are many different ways a person can grow and develop. Physical development is the most obvious. When we talk about physical growth, we mean how we grow in size and in bodily strength and skills. We become more like adult men and women.

But growing up is more **complicated** than just growing up physically. Each one of us grows in the following ways:

PHYSICALLY

EMOTIONALLY

INTELLECTUALLY

SOCIALLY

SPIRITUALLY



You are a preadolescent on your way to adolescence. Adolescence is a wonderful time of rapid physical growth and change. In your adolescent years you will grow in height, weight, and muscle composition. Your sexual characteristics will develop. Girls begin to look more like young women. Boys begin to look more like young men. In general you will begin to look more mature. And you will **feel** different too.

The physical changes you are beginning to experience have a big impact on your emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual development. You may feel a bit uncomfortable at times. Sometimes you will be moody. You may feel sad and awkward. But it is normal and natural to have these feelings as you are growing.

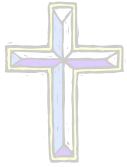
It takes a while to grow from childhood to adulthood, but you will find that it is worth it! Be **patient** with yourself. All these physical changes are part of God's overall plan toward helping you become fully alive.

We grow emotionally. As we grow from childhood to adulthood we feel attractions to people in ways we did not feel before. We see boys or girls we know in a new light. People of the complementary gender that we may not have noticed or liked before seem more interesting. We have interests in new things and different concerns too. We can also grow to be more understanding of others. Our whole life is getting more interesting.

We change intellectually. As we grow older, we learn a great deal. We can organize our thoughts more carefully. We can remember more. We learn to think more intelligently about our behavior. We can reason more clearly. People will begin to expect more of us. We will be more capable of doing things well.

We grow socially. When we were very young, our first contacts with people were with our family members. As we grew up a bit, we began to play with other children. We learned to share, and to make friends. As we approach adolescence we have a chance to broaden our friendships. Our lives become richer and larger and more complex in many good ways.

We mature spiritually. As we grow in understanding and in experience, we are able to learn much more about God too. We begin to realize that God knows us personally, and that He cares about everything in our lives. He has very special plans for us. God has special plans for the life of each person, because each one of us is important to Him. As we experience happy and sad times in our life, we see more and more that God is important to us and that God always loves us. We need to get to know God better, and share all of our life with Him.



As we mature in our life of faith, we not only learn more *about* God, but we are able to become His *friends*. In prayer and in the sacraments, He touches our lives deeply. We can actually get to “know God.” Friendship with Him changes everything. It makes us able to be better friends to others too. It helps us to be kinder, stronger, and more courageous. We learn how to guide our consciences honestly and how to think clearly about important things. We learn how to make **right choices**, choices that make life work. Our friendship with God gives us tremendous strength and help in our lives.

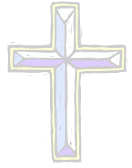
Activity — We grow in our life of faith

- ? Going to Mass every Sunday, and actively participating in Mass, is one of our important Catholic duties. Why is this so important for your life? Is it a duty or a special privilege?
- ? People who knew Jesus, and realized how important prayer was to him, asked him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Have you learned to pray in a more meaningful way, since you are older? Are you mature enough to occasionally give longer periods of time to prayer? What are some prayers you say? What are some ways to pray? Is prayer important to you?
- ? Have you ever helped in any of your parish works of justice and love? Have you ever helped in feeding the poor, or collecting clothing for those who have suffered from great tragedies? Have you ever done any other such important jobs?
- ? The Sacrament of Penance is important. How can the Sacrament of Penance make a difference in your life? Why is this sacrament important to you? Why do you think it is important to celebrate this sacrament of forgiveness often?

God’s PLAN

God has a special plan for each person. It unfolds differently for each individual, because each one is important to God for special reasons. We come to understand God’s plan for us in many ways. He wants us to grow and develop in the things we like to do. We sometimes realize this when we are quiet in **prayer**. We come to see what He wants of us, when we talk with people we admire and think about the kinds of things we could do that would be pleasing to God.

Each person is called to be a close friend of the Lord! Faith has always taught us how near He is, and how much He cares for us. But it can surprise us when we realize how very true this is — our life is very important to Him! He made us and everything we are — our feelings, or bodies, our hopes, our whole person. And He made our friends and all the people we meet on this earth. When we learn to respect and **love one another**, we learn to love God more joyfully too. All of our growing, changing, and developing is part of God's plan to enable us to grow in the paths of friendship and love.



It is ALL RIGHT to be different!

When we look at our timetable, we learn that each one of us is special.

We develop at our own pace or rate. Some boys and girls develop earlier or later than others. Each one of us is unique. We are all custom-made!

When we begin developing into young men and young women, we say we are entering "puberty." Our bodies are changing from the bodies of children to the bodies of adults. We are going through social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual, and spiritual changes at the same time. This can make life *confusing*. We are growing in all ways — at once!

Accepting the **difference** in the rate of our growing helps remind us how true it is that we human beings are of various kinds. We come in all sizes and all races, with various handicaps and abilities, and with a great variety of talents.

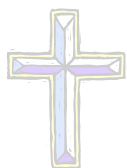
**Each
one of
us is
special.**

God wisely made each one of us **special**. And it is good to learn to live happily in a world of so many kinds of people. Each person is made in the image of God, precious and irreplaceable. God is always guiding our lives and watching over us. There is no need to worry or to be afraid of all the changes. God will help us.

Sexuality — a GIFT from God

All that you are is a gift from God. Be glad that He has made you who you are. Be glad that He made you a boy, or that He made you a girl.

Your sexuality is a gift, too. The word "sexuality" has different meanings. Sometimes people use the phrase "genital sexuality" to refer to our sexual organs, and to the great power God has given to people so that they may become fathers and mothers. Their children will become the center of their lives.



Sometimes “sexuality” is used in a much wider sense. It is used to talk about all the emotions, feelings, and talents that boys and girls and men and women possess. Sexuality, in this sense, affects all that we are. It affects the way we feel, think, love, and build friendships with one another. Sexuality refers to more than just our body and the power God gave us for physical union with another person in marriage. Sexuality refers to the **whole person** and to everything that makes a person full of life. It refers to all that makes us a special person.

Who AM I?

I am this special person. I am this boy or this girl. I am like you — but I am unlike you, too. And, I am growing!

At each stage of growth and development, we learn something that helps us get ready for the next stage. We are always changing!

Most of all, we remember through all stages of life that God loves us, and that He is guiding us along the way. We remember that God made us His own and that we are wonderfully made!

God’s gift of sexuality is **precious**. To show our respect for this gift in ourselves and in others, we rejoice in our growth and development. We use modesty in dress and behavior, and in the language we use when we speak about our bodies. The modesty we have tells how much we value and appreciate God’s gift of sexuality, and how much we want to protect it.

TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

1. We are always growing and changing from one stage of life to another.
2. There are many different ways we grow and develop: physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually.
3. God’s plan for each person unfolds differently. We develop at our own pace yet all that we are is a gift from God. I am a special boy or girl.