CHASTITY EDUCATION AND PERSONAL SAFETY CURRICULUM

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A Curriculum for Christian Education in Sexuality and the Family
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GRADE 8
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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.
Section One

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.

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:

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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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 if 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. 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:


**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 —
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 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

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The Catholic Vision of Love...........................................................................................SECTION ONE • Guidelines
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 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)._  

_____._Educational Guidance in Human Love (1983)._
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.

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

**Bibliography.** Studies useful for grasping the Catholic vision of love and sexuality in the light of the spirit of Vatican II and the pastoral considerations stressed in our time:


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 is 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

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 (Declarations 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 
VII. INTEGRATION

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 the 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.

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.
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.

Moveover, 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.

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 calling them toward that generous love that alone can make their marriages and lives secure.

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.

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 is 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

... the Church cannot flourish if the family is not strong.
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.
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.
Theses 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.

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.

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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.
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 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.
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
Parents can serve as models of Christian marriage, and of the attractiveness of generous love. 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).

Parents can serve as models of Christian marriage, and of the 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 complementarily 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.
XI. SPECIAL NEEDS

*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 of 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.
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

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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.

**Members of the Human Sexuality Advisory Committee**

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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
- Reverend Kris D. Stubna, Assistant Secretary for Education
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Sister Louise Marie Olsofka, C.S.S.F.
Mr. Timothy J. O’Sullivan
Sister Elizabeth Ann Stock, S.C.
Sister Bertha V. Sutton, C.S.J.

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Ms. Grace T. Harding
Ms. Carole M. Obrokta
Ms. Maureen E. Wall

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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.
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.
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 privates.
- 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 Liseaux 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.
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.
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.
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 if 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 8

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YOUR VOCATION:  
To make the world a better place

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality

Introduction

General aim of the lesson

This lesson seeks to stress for students the importance of accepting responsibility for making this world a better place, for seeking to overcome abortion and the injustices involved in poverty. This lesson teaches 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 our 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 specific vocations as such, and their relation to 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.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. As Christians we have duty to respect the lives of all persons.
   A) Activities of irresponsible sex outside of marriage can very often lead to pregnancy and pressure persons to have an abortion.
   B) We must care about the lives of the children who are killed by abortion, and yet have compassion for those who have had abortions in the past.
   C) God calls us always to choose the good. This choice is always a choice for LIFE.
2. We must also concern ourselves with actions of justice toward all persons.
Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

The “Prayer of St. Francis” is recommended for this class. To care about life is an important task, and to care about justice for the poor is not a call to class warfare, but to conversion and to peace. Copies of this prayer might be made for the students.

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to everlasting life. Amen.

Introduction to the lesson

Every serious person realizes that this world is a very flawed place. Faith suggests many of the reasons why the world made by God has so much evil in it. One is the reality of evil spirits: powerful personal beings who were very good when made by God, but became evil by their deliberate sin. Another is the reality of past deliberate sins of persons, both the original sin that wounded the world near the beginning of its history, and the many actual sins that wounded the world near the beginning of its history, and the many actual sins committed since, through the centuries, that have created an atmosphere and tone of sin in the world. Another reason is our own deliberate sins, often committed quite freely, but with certain pressure toward sin from the world as well. Popular culture often gives young people an impression that “they” (others, older people) have done dreadful things to our world, and “we” are innocent lambs whose hearts are very noble, and are simply “victims” of all the wickedness of others. Catholic teaching suggests that we ourselves have contributed, and do contribute, to what is wrong with the world, so that we have serious obligations for caring to try to heal the world we live in.

Faith teaches us that we have a duty to care for and to have compassion for others — we must show a kindness to others as we live in a world that has been wounded by the effect of so many sins. Jesus has told us that we come to eternal life by two kinds of faithfulness. First, we are called to eternal life by refusing to do evil. We do this best by keeping the commandments, so that we do not harm others: that we do not kill others, or steal from them, or hurt them by our lustful deed, or swear falsely about them. Secondly, we come to everlasting life by doing deeds of love. Scripture makes it clear that one can lose one’s soul by refusing to care about the sufferings of others and that we can be saved by caring with great love (see Matthew 25 for an account of some of the concerns we need to have).
There are also *spiritual works of mercy*. When people harm the world deeply by their sins, by creating slavery and crushing the lives of many innocent people, by forms of genocide, in which some people support one another in killing great numbers of other people, we have a duty to seek to end these sins, for the sake both of those who commit these crimes, and those who suffer them. The Gospel teaches us clearly what Pope John Paul II has said: “We are all really responsible for all!” (Encyclical, *On Social Concerns* [Sollicitudo Rei Socialis], 1987, n.38).

1. **A pro-life stand**
   
   The catechist should, with the students, read through and discuss the material on abortion. First there should be a serious effort to be clear on what abortion essentially is. It is ending the life of a very young baby. Two considerations are raised. From the very beginning, from conception, the new young human life is distinctive. The child is alive, growing, and has within himself or herself the longing for life, and the power to shape his or her own body entirely, from the genetic code written within his or her very being. All he or she will be, the color of eyes and hair, the physical foundations of life, the emotional and spiritual foundations, all are already present from the first moment. And by the time abortions take place, unborn babies are clearly human beings life we are, even in their appearance: their faces, their fingers and fingerprints, their beating hearts, their living brains. Abortion destroys innocent human life.

   **A) Why are there so many abortions today?**
   
   Why do people harden their hearts, and kill these wonderful little babies? The class plan spells out reasons, and shows how the world’s carelessness about honest love and pure hearts leads to such a terrible crime. This is an important section to be covered clearly.

   **B) Compassion is needed**
   
   This section needs attention also. So many people have had abortions that many (knowing families and friends that have had them) could not be willing to recognize abortion for what it is if honest compassion were not present also.

   **REFLECTION: The problem of abortion and a question of law**
   
   Both of these should be gone through thoughtfully to help the students digest the strong material that has been given. The media have made the students much more aware of “pro-choice” than of what abortion really is in itself. We should help them to understand: A) Freedom of choice is important in human life. In moral matters, people must act freely. B) We should show students as well how we cannot make something that is very bad “good” for us simply by choosing it. Real freedom is always the freedom to choose what is good and true. We are not free when we choose bad things (see Pope John Paul...
II’s Veritatis Splendor). No one really believes that it would be right to let people enslave other people, or to permit fathers and mothers to kill tiny born babies, if they “chose” to. D) We do not have the right to crush the rights of anyone, even if we choose to.

Laws should protect the right to live, and help people overcome the pressure to do very evil things that would haunt them afterwards. The slavery analogy is particularly understandable to young people. A reminder of the compassion noted above can come with this: Just as we can understand how slave owners in the South (who tried to treat slaves fairly well) might have been persuaded by social pressure to feel that having slaves was really all right, so we can understand in a way why people in fear have abortions. But neither slavery nor abortion is at all right. Each one destroys the soul of a country.

2. Caring about justice

While the killing of one-and-one-half million babies every year is the great crime against justice in our country today, there is other great injustice also. There is much failure to love strongly enough those who need mercy.

Point out how strongly the Gospels condemns those who do not even notice, and so do not have any pity on, the very poor. Go through the story of Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and recall the judgment scene in Matthew (Matthew 25:31ff). Recall how truly the Pope sums up the words of Christ in saying: “We are all really responsible for all!”

Ask the students whether they have done anything seriously to help the very poor. Do they know really poor people? Ask them if they can think of any things they could do to help them.

REFLECTION: The rich man and Lazarus

This activity should be gone through with great care. One of the reasons why temperance (or self-control), of which chastity is a integrated part, is a cardinal virtue is this: We cannot have other strong virtues if we do not have self-control. There are so many abortions because people are not chaste. There is so much injustice in the world, largely because people do not have the will and concern to struggle for justice. When we seek pleasure in unreasonable ways (in drugs, abuse of alcohol, drink, disordered sexuality), we lose the will and energy to be just and merciful. What we want is the pleasure to which we are subjected. Some people think that it is all right to be unchaste, as long as we are kind and just. But the problem is that the selfishness and lack of self-control that come with unchastity make it impossible to be just or charitable if our hearts are not chaste.

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 in the student’s section.

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church: 544-546; 678; 2401-2414; 2419-2442; 2443-2449.
Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality

Introduction
General aim of the lesson
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, of other sexuality 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 it causes.
3. To show how so-called “safe sex” (deciding to use sexuality casually, including some devices to keep sinful activity from doing us physical harm) simply does not work. “Safe sex” is a myth, and it is immoral.
4. To point out how easily one can escape the danger of AIDS if one so wills and chooses.
5. To remind students of the many other sexually transmitted diseases: how sin can have any number of physically bad results. It is important to help students understand that these physical dangers are not even the worst effects of sexual sins!
6. To show how unnecessary it is to commend insecure defenses against such terrible diseases and the many harms they cause. A better way is readily possible. Chastity is not too difficult; it alone is really “normal.” Your life deserves the best!
7. To recall the practical things we need to do to make an intelligent and chaste life easier and more attractive.
These are the things we will talk about . . .
Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer
1. AIDS is a fatal condition that can strike everyone.
2. Responsibilities behavior avoids contracting AIDS.
3. The HIV virus can be passed unknowingly to others.
4. “Safe” or “safer” sex is a false concept; it is immoral.
5. Unchaste acts can also lead to the contraction of other sexually transmitted diseases.
6. Chastity faces sexuality in a good and intelligent way.
7. Chastity is a natural and good way to live.
8. All persons are able to live the chaste lives to which Christ calls them in their state of life.
9. Compassion is needed in caring for victims of AIDS.

Path through the lesson

Opening prayer
This could well be a prayer for those who are dying from AIDS, and for their families and those dear to them, and for those who care for AIDS patients.

1. AIDS and the challenge of living intelligently
AIDS is so somber a subject that it is important that we start in a positive way. Noting what is said in the first paragraph of the lesson, it is important to stress that life ought not be a fearful thing. We need not live in dread of terrible things. Christ came to teach us good and joyful ways of living. The Lord is the author of sexuality. He made it, and He knows how it needs to be used to bless rather than bring terrible sorrows upon us. To be attentive to the Lord is to find ways of living that really work well.

Most students have heard very often of AIDS. But the catechist should be prepared to give a clear and forceful account of what it is. In addition to the statistics given in the lesson, the catechist should point out: All over the world, over forty million people have been infected with the HIV virus, and many have died of this sad disease. This happens to young people, who are so pressured into foolish sexual misconduct by the media, and do not realize how great is the danger of AIDS, and many other, sexually transmitted diseases. See the statistics for some other such disease later in the lesson.

AIDS is always fatal! It is one of the worst plagues in history.

How do people get his dreadful disease? Not just by accident; not by germs flying through the air. The lesson points this out: AIDS is contracted by sexual intercourse with a person who has the disease, or by sharing drug needles with people who have the disease.
2. **How to avoid getting AIDS**

   The only way we can be sure of avoiding sexual contact with AIDS victims is by not having casual sexual activity at all. An intelligent and good life reserves all sexual activity for marriage anyway. And one should not only avoid the use of drug needles that other people have used but must be taught to avoid drug use at all! By avoiding kinds of conduct that good sense urges us to avoid anyway — casual use of something as important as sex, and the abuse of drugs — we can be quite sure we will not get AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases.

3. **Who has AIDS?**

   A huge number of people have AIDS, many of whom do not even know they have it. Anyone who has been engaged in sexual intercourse outside marriage, or in drug activity with needles, is a candidate.

4. **What is this “safe sex” concept?**

   “Safe sex” is a halfhearted and not entirely honest response to the AIDS crisis. AIDS is caused by having sexual intercourse with someone who has AIDS. Obviously the safe thing to do is to avoid having such intercourse. But some people, fearing that they or others have not sufficient courage or moral strength to avoid the kind of conduct that may kill them, pretend that it would be “safe” to have such perilous sexual activity if one uses a condom to keep from getting the deadly disease.

   The use of contraceptives as outlined in Church teaching is wrong. But the truth is that the condoms do not do the job. Condoms fail eighteen to thirty percent of the time, and the people are no safer than if they had no protection at all. To recommend “safe sex” is to recommend a deadly course of action. Much of the time those who follow this path will catch the disease, in spite of their rather frivolous efforts to escape it. But there is an absolutely safe way of avoiding AIDS! To avoid AIDS, learn to live a sensible, strong, joyful, and chaste life!

   The catechist should seek to be sure that the students get the point very well. AIDS is deadly, and “safe sex” will not keep people from getting it. It is foolish to risk one’s life when there are secure ways of avoiding AIDS and other sexual diseases.

5. **Other sexually transmitted diseases**

   For this section the catechist will need to have access to updated standard medical dictionaries or resource manuals. The statistics on these diseases as well as their projected implications for human society will change as medical science continues to study them.

   The reflection is important. It reaffirms the Church’s constant teaching on the practice of a life of chastity as a value in and of itself, regardless of whether or not dangerous sexually transmitted diseases are present. The logic and consistency of the teaching of Christ and His Church need to be reviewed.
6. **What is chastity?**
   The catechist here reiterates the definition of chastity which the students have learned from earlier lessons in previous years. This section, following from the previous section, establishes the value of chastity as a life calling truly worth living.

7. **Is chastity normal?**
   Chastity is a normal way of life and has been accepted as such for thousands of years in multiple cultures. Jesus taught and lived chastity. The message of the many voices in our contemporary society, from the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960’s on, would say something much different.
   Yet the truth, constancy, and beauty of the teaching of Jesus needs to be stressed.

8. **Is chastity too difficult for me?**
   The catechist should be able to present the points in this section with great clarity. He or she must show that to lead chaste lives is not really difficult at all. Chastity means treating sexuality intelligently and responsibly. Chastity is entirely normal. Students are led to believe by the media that no one is chaste today. Facts prove otherwise — studies continue to show how many young people are choosing to refrain from sexual activity until marriage — chastity is NORMAL.
   Even when lots of people use sex foolishly and suffer terribly from that, intelligent handling of sexuality is normal for sensible people. Even those who have been sexually active can become chaste and find intelligent living a good thing. Students must be *encouraged* to embrace a life of chastity.

9. **How should we think about people who have AIDS?**
   It is crucial that the Church’s teaching on compassion for victims of AIDS be clearly spelled out.
   First of all, not all persons who contract AIDS do so because of mistaken moral conduct. For example, prior to the adopted universal precautions now in effect, hemophiliacs contracted AIDS. (Ryan White will be an example many students will have known.) While the lesson points out the virtual impossibility now, it was a tragic earlier reality. Also, unborn babies can contract AIDS in the womb from an infected mother.
   Secondly, and more importantly, regardless of how a person contracted AIDS, Christ calls us to show genuine and active love and compassion toward these persons. “We are really all responsible for all.”

**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 in the student’s section.
   For further background and reference, the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 2337-2350.
Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality

Introduction
General aim of the lesson

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. Often they let themselves be led astray and feel that it is all right to do things that their peers do because they often do not 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.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. Good persons recognize the importance of having and developing a good conscience.
2. Concerns about chastity are aided by a good and honest conscience.
3. The conscience of a Christian will always be guided by what Christ teaches.
Path through the lesson
Opening prayer

Catechist: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Your love.

Verse: Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created.

Response: And You will make new the face of the earth.
(Note: The students are to say this. The teacher might have this written on the board).

Catechist: O God, You instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit. Grant us, in the same Spirit, to have a taste for what is right, and always to rejoice in His consolation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(At the end of the prayer, it might be good to point out that this is another prayer we ought to know well by heart, and to pray often when things are confusing and we need to the help of God. It is good to pray before we go to confession, and before all important and trying times.)

1. The importance of a good conscience

In this first session the students are assisted in grasping the basic idea of conscience, and of how important it is to care about what is really good or really bad.

A) First, they are to recall how people commonly do the worst things, and make the greatest mistakes with their lives, when they fail to think honestly in their hearts about what is right or wrong. Go through the examples in the text, and ask the students for more examples. Be ready to help them with examples: People actually owned slaves, and treated other persons as "things" in this country, because they did not think honestly. Today many people have abortions, and kill their own tiny babies before they are born, because they do not think seriously.

B) We need to be ready to talk about whether what we are about to do is right. We might talk with our own hearts: "What would that mean?" Or we could talk with people we know are good, and care about us: "Would it be all right for me to do this?" Or we could speak with Christ about this in our prayers. (Ask the students: How would Christ answer us if we did this? In what way are prayers for a better understanding of God's will answered?)

C) In the paragraphs beginning with "My conscience is . . ." we talk with the students about what conscience is. Conscience is not concerned with "guilt feelings: or with self-righteous claims that "It seems all right to me." To be conscientious one must be seriously concerned about what is really good and what is really bad. The catechist might want to read the beautiful (and very understandable) words that the Second Vatican Council says about conscience in Gaudium et Spes, n. 16 ("In the depths of his conscience...").
Honest and dishonorable ways….These paragraphs remind the students of the need to be honest in thinking about their sins. Go carefully with them through these sections:

- My conscience tells me it is all right
- Everybody is doing it.

REFLECTION: About conscience

Ask the students the questions found in this exercise. Try to get them to think seriously about this matter. These days most people (including most young people) are inclined to think that because TV and other forms of media pressure them there is no such thing as “good” or “bad.” Things are only good or bad for the people who decide to count them as good or bad. This is a silly pattern of thought, but a common one. Still, young people can be liberated from it. Young people are basically realists. They have deep inclinations to admit that some things are really bad, some things really good. If we ask them intelligent questions about good and evil, they are quite capable of coming up with intelligent answers — answers that strengthen their faith.

2. How a good conscience faces sexuality

Often young people isolate their thoughts about sexuality from their thoughts about good and bad. They often half realize that they should ask themselves honest questions, and be more honest in their thoughts about sexuality. But unless they are helped to think seriously about sexuality and its consequences, they are likely to drift into ways of thinking and acting that are very bad for them.

Show them that Christ knew that sex is something important. He knew that even the ways we think about sexuality are important. Remind them of what Jesus says in Matthew 5:28. The world tends to press lustful thoughts and attitudes on young people. Some rock bands and entertainers make much money doing that. We should help our students realize that if we let our heads and hearts treat sex in shabby ways, it will hurt us, and hurt the ways we deal with other people.

Suggested are some of the ways in which students can learn to be more honest in thinking about sexual matters. Help them see how false and unfair to other people it is to go along with shabby ways of treating God’s gift of sexuality.

Note: Thoughts about confessing embarrassing sins — The catechist should study this section carefully while preparing for this class. For many young people it is crucial that they realize that they do not have to live in confusion, and in bad faith, about sexual matters. They can have clear heads, and straightforward ways of thinking before God about these matters. They can get very clear answers to questions like these: Is it wrong to go to movies that are sexually arousing, or to spend time with obscene magazines? They can have very clear thoughts about how wrong it might be to do impure acts alone, or with someone else. We should tell them that trying to make good and honest confessions is a great help toward developing an honest and right conscience.

The Catholic Vision of Love .................................................................................................................. SECTION TWO • Catechist’s Notes
Note: Please read the *Guidelines* in preparing this lesson. Young people often fear going to confession because they are not sure of what to say. And often they have not managed to get clear thoughts about the whole business of sin, sorrow, and forgiveness. But this often has bitter results for them. They half-know that they have important sins to confess, and they know vaguely that they should not go to Communion until their serious sins are forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But often they do go to Communion anyway, and end up feeling worse. They want to run away from the whole set of anxieties they have managed to create.

We need to reassure them, and help them see that they can have clear thoughts and straightforward conduct before the Lord.

The catechist should help them realize how easy it is to confess their sins, even when they are mixed up about things. Go through the paragraphs that give concrete suggestions on how to confess even embarrassing sins calmly and peacefully.

3. Christ’s teaching and my conscience

One of the virtues young people most understand is being honest and being truthful. They expect people to be honest and truthful to them, and can be moved by appeals to honestly. This section provides another aspect of the crucially important matter of having an honest conscience.

Christ expects us to be honest and decent in our dealings with Him. If we know who He is, He expects us to take Him seriously. When He who is the Lord tells us what is good or bad, we can be very sure that He is right. If our peers do things that contradict the Lord, or if rock singers and entertainers urge us to do things the Lord warns us against, we know what we ought to do.

Think over well the passage about St. Peter (Matthew 16:21-24). St. Peter sincerely did not want to hear about the cross. But in his heart he knew that if Jesus told him something seriously, it must be true. Yet he tried to tell himself, and even Jesus, that he was wrong. Notice how seriously the Lord reprimanded him.

Jesus is gracious and kind. But if people know who He is, they have a strong duty to believe Him, and try to do the good things He urges us to do.

We should consider it a very disturbing thing when our “consciences” tell us to do things that are wrong. We have good consciences only if we are willing to follow truth of Christ.

Christ Himself teaches us through the Gospels, by Church tradition, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the words of good people who urge us to be faithful to the teaching of Christ. To have a good conscience is to care about what is really good. Those who want their consciences to be right should listen to Christ always.

**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 in the student’s section. For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1385-1395; 1420-1470; 1480; 1776-1794; 1806; 1849; 2490.
Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality

Introduction

General aim of the lesson

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. 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 gives warmth to 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 we 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.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. The Eucharist is a gift of pure love from Jesus to us.
2. The power of Jesus’ love is most apparent in the Eucharist.
3. We must receive the gift of the Eucharist worthily.
4. Serious impurities of heart, mind, and action make us unworthy to receive Jesus in Communion.
5. The Eucharist gives us the grace to live lives of chastity.
Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

The catechist might introduce this prayer by telling the students that in this class we are speaking about something most precious. For the Eucharist is the Lord’s greatest gift to us, the gift of Himself. We know that He is always with us in the Blessed Sacrament. He is there as our friend, as the Savior who gladly died for us, as spiritual food and drink. In coming to us in Communion, He gives our hearts energy and strength far more than good earthly food and drink give strength to the body.

Then the prayer said together could be this familiar one:

Lord Jesus Christ, You gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of Your suffering and death. May our worship of this sacrament of Your Body and Blood help us to experience the salvation You won for us and the peace of the kingdom where You live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

1. **Eucharist as gift of pure love**

   We all want to be loved, and life is too difficult if we do not know we are loved. We need to be loved at home and at school; otherwise everything is too bitter. The person who loves us most deeply, most honestly, most personally is Jesus Christ Himself. The most important of all persons, Jesus our God, is the One who loves us most.

   One of the most central teachings of faith is that Jesus so loves us. The catechist should do all possible to help the students know, and experience, that the Lord who is with us in the Eucharist is the Lord who loves us so greatly.

2. **Eucharist and the power of love**

   To realize that Jesus loves us, we must realize how faithfully He is with us, and how willingly He suffered and died for us.

   - **Jesus with us.** We should not be afraid to teach the doctrine of the Eucharist plainly. Jesus does not only give us Himself in the Eucharist. He also, generously, gives us faith, the power to believe in this great sacrament. It is at the heart of Catholic faith. Faith in the Eucharist comes easily to young people, if we teach them out of our own faith. We want to help them feel that the bread and wine you receive into your heart at Communion is really Jesus, our Savior and our God. Be glad in receiving Him!

   - **The Paschal Mystery of Jesus** is with us. In this section we are teaching great and most important ideas. Everyone knows that love is recognized in faithfulness, in standing by another, even when it is hard to be faithful. But Christ stands by us forever. He died for us. We have to help the students realize what faith teaches. When we are around the altar at the Eucharist, we are really around the cross and resurrection of the Lord. We are with Him who gladly died for us and then rose from the grave. Help the students see that anyone who understands the Eucharist knows that the Lord loves us with a mighty love.
**Eucharist and sin**

This section has great practical importance. Many young people tend to get careless about preparing for Communion. They tend to forget how precious and important this sacrament is. It helps them immensely to recall reverence for it.

They must be reminded to not just go thoughtlessly to Communion. One must go to the Lord in this sacrament with faith, with a prayerful heart, and in the state of grace.

The section spells these things out. But the catechist needs to be well prepared for teaching this section. We want the students to realize how earnestly Christ wants them to come to Him with some of the love with which He comes to them. We want them to take seriously all that faith says about receiving Communion worthily. But we want to teach this in a way that encourages the students and helps them trust that Christ will not fail them. He will enable them to come to Communion with devoted hearts.

3. **Impurities lead us away from the Eucharist**

Christ seeks pure and generous hearts. But the world presses us toward selfishness and impurity. What Christ wants is what really makes our hearts glad and strong.

The world wants young people to believe that impure acts and thoughts are “just natural.” But impurity is not just natural. It hurts people deeply and ruins their lives. When we tell them, gently but clearly, that impure acts are very wrong, they know that this is true.

The catechist will need to firmly but gently point out the sins of masturbation, pornographic use, and the abuse of others in passion.

We ought to remind students clearly of the strong ideas taught in this section. But we should do it gently, reminding them that no one commits mortal sins *accidentally.* It is always something quite deliberate. And Jesus gives us power to escape such sin and gives us a way to have our sins forgiven, if we should fail.

Students should be clear on this. They do *not* have to go to confession before every Communion. *But* if they know they have committed a mortal sin, *then* they have a duty to go to confession before they go to Communion again.

**Note:** How the second half of this section explains why sins of impurity are so wrong. This is a very *scriptural* teaching. The catechist might read through 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 and 11:27-32 before class. This need not be read to the students, but reading it before class helps the catechist recall the message more clearly.

4. **The Eucharist empowers us to live chastely**

It is important that we constantly encourage those we teach. Our Lord was always giving comfort and support to those He loved, and He wishes us to do so also.
We need to help our students feel the power of the words of Christ in this section. He does not give us excellent and difficult commandments and then abandon us. He really gives us the power to live the good and generous lives He wants us to live, and He does honestly make it easy, if we come to Him.

- *Remembering the promises of Jesus.* It can be helpful if the catechist ties together the whole lesson by the way he or she treats this section. The catechist can ask questions aimed at helping the students see in how many ways the Lord is with us. He never fails. He never abandons us. We can live the good lives He teaches even when overburdened. It is He, always with us, who makes possible and easy really generous and good lives.

**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 in the student’s section.

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church:* 1322-1405; 1849-1864; 2337-2355.
STUDENT’S LESSONS for Grade 8

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: Your vocation: To make the world a better place
CLASS 2: Living in a world that suffers from AIDS
CLASS 3: Christ and my conscience
CLASS 4: The Eucharist and love
CLASS 5: Personal Safety
YOUR VOCATION:
To make the world a better place

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality

Introduction
This world is clearly not in the condition it should be in, but Christ calls YOU to accept the responsibility to make it a better place. He wants YOU to do what you can to make our world mirror the Kingdom of God. YOU can make a difference, and YOU are not alone!

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

- As Christians we have a duty to respect the lives of all persons.
- Activities of irresponsible sex outside of marriage can very often lead to pregnancy and pressure persons to have an abortion.
- We must care about the lives of the children who are killed by abortion, and yet have compassion for those who decide for abortion.
- God calls us to choose the good — for life.
- We must also concern ourselves with actions of justice toward all persons.

A PRO-LIFE stand
As Christians we have a duty to care about and respect all people. Jesus told us that we would be judged by the way we have loved others. (See Matthew 25:31-46.)

Consider abortion. Abortion ends the life of a tiny baby in the mother’s womb. You are bombarded with harmful television messages regarding abortion. You must know that abortion can only be overcome by unselfish caring and loving attitudes and actions.

We call a young newborn an “infant,” but we call a baby before it is born a “fetus.” A fetus is unquestionably a tiny human being. Everybody knows this, but sometimes people try to talk themselves into pretending that the fetus is just “a bit of tissue” or a mere part of the mother’s body, like an appendix. This is simply not true! Perhaps you have learned how each person has a distinctive “genetic code.” Every cell in the mother has the same genetic code, but every cell of the fetus is marked by its own genetic code, not the mother’s.
The tiny fetus is your little brother or sister in the human family. The fetus is a very young human being — he or she has a face and a beating heart. The hands are tiny, and “perfect,” right down to the unique fingerprints. The brain is working. In fact, doctors can catch distinctive brain waves on a screen. Most of all, this fetus has an inner longing to live, to grow, and to be allowed to become its full self, just like you and me.

**WHY are there so many abortions today?**

Many people are irresponsible about sex. Sinful sexual acts of different kinds gradually lead people toward sexual intercourse (an act intended only for marriage). God’s plan for us is great. However, when we are selfish and irresponsible, everything is confusing.

**Everyone** knows that having sexual intercourse carries with it the potential for bringing new life into being. This is also true for people who use contraceptives. In fact, contraceptives fail more often for young people than for others. The passion for careless sex is so strong that the people involved often stop caring about anything but pleasure.

The result of this careless behavior may be conception of a child. The problem intensifies: This child will be an embarrassment . . . Our lives will change drastically . . . College is not an option . . . Where will I get the money needed to take care of a child? . . . What will others think of me?

To add to the pressure, many important and powerful people believe that it is OK to have an abortion. They do not believe in Christ or His message that every human life is precious. In addition, the performance of abortions becomes a large and profitable operation.

The outcome is an abortion — the killing of a precious human being.

**COMPASSION is needed**

We must care about the babies who are killed, and have pity on so many people who feel compelled to have an abortion. Young people today are pressured by television, movies, and magazines to experiment with sex. Even though sex is a precious gift from God, it is often treated as a toy. Consequently, young people find themselves pregnant and scared. The pressure seems too great, and they are blinded into thinking that an abortion is the only solution. Often they have deep and desperate regrets that affect them for the rest of their lives. They see cute, happy little babies and their minds flash back to the life they ended. Are the lives of such people happy? Do you think Jesus would help them, forgive them, and bring them back to a happier state if they came to Him?
Reflection: The problem of abortion

Have you ever thought about the abortion problem? What do you think about people who gradually slip into such terrible decisions?

How do you think the Lord feels about this? Did you know that our faith has always taught that abortion is a horrible sin?

What is an excommunication? Did you know that people who have an abortion are excommunicated from the Church? Why? Will the Church welcome back and have compassion for people who are sorry for what they have done?

What is PRO-CHOICE?

Obviously God gave us the power to choose. “Before a man are life and death, and whichever he chooses will be given to him” (Sirach 15:17). Of course God calls us to choose good. To choose good freely is admirable, but to deliberately choose something that is clearly wrong was not the purpose of freedom.

Reflection: “A question of law”

Laws should, first of all, guard the most basic rights: the right to life and the right to be free. Do you think it would be a better world to have slavery exist under the law? It is right and good to have a pro-choice law to enslave people? It is right and good to have a pro-choice law to kill an innocent, helpless unborn child? Should the laws say: No slavery and no killing of the innocent? Should we be active in pro-life work and help to free our country from this cruel practice?

Caring about JUSTICE?

Our care about the lives of people should also extend to concern with fair treatment and the chance for a better life for all.

Just as chaste hearts can more easily be concerned about guarding the lives of the innocent, so they can also more readily help the poor.
When we become unreasonable, fixed only on our own pleasure and comfort, we begin to think less honestly about what is really good. Our hearts become hard about everything.

People whose minds just concentrate on pursuing unchaste pleasures often do not find it very interesting to care about the poor and the needy. Those who care about what is right, and concentrate on what the Lord wants of them, very easily learn to have merciful hearts.

**Reflection: The rich man and Lazarus**

Read the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and the account of the Last Judgement (Matthew 25:31-46).

- What is it that makes people fail to even think about the poor and helpless?
- Do the people of this world who are wealthy have the responsibility to care for the poor as well as themselves? What does our Lord say about this?
- Do you think the rich man was happy when he was so interested in his own wealth and pleasure that he could not even notice Lazarus?
- Are we happy and pleasing to God when we look out just for our own pleasure in life?
- Who are the poor among us?
- Should we learn to see and recognize the poor and the suffering, and care about ways to help them?

**Discussion: Jesus calls you to care about the poor also**

- Are there practical ways in which you can care for the poor?
- Are there places near your home where food is made available for the poor, or shelter given to the homeless?
TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

1. As Christians we are called to live out a pro-life stand.
2. There are many pressures on persons to commit the sin of abortion.
3. We care about the lives of the unborn. We also need to have compassion on those who commit abortions.
4. God calls us to choose for life.
5. Our concern for life extends to acts of justice toward the poor.
Write your notes down here!
Introduction

Christ wants our lives to be richer and better. "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly!" (John 10:10). Our lives are a gift from God and we are dignified beings. We should never live beneath our dignity. Those who understand sexuality and wisely try to live by grace, as Jesus taught, are more joyful people. They do not live beneath their dignity. They escape the sadness that results from sinful sexual activity and the many physical evils casual sex can cause. We need to challenge ourselves to think intelligently about these matters and resolve to never live beneath our dignity!

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

- AIDS is a fatal condition which can strike anyone.
- Responsible behavior avoids contracting AIDS.
- The HIV virus can be passed unknowingly on to others.
- "Safe" or "safer" sex is a false concept; it is immoral.
- Unchaste acts can also lead to the contraction of other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Chastity faces sexuality in a good and intelligent way.
- Chastity is a natural and good way to live.
- All persons are able to live the chaste lives to which Christ calls them in their state of life.
- Compassion is needed in caring for victims of AIDS.

AIDS and the CHALLENGE of living intelligently

AIDS is a disease that is always fatal. AIDS shows no prejudice. It can strike anyone.

AIDS means: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

It is caused when HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) attacks the body's immune system. Thus it leaves the body unprotected against infections and diseases. There is presently no cure for AIDS.
One out of two hundred fifty persons worldwide now carries the virus. A new person in the world is infected every fifteen to twenty seconds.

This disease is transmitted chiefly in three ways:

1. Through sexual contact with a person who has AIDS or the HIV virus. (Many do not even know they have been infected with the virus as it can be many years before the virus is detected.)
2. By sharing drug-related items (like needles) with people who are infected with the HIV virus.
3. By receiving a blood transfusion from an infected person. (The likelihood of contracting the disease in this way is now almost impossible due to the safeguards instituted by blood banks several years ago.)

The AIDS virus does not travel through the air, nor is it contracted by casual contact with AIDS victims. Simply shaking hands or hugging does not transmit the disease.

**How to AVOID getting AIDS**

- Refrain from sexual activity before marriage.
- Remain faithful to your spouse in marriage.
- Refrain from illegal drug use.

The cost is responsible behavior. You would only be doing what good morality and good sense require anyway.

**Note:** During surgical or dental treatment in which the blood of one person gets in contact with the blood of an AIDS victim, one could contract AIDS. This situation is not likely, since health care workers are taking universal precautions to prevent such situations. This is something extremely rare.

Sometimes babies are born with AIDS because their parents contracted the disease. But AIDS normally is caused by irresponsible sexual conduct, and by the use of drugs.

Therefore, if you live a life of self-control that Christ calls you to lead, there is no reason to be fearful.

**WHO has AIDS?**

The HIV virus can live in the body for years before a person becomes ill. Therefore many carriers do not even realize that they are infected. Sadly, they have the potential to pass on the deadly disease to others unknowingly. The only safe and responsible solution is to refrain from all sex outside of marriage.
God has reserved sex for married people. In married love, each person commits faithfully to one person forever. The fact is that the strongest marriages are characterized by faithful, honest love. Chaste love is necessary for life. Only it can make homes happy.

**WHAT is the “safe sex” concept?**

Some say: “If you use a condom when you have sex with another person, you will be protected from the HIV virus. You can’t catch AIDS then. It’s safe!”

That is *far* from true or safe! Condoms very often fail! You are playing with your life in this situation. It is like playing Russian Roulette. You could kill yourself.

“Safe” sex is not safe. The only “safe” sex is **no sex** until marriage.

**OTHER sexually transmitted diseases**

- **Gonorrhea** — 1.3 million new cases annually in the United States.
- **Herpes** — 500,000 new cases annually in the United States.
- **Pelvic inflammatory disease** — 1 million new cases annually in the United States.
- **Chlamydia** — 4 million cases occur annually in the United States.

These are tragic diseases that need not be contracted. Often people who suffer from such diseases are unable to have children in later years when they deeply desire them. The consequences of many STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) are severe. A chaste life is the only escape from such tragedy.

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**Reflection:**

Is the fear of AIDS or STDs the best reason for being chaste and avoiding illegal drug use?

Fear of AIDS and STDs can motivate people not to engage in dangerous behavior. To avoid evil out of fear is not the best reason for living well. There are far better reasons. Unchaste deeds are not only dangerous; they are also immoral, because they go against God’s revealed Word. Abuse of God’s gift of sexuality shows a lack of respect for love and life.

**Think critically.** Suppose you have the opportunity to beat a child, kick a handicapped person, or kill someone, but you refrain from such activity because there is a chance that you might get hurt or caught in the process. Is that the best reason for avoiding outrageous conduct? Those hurtful activities are immoral!
What is CHASTITY?
Chastity means getting personal control of your own life, by your own acts, your own feelings. It means not being driven by the pressures of peers, or by passions, when we know they are urging us to act in foolish ways. Chastity faces sexually intelligently.

Chaste married people use sexuality happily in marriage when it will really deepen personal and committed love, strengthen the home, and welcome with love the children born of acts of love.

Chaste single people lead full lives, but intelligently avoid the sexual conduct that deserves to be saved for marriage. Real chastity is comfortable and not confining, as all acquired virtues are.

Is chastity NORMAL?
Chastity is a natural and good way to live. It is at home with honest friendship and good times that do not exploit people in any way. God made sex good, but sexual activity requires mature, disciplined, and honest love within the marriage covenant. It is made for people who are mature enough to make a lifetime commitment to grow together in the generous love of marriage.

Is chastity too DIFFICULT for me?
Millions of people are chaste all the way to marriage, and faithful to their spouses in marriage. Ask your parents and grandparents about this. Ordinary people are quite able to be as chaste as love and life require — and to be happy in doing so. Do not be deceived by unchaste people, who have not tried seriously to live in the good ways the Lord calls us to live. Most people marry and promise to be faithful to each other for life. Some people choose to live as single people. They live vigorous and good lives in service to others, choosing simply not to engage in that sexual activity that is proper only in marriage. Other people become priests, sisters, and brothers who live lives of service by promising to remain unmarried and chaste. Christ is all-powerful, and He always promised to help us in whatever state of life we choose.

One important thing is to find interesting good ways of living. We can and should find ways of enjoying life with our friends. Good times need not lead to irresponsible acts that:

- Are gravely sinful and separate us from a friendship with Christ.
- Are hurtful to our lives and the lives of others.
- Keep us from understanding the true meaning of love and sexuality in a mature, sensible manner.

The Catholic Vision of Love ....................................................................................................................................................................................... Grade 8 • CLASS 2
Avoid movies, magazines, TV programs and websites that are indecent. Why fill your mind with trash? Your imagination is too good and important to be filled with obscene thoughts. Let your imagination and memory find **creative and intelligent** ways of enjoying life. God made this world, and we are invited to cherish it.

Sinful actions always create great problems. Shoplifters, drug users, and those who commit sexual sins not only hurt others but they hurt themselves even more.

Christ taught good ways to live, not to make life difficult for us, but to make life full and happy.

Careless and casual uses of sex run into many serious problems. From foolish acts come unwanted pregnancies, diseases, the inability to understand the **true meaning** of love, and the inability to acquire the generosity necessary to be a good husband, wife, father, or mother.

You are called to something far better. Allow the Lord to help you make your own life a good one.

**Discussion questions**

? What about people who have already become sexually active? Can they get control and lead chaste lives again?

! Of course! All irresponsible and sinful activity can be overcome if we are seriously sorry and determined to live worthwhile lives. God is able to heal our lives and He cares about us. “Let go and go to God.”

? It is really possible to refrain from sexual activity when we are attracted to someone?

! God’s grace gives us unbelievable strength to do good. Our freedom and self-control sets us apart — we are not animals at the control of our passions!

**HOW should we think about people who have AIDS?**

AIDS is a terrible disease. If we caught so tragic a disease, no matter how, we would not want people to judge us severely. The Lord’s Golden Rule requires us to treat others as we would wish to be treated. You ought to care about them very much. We have no right to look down on them or refuse to care for them. These are people bearing very severe crosses. We should try to see that they are helped. It is an injustice to refuse to help AIDS victims, as if they were not our brothers and sisters. They are!
TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

1. There is no cure for AIDS; it is a fatal condition.
2. We can avoid AIDS by avoiding sexual activity outside of marriage.
3. Many persons do not even know they have AIDS and pass the virus on to others.
4. There is no such thing as “safe” sex.
5. There are other sexually transmitted diseases besides AIDS.
6. Chastity is the best and most intelligent way of life.
7. Chastity is natural and good.
8. Christ offers us all the grace to lead chaste lives.
9. We must act with the compassion and justice of Christ toward all victims of AIDS.
Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality

Introduction

In this class we study conscience. We study why it is so important that we respect conscience. We look at the way a good conscience helps us be at peace with sexuality. Finally, we think of the ways in which Christ gives light to our conscience.

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

- Good persons recognize the importance of having and developing a good conscience.
- Concerns about chastity are aided by a good and honest conscience.
- The conscience of a Christian will always be guided by the teaching of Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The IMPORTANCE of a good conscience

Good people like to know that what they are doing is right. They ask themselves questions like: Would it be fair to do this? Would I be a coward if I did not say what I thought?

As we grow up, we realize that people do wrong things when they just do not think. We do really bad things when we are afraid or unwilling to find out if what we are thinking or doing is right or wrong.

Sometimes people are afraid to think. A young man wonders if he could make easy money in a way that really is very bad — maybe it is by selling drugs, or even by stealing from someone who is old or poor. He may not want to dwell on the rightness or wrongness of his action because he wants the money so badly.

When we do not follow our conscience, we can do very bad things!

A girl wonders if doing something that an older person is pressuring her to do would be very bad. She does not want to think deeply about it, because she wants to please the other person, or to get what she thinks she might in return.
So by deliberately not being clear on what is good or bad, people do bad things. They very much hurt their own hearts and lives.

When we want lives to be proud of, we have to think honestly: Would this be OK to do? I may be just our own hearts that we ask. Sometimes we also ask our very close friends.

If we have learned to pray in personal words to Christ, we may even ask the Lord, “Is this right?”

It is not that we expect Him to speak in words we can hear. His voice is more gentle. He sends us His Spirit to help us realize what He wants us to know honestly. He stirs up our memory and our most honest thoughts. He helps us see for ourselves, in the light of His teaching and our faith, what things we should do.

Those who want to know what is good, and what God really wants of them, find how true it is that God gives light to those who wish to have it because He loves them.

Notice some of the words and the Second Vatican Council about conscience, from the teaching of Christ Himself:

When we enter our own hearts, God awaits us there. [In my conscience], I am alone with God, whose voice sounds in the depths. Always summoning us to love good and do it and to avoid evil, the voice of conscience can, when necessary, speak to our hearts more specifically: do this, shun that. For we have in our hearts a law written by God. To obey it is our very dignity; according to it we will be judged (Church in the Modern World, n. 16).

My conscience is the power God give me, when I care about what is good, to see the difference between what is good and what is bad. It is the power He gives me to tell what things I am thinking of doing are all right, or good, and what things are wrong.

How important is it that I think with my heart, in my conscience, before doing things that I may regret?

Of course, our consciences are our own, and we have to be serious in order to develop good consciences. We have to care about the truth, about what is really good. To follow conscience is to try to do what is really right and fair and good. Unless we care about what is good, we will never develop good consciences. Ultimately, we can hurt our lives badly.

To follow our consciences is also to do what the Lord wants us to do. He wants us to do what is really good, what will make our lives work out well, what we will be glad about when we look back on what we have done.
Honest and dishonorable ways of deciding what to do

People often lie to themselves about their consciences. When they are tempted to do something that is very wrong, they give strange excuses.

“My conscience tells me it is all right!” — Often they say this as a shabby excuse for doing whatever they feel like. They let themselves think: “If I really want to do it, it must be right for me. It must be my conscience telling me it’s OK.” If we think this way, we are just rationalizing. Whenever anybody wants to do anything wrong, this is the way the mind will try to justify it:

“Everybody is doing it.” — It is true that when lots of people do wrong things, we often feel it is all right because “Everybody is doing it. My peers would be angry if I told on them to the teacher, so I won’t do that.” “No one really cares if we stole from big stores or cheated on exams especially if we don’t get caught doing it.” “If people don’t blame me, I’m doing OK.” But we know that the point is not “Will my friends think this is bad?” Is it really bad despite what my friends think? And does God know it is bad?

In many places, people have tolerated different kinds of evil: slavery, Nazism, abortion. In different times, different kinds of wrong things seem so common that people act as if they did not notice. That is what people do with many misuses of sex in our day. Abuses of sex may lead to serious situations: AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and abortion. Abuses can destroy homes and the peace and safety of young people. Abuses of sex can cause people to lose their faith and live in ways that cannot make them happy.

Reflection:

? If I know that Christ teaches in the Gospels, and in His Church, that something is very wrong, but my peers tell me it is all right, who is really right?

? When people do seriously bad things, have they first thought in their hearts, and given their conscience (and Christ) a chance to help them see if that is really all right to do or not?

? Many people do not believe in Christ. They do not care a great deal about what is really good or bad. Some songs and movies suggest to young people: “Doing these things (things Christ has taught are disastrous for our lives) is great!” Should we guide our lives by what such people say and do? Do we sometimes need courage to be faithful to Christ?
How a good CONSCIENCE faces sexuality

When people are entering adolescence, things that affect chastity often are the crucial things about which they need to have honest and good consciences.

Young people are pressured a lot, and often they can get confused in serious matters if they have not developed good consciences.

Sometimes we are tempted to think, though we know it is not true, that if lots of people are doing something, if is OK to do it.

For example, a lot of young people go to movies that have explicit sexual scenes, and this causes a lot of turbulence to their feelings. They may feel uncomfortable and confused. Letting our minds and imaginations get filled with such ideas and feelings seems wrong. “But, hey! Everybody is going to this movie. It's got to be OK.” It will seem fine if I do not think about it very much, or if I do not talk with Christ about it.

Lots of young people do different kinds of things that they know would not please Christ. They get copies of obscene magazines, and daydream through them. They talk with one another about sex in ways that cheapen it. They show not respect for the people they talk about, or for the real meaning of sex as God created it. They talk in ways that make them feel ready to do things that they know they should not do.

Sometimes when the imagination is filled with obscene thoughts, they begin to handle their own bodies in ways that they vaguely know to be wrong. Sometimes when they are with a boy or girl they feel attracted to, they kiss or touch in ways that have really nothing to do with loving someone else. They are using someone else for their own pleasure in ways that are not right.

Thoughts about CONFESSING embarrassing sins

Sometimes we deliberately let our minds think about things that we are somewhat ashamed of. We would be embarrassed if other people could see our thought! Sometimes we do things we are ashamed of. We hope that some people we love and care about will never know we did these things.

Strangely, we often have boldness to commit sins, and then we do not have the courage to confess them!

We ought to ask God always for the courage to be able and will to confess sins of which we ashamed. We are likely to want to stop going to confession, and even to be a bit upset by going to Communion (because the Lord knows our hearts and we know that after some sins we should go to confession before going to Communion).
Sometimes we just tell ourselves, “I haven’t even any idea how to confess these sins. I wouldn’t know what to say. Father would dislike me if I mentioned sins like these.” But Father would not dislike you at all. He would admire the strength of heart you show, and he would help you if you tell him: “I am not sure how to confess these sins...” Really it is easy enough to know what to say, if we first pray and ask the Lord to help us. It is not hard to say things like this: “I deliberately went to indecent movies (or watched some rather indecent TV shows), and then let impure thoughts in my mind for a long time.” Or to say: “I did an impure act by myself,” or “With a girl (or boy) friend of mine, I did some immodest kissing and touching.” If we have asked the Lord to help us be sorry about these things, and resolved to do better in these matters, mentioning the sins will be easy, and confession will make us feel much better. God’s grace will get us great strength in facing these temptations.

People should not be afraid of confessing embarrassing sins. The confessional is a place of absolute privacy. You may wish to confess “face to face.” You can confess with the privacy the confessional screen gives. We ought to remember that it is really Christ to whom we are talking. Christ wants us to confess to priests, so that we, who sinned boldly, will also have some courage (which He will give us) to come to Him for forgiveness.

**Christ’s teaching and my CONSCIENCE**

Christ teaches us how we are to live. He teaches us because He wants us to escape terrible problems and have a good life.

Jesus expects people who know who He is to pay attention to what He teaches. Notice in the Gospel of Matthew (14:27-31), how strongly Jesus blamed St. Peter for not believing Him and doing what He said, even though St. Peter clearly knew that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

What can we learn from the experience of St. Peter (Matthew 16:21-24) about how important it is to follow Christ’s guidance, even if we are upset, and want to do something else? If we know who Jesus is, our Savior and our God, we know that He is right.

And when He teaches that deliberate impure thoughts are very sinful (Matthew 5:27-28), we know that is true. We know that we should not let deliberate indecent thoughts fill our minds.

When Jesus teaches that deliberate impure acts come out of our disordered hearts, and they corrupt us seriously (Matthew 5:19-20), then we know we must not do such acts. What the Lord teaches is not just “rules.” He teaches us wise and good things that make our lives work well. It is good sense, for one who knows who Christ is, to believe what He teaches.
The conscience of one who believes in Christ will always be guided by what Christ teaches through His Church, much more than by what society, or those around us, says.

We will find that our minds get less confused, and our lives get happier, when we follow our consciences, and our consciences are formed in the light of Christ.

We find Christ’s teaching in the Gospels. We find His teaching in what the Church teaches, for He is always with the Church, teaching in her. “...And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

1. It is important for each person to have and to develop a good conscience.

2. A good and honest conscience assists with concerns about chastity.

3. The teaching of Christ guides the conscience of a Christian.
THE EUCHARIST and love

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality

Introduction

The gift of the Eucharist is an eternal reminder of how much Jesus loves us. Jesus is most truly present with us in the Eucharist. We should always celebrate and receive the Eucharist with faith that is true. We need to have pure hearts and souls. In this sacrament Jesus promises us that He will help us in following Him.

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

- The Eucharist is a gift of pure love from Jesus to us.
- The power of Jesus’ love is most apparent in the Eucharist.
- We must receive the gift of the Eucharist worthily.
- Serious impurities of heart, mind, and action make us unworthy to receive Jesus in Communion.
- The Eucharist gives us the grace to live lives of chastity.

Eucharist as gift of PURE LOVE

To be really happy, we have to know how much we are loved.

We feel good when our parents give us things we want. We feel great when we realize that they love us very much. If others in our class think we are intelligent, that pleases us. But if they really care for us, that makes our day.

Jesus loves us beyond all our imagining. Everything He did on earth, He did because He loves us. He even gladly suffered death for us. He did all this so that our sins could be forgiven and our lives could be healed and blessed. He did this so that we could be happy in this life and in eternal life.

Jesus never wanted to forget how much He loves us.

The Gospel tells us: at the Last Supper, on the night before He died for us, He thought of us. “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (John 13:1).
The night before He died on the cross for us, He gave us the Eucharist. He gave this Blessed Sacrament to us so we would always remember how much we are loved. As He turned ordinary bread and wine into His own presence, which would be the food and drink that gives us life and gladness, He said: “This is my body which is given up for you. Do this [celebrate the Eucharist] in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’” (Luke 22:19-20).

Jesus wants us to receive Communion, because receiving Communion is receiving Jesus Himself. And He wants to be with us, as our most dear friend. He promised that those who receive this food and drink of Communion would live in Him, and that He would live in them (see John 6:56).

**Eucharist and the POWER OF LOVE**

In the Eucharist, Jesus Himself, the Friend who knows us best and most cares about us, is truly with us.

**Jesus with us**

“The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:51). “This is my body” (Luke 22:19).

The Church has always believed and known that Jesus is most truly with us in the Eucharist. The Eucharist looks like plain and ordinary bread, but it is Jesus. It is the **Bread of Life** and the Cup of Salvation by which Jesus gives Himself entirely to us in the Eucharist.

All the saints loved and drew near to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. One of the great teachers of faith, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, spoke of our faith this way in the fourth century: “What here seems to be plain bread is not bread — though it tastes like bread. But it is the Body of Christ. Strengthen your hearts by receiving this bread as spiritual food, and give gladness to your soul” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechesis 22).

**The Paschal Mystery of Jesus is with us**

When we gather about the altar at the celebration of the Eucharist, we are gathering around the Paschal Mystery of Jesus our Lord. He is really present on the altar. And He is there as the Savior who gladly died on the cross for us. He loved us immensely when He died for us. He gave us hope when He rose on the third day. And He is present at the altar with all that great love and hope.

In Jesus’ heart still burns the love that made Him gladly die for us. In His heart is the great love that makes Him want to **heal** our lives, take away our sins, and make us His friends, worthy to live with Him forever.
In Communion we receive Jesus Himself. We receive the One who alone knows our hearts perfectly. We receive the One who cares about everything in our lives, because He loves us.

Eucharist AND sin

The Scripture tells us that we should always take care to receive Jesus our Savior worthily in Communion.

Of course, we certainly cannot be entirely worthy of so great a gift as that of Communion. How could I be worthy to receive into my heart my Lord and my God?

But the New Testament tells us plainly: We must seek to be worthy to receive Him! We must examine our hearts, and prepare them for Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). We should always come to this sacrament with faith. God gives us the gift of faith, so that we can recognize who it is that we are receiving in so great a sacrament. “It is the Lord!”

Two of the chief ways we prepare to receive Jesus are:

1. We must be in the state of grace.
   That is, we must have that new life that God gave us in baptism. We must have in our hearts the love of God that we will always have if we keep mortal sin out of our lives.
   When we want to go to Communion, we must be sure no mortal sin lies in our hearts. Mortal sin is very serious. To commit moral sins is to become selfish people, people who do not really love Christ with sincere hearts. And Communion is meant for people who love the Lord, the Lord who loves them so much, and loved them so intensely on the cross.
   If we have committed a mortal sin since our last confession, we should make a good confession before we go to Communion. Those who have committed a mortal sin must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before going to Communion. In forgiving us, the Lord Himself makes us worthy to come to Him.

2. We should come to Communion in a prayerful spirit.
   We should come to Jesus in Communion with thoughtful hearts. We should take time to remember who He is, how much He loves us, how good it is to be His friend, and how to receive Him. Before and after receiving Communion, we should take time to offer quiet prayer to God.

Impurities lead us away from the EUCHARIST

The Scriptures remind us why those who receive Jesus in Communion must have pure hearts and pure bodies.
Impure acts, when they are deliberate, are mortal sins. They take away the state of grace and they take the love of Christ out of our hearts. They make us unworthy to receive our Lord in Communion. To receive Communion while in the state of mortal sin is a very serious sin.

What sins of impurity are mortal sins? They are impure kinds of actions that one does by oneself to stir up lustful feelings in one's own body, or impure acts that one person commits with another person. Gravely sinful also are deliberate choices to want to engage in impure actions, or to take pleasure in them. Sometimes these deliberate desires are stirred up by deliberately filling our minds with indecent images by fixing our hearts on obscene images in truly indecent magazines or movies. Masturbation; viewing pornographic websites; engaging in passionate acts with others, all of these are very grave sins.

Remember: A mortal sin is always a sin committed with full knowledge of what we are doing, with full consent of the will. Certainly temptations alone are not mortal sins. If a lustful thought comes into one's mind, and one does not quite realize how wrong it would be to deliberately entertain it, a small hesitation is not a mortal sin. It is no sin at all, if we try gently to get rid of suggestions to do wrong things, when we realize that it is important for us to do so.

The New Testament reminds us that mortally sinful impure actions are especially wrong for those who wish to receive Jesus in Communion (1 Corinthians 6:15-20; 11:27-29).

Communion brings us closer to Jesus our Friend. When we receive Him in Communion, we come to “live in Him.” He wants us to be wonderfully close to Himself. We live in Him, as branches live on the vine (see John 15).

Communion makes us so close to Jesus that He considers us as a part of His very self. If anyone loves us, Jesus counts that as loving Himself, because we are that close to Him. If anyone hurts us, Jesus counts that as hurting Himself. Remember how Jesus asked St. Paul, before conversion, when he was hurting the Christians: “Why are you persecuting me?” When we come to Jesus, when we receive Communion, we become part of His Mystical Body. We belong entirely to Him.

Now sins of impurity are said in Scripture to be especially shameful for this reason. Other sins are “outside the body” (1 Corinthians 6:18). But in sins of impurity, it is our own bodies that we treat shamefully.

But there is more. This body of ours, which we would abuse by impure actions, even becomes united with Jesus when we go to Communion. Our bodies become part of His mystical body. By impure acts, then, we would not only treat our own bodies shamefully but we would be treating the body of Jesus shamefully, too. That is why we must avoid such sins, or sincerely repent of them, before coming to Communion.
Happily, Jesus makes it possible and easy for us to have pure minds and bodies. And if anyone has sinned, He makes it easy for them to repent, and find forgiveness, before going to Communion.

The Eucharist EMPOWERS us to live chastely
Receiving Communion devoutly makes it easier for us to have pure and generous hearts, because in the sacraments God gives us His powerful gift of grace.

In this world, where there are so many temptations toward impure actions, people would not be able to have strong and generous and pure hearts, unless Christ helped them very much.

But Jesus does help us, even more than we need. Jesus promises us: It will really not be painful, it will really not be too difficult, to serve Me with generous hearts, if you come to Me for help.

If it should ever seem too difficult to be pure of heart, and still have happy and cheerful lives, we should remember His promise. His grace will make it easy for us if we come to Him.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your soul. For my yoke is easy and my burden light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Remembering the PROMISES of Jesus
Jesus will not break His promise. He will always help us when we come to Him. We should come to Him in quiet prayer. We should come to Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation if we have committed any sins.

But above all, we should come to Him in Communion. We should come to Him, trusting Him. We should come to Him, trying to receive Him as worthily and devoutly as we can.

Those who receive Communion often, with prayerful spirits, and as worthily as they can, will find it easy to be faithful to Jesus. They will find it easy to know Him well, and love Him. And they will find it easy to love one another, with pure and generous hearts.
TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

1. Jesus gives us the Eucharist as a sign of pure love.
2. The love of Jesus, the power of His cross and resurrection, is most present in the Eucharist.
3. We must always be worthy to receive Jesus in Communion.
4. Mortal sins, such as deliberate thoughts and acts of impurity, make us unworthy to receive the Eucharist.
5. Chaste lives are greatly strengthened by the promise of Jesus in the Eucharist.
Personal Safety  
8th Grade Lesson Plan  
Body Boundaries  

What We Wear And What We Do  

LESSON OUTLINE:  
- Introduction & Opening Prayer: 5 – 7 Minutes  
- Teaching on Respect, focus on Dignity of Human Person: 7 – 10 Minutes  
- Teaching on Modesty and Chastity as Safe Body Boundaries: 7 – 10 Minutes  
- Activity—Talking about what we wear and what we do: 15 Minutes  
  *(This can be done by dividing the group and letting the 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  
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 world 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)  

✓ The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person and the integrality of the gift.  

✓ The Cardinal Virtues, of Prudence, Fortitude, Justice, and Temperance, help us to form the character that preserves the dignity of the human person and successfully integrate all parts.  
  “The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Article 2341)  

The Integrity of the Person has Self-Mastery  
The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech. (Catechism of the Catholic Church Article 2338)  

✓ Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery—a training in human freedom.  
✓ The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.
"Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end." (Catechism of the Catholic Church Article 2339)

Opening Remarks and Prayer of Cardinal Justin Rigali, USCCB Conference on Human Trafficking, Wyndham Plaza Hotel, Philadelphia - May 19, 2004

(Distribute Student Prayer)

Lord God,

You have made all humanity in your image, and have given us a share of your likeness. Help us to recognize that image and likeness in all people. Make us aware especially of those who find themselves subjected to inhuman conditions and unable to live in freedom. May we always remind the world, through our words and especially through our actions, of the dignity you have given us and of our responsibility to safeguard that dignity on behalf of all.

Guide us to protect the rights of all who have been victimized. May they and their families be protected from harm, may they be granted freedom from their oppressors, and may they be granted a full recognition of the dignity which is theirs.

Guide our nation, our state, our city, and all people and organizations, to work for an end to human trafficking and to all types of injustice as we seek to live as your children and as brothers and sisters to one another.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
TEACHING ON RESPECT,
FOCUS ON THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON: 7 - 10 Minutes

- Every person was created with a purpose, and every person can choose how to act and react in every situation.

- **Chastity** maintains the integrity of a person, and protects their dignity. Chastity includes learning how to be “masters of self”, which is really a training in human freedom.

- The Catechism tells us, The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.”

- The Catechism goes on to speak about dignity, which “requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end.”
  (Catechism of the Catholic Church Article 2339)

  “The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person and the integrality of the gift.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 2337)

⇒ What is the “gift” that we are talking about?  
(Allow a few seconds for the students to try to answer the question…)

⇒ So what does chastity really have to do with the Dignity of the Human Person?  
(Let them try to answer, then move on with the lesson to explain)

- Without self-mastery, and a respect for the dignity of the human person, people become slaves to their passions. Listen to this story:

- An 11 year old girl is stabbed, nearly to death, by a 20 year old who wanted to sexually abuse her. How did this happen? She was born third of six children, and when she was nine years old, her father died.

  When mom went to work, Maria took care of her younger siblings. Their family was poor, but Maria was cheerful and smart…also beautiful. Maria started doing household chores for a neighbor, 20 year old Alessandro, but he was never satisfied with the chores she completed.
He would often yell at her and make her cry. He also began making advances towards Maria, and she would refuse him, but she never told her mother because she was afraid of causing trouble.

One day, Alessandro overcame Maria and demanded that she submit to him, but she wouldn’t and told him that it would be a sin. Alessandro was so mad that he stabbed her 14 times—in her heart, lungs, and intestines.

Maria was rushed to the hospital, but after 20 hours of surgery, she died. Before she died, she was asked if she could forgive her murderer…and she said, “Yes, for the love of Jesus I forgive him…and I want him to be with me in Paradise.”

What happened to the Murderer? Alessandro was convicted and sentenced to 30 years in prison. On his eighth year of imprisonment, he had a vision of Maria in a garden…she smiled at him and handed him lilies (a symbol of peace). He accepted the lilies and each one transformed into a still white flame, and then Maria disappeared.

His heart completely changed and after 27 years in jail, he was released, and went directly to Maria’s mother to beg forgiveness. He then found a job as a gardener at a Capuchin monastery and worked there for the rest of his life.

Alessando was one of 30 witnesses who testified to Maria’s sanctity during her Cause of Beatification, and in 1950, she was canonized a Saint of the Church.

(paraphrased, based on the biography written by Dave Kopel, of St. Maria Goretti Church, Runnemeade, NJ, published by Independence Institute. Contact: Dave Kopel, Independence Institute, 13952 Denver West Pkwy., suite 400, Golden, CO 80401 Phone 303-279-6536. email webmngr@i2i.org)

- To Maria, purity meant the difference between life and death. Maria had a heart for God alone, and desired nothing but holiness for her life. When Maria recognized that her life had a purpose, she was able live the call to chastity.

- When Maria was threatened, she had the courage to resist and to forgive the person who hurt her.

- When Maria was alive, things were very different from today. Today, parents who are struggling have places to go to for help. Today, kids have a lot of people who want to help them when they feel they are in danger.

⇒ Who are some of those people?
TEACHING ON MODESTY
AND CHASTITY AS SAFE BODY BOUNDARIES: 10 – 20 Minutes

- The bible says, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys God's temple of God, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God is holy, which you are, is holy.” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)
  ⇒ What do you think this really means?

- One of the best ways to protect our bodies and remain pure is by learning about and understanding the **virtue of modesty**—it protects the most intimate part of a person.

- It’s not so much about what someone wears, but it’s about refusing to reveal what should remain in the secret—**modesty guides how someone looks at another person and how he/she behaves toward them**...but it also guides us on how to look at ourselves.

- **Modesty** encourages patience and moderation (which can be really hard), and it inspires ones choice of clothing, words, and closeness of a relationship. That’s what modesty of the feelings is all about—”**Modesty inspires a way of life**” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Articles 2521-2523)

- Modesty and Chastity are SO hard to practice alone. We need to understand and practice the **cardinal virtues** of Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice in order to **protect the dignity of ourselves and others**.

- First, let’s look at what a **virtue** is. The Catechism tells us a virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good (CCC #1803). **We make it a habit and are firm about our conviction to do good. We use our conscience to help us.**

- The **moral virtues** are acquired through human effort aided by **God’s grace** (CCC #1803). God never leaves us hanging—but **helps us** by giving us the graces necessary to practice the moral virtues, make good decisions, do what’s right, etc...

- So, how do we get God’s grace? One way we get grace is through all of the sacraments we receive, especially Holy Communion and Penance (going to confession). Our conscience comes into play again here.

**PRUDENCE**

- The virtue of **Prudence** means exercising sound judgment. “**Prudence guides the judgment of conscience.**” (CCC 1780) This virtue helps us overcome irresponsibility and become wise.

- **Prudence is the opposite of being impulsive.** It’s the way we acted when we were very young (age 2-3) and didn’t know any better. Think about it, making any **moral decision impulsively** can be pretty dumb and get you into a lot of trouble.
- Prudence helps us stop and think first, before we act on something.

- A good example is if you’re at the mall and your friends want you to steal something. You know it’s wrong—they keep insisting, or maybe they steal it anyway and get away with it. In your heart you know it’s wrong—not only because you might get caught, but because it’s cheating the store owner or company who will no doubt have to raise the price at some point because of the loss the store has taken. Which means the other shoppers will have to pay more and so on and so on……OR… If other people also steal from that store, the owner might have to go out of business which raises a lot of other problems (for the owner, his family, his future etc.).

(Catechist Note: There are numerous examples that might be used here: decisions made by certain people in the spotlight – Ben Rothlesburger, Tiger Woods, President Clinton Lindsay Lohan – the list goes on…use your discretion).

- The reality is that everything we do (good or bad, right or wrong) affects others.

- Prudence reminds us that it’s not about what I know, but about what I know to be true, why I know it to be true, and who I know and follow (Jesus).

TEMPERENCE
- The virtue of Temperance helps us to remember to have peace and confidence in God. “When tempers flare and fear takes over, disciples remain calm and trust in the Lord.”

- Another word for temperance is “self-control” Temperance is doing things in moderation. Practicing self-control or self-denial helps us in many situations (eating too much, using alcohol or drugs, getting too intimate with a boyfriend or girlfriend).

- Temperance helps us to “temper” our desires by practicing self-control. It helps us to find balance in our lives.

FORTITUDE
- The virtue of Fortitude reveals the true meaning of strength, “Strength is determined not by bone and muscle, but by the human heart and God’s hand.”

- Fortitude strengthens us to overcome obstacles—to live a good, solid, moral life. It’s easy to be good if we don’t have anything that morally challenges us – if we aren’t tempted (to eat until we’re sick, to steal from someone, to drink or use drugs, to hurt someone’s feelings when we’re angry, to act irresponsibly in our use of the internet, or on facebook etc …) BUT we all know that we face temptations every day!

- Fortitude helps us to stay strong in our conviction to do what is good and right! To follow our conscience—to use the graces God give us.
JUSTICE

- The virtue of Justice asks the question: “Who do you serve, yourself, or do you serve God?”

- Justice is about giving God and others what is their due. Jesus tells us to love God about all else and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

- Think about it—if everyone followed this beautiful teaching (it’s called the Golden Rule)—if we put others before ourselves, if we thought about others’ needs first before we thought of our own needs—we wouldn’t have any wars, everyone would get along, we wouldn’t cheat or steal, take advantage of, or injure anyone else, we wouldn’t put someone down because they might be different than we are—WE WOULD ACT JUSTLY!

- Justice helps us to treat others fairly—the way God intended.

- These cardinal virtues (Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice) help us to honor the dignity of ourselves and others. NO ONE SHOULD LIVE BENEATH THEIR DIGNITY! That includes us—we should never lower ourselves to do something that we know is morally wrong AND we should never put another person in that position!

- When we recognize how important it is to protect our bodies and our dignity, we will be able to recognize situations when personal safety or dignity may be in danger.
Grade 8

DISCUSSION GUIDE ACTIVITY
15 Minutes

ACTIVITY 1 – TALKING ABOUT WHAT WE WEAR AND WHAT WE DO
BRAINSTORMING
5-7 minutes

Catechist notes: Divide the class into groups of 4-5 students and have them brainstorm through the following prompts. At the end of 5 or 6 minutes, facilitate a class discussion in which they can share their thoughts and ideas with the entire class. See notes below before beginning.

(Distribute student handout)

Catechist

Talking About
What We Wear and What We Do

1. Modesty is not about drawing a line on an arm, a leg, a neck or any other body part. It’s about drawing a line on your heart, telling what you will not cross.”

→ What are some ways that you can “draw a line on your heart”?

2. Make a list of all of the places where someone might see images of things that are not preserving the dignity of the human person in a week.

→ What are some good choices that you can make about modesty and respect?
→ Who are the people you can talk to about issues with modesty, respect and personal safety?
Catechist notes continued…

**Catechist 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 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.

**Be sure to 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).
Grade 8

DISCUSSION GUIDE ACTIVITY
10 Minutes

ACTIVITY 2 – TALKING ABOUT SITUATIONAL EVALUATIONS
10 minutes

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

Recommendation: Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4. Present some of the questions to the entire group for general discussion then have the students discuss each of the other questions in their small groups and share with the large group.

For other scenarios, have the students discuss each question in the group for a minute before talking to the class. Use your discretion.

- You and your friends have been on gaming sites online for a couple of years. Sometimes you play against other online opponents and talk while you’re gaming. One of the players always says weird things to you, and added you as a friend on Facebook.

  The pictures that this person has on their profile show other kids doing weird things that you don’t think your parents would want you to be seeing.

  ⇒ What can you do and who can you talk to about this?

  ⇒ If this person starts to ask you for pictures, or sends you pictures of themselves or other people doing “weird” or private things, what would you do?

  ⇒ Is this something that you should tell your parents about?

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.
Catechist notes continued…

› Over the summer, you and your friends spent a lot of time in the pool. Your friend’s neighbor was over at the pool a lot too. He would always watch you all swim and jump around. Sometimes, he would take pictures of you and your friends at the pool, but never let you guys see what the pictures looked like.

⇒ What do you think about this?

› 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 because it showed private things happening between adults. 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?

⇒ 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.
Wrap up prompts for group discussion:

1. Does what you do reflect who you are?
2. How is what happens to you different from what you do?

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

The Catholic Vision of Love gives dignity and respect to every person.

- God gave each of us the gift of our sexuality to use in cooperation with God’s grace and in the context of our vocation.

- Chastity involves the integrity of the person and the integrality of the gift.

- Chastity is the appropriate expression of intimacy between people in relationship. We can practice chastity in all of our relationships.

- The Cardinal Virtues, of Prudence, Fortitude, Justice, and Temperance, help us to form the character that preserves the dignity of the human person and successfully integrate all parts.

- These cardinal virtues (Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice) help us to honor the dignity of ourselves and others. NO ONE SHOULD LIVE BENEATH THEIR DIGNITY! That includes us—we should never lower ourselves to do something that we know is morally wrong AND we should never put another person in that position!

- “The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Article 2341)

- The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech. (Catechism of the Catholic Church Article 2338)

- Exploitation of the human person denies their dignity and destroys their freedom. The Catholic Vision of Love preserves both dignity and freedom.
Review of what Exploitation is and how to identify it:

It is important to 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 today’s activities take a closer 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:

“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)

“Where’s your computer (location, what room) in the house?” (to see if parents might be around)

“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)

“I know someone who can get you a modeling job. (opens a doorway for inappropriate photos)

“You seem sad. Tell me what’s bothering you.” (sympathy leading to a false sense of trust)

“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)

“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)

“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)

_Catechist note: This is such an important lesson—if the students have questions, or may need to talk about experiences. Please provide some avenue for this, and consult diocesan regulations for reporting incidences of abuse or sensitive topics that young people may share about themselves or a friend._
CLOSING PRAYER
5 – 7 Minutes

Catechist

8th Grade

CLOSING PRAYER

EXAMINATION OF VIRTUE

Reader 1: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence rely not.”
(Proverbs 3)

The virtue of Prudence reminds us that “It’s not about what I know, but about what I know to be true and Who I know.” God, present in my life today and all days, help me to trust you.

Group Reflection (Silent): What does it mean to trust God in EVERY aspect of my life? Why is that difficult for me? Do I fully trust in God’s love for me? Do I believe that He desires what is best for me? Do I trust that He will fulfill all His promises?

Reader 2: “Trust in the LORD forever! For the LORD is an eternal Rock. He humbles those in high places, and the lofty city he brings down.” (Isaiah 26: 4-5)

The virtue of Temperance helps us to remember to have peace and confidence in God. “When tempers flare and fear takes over, disciples remain calm and trust in the Lord.”

Group Reflection (Silent): Are there areas in my life where I am waiting for God to “prove” himself? What are the areas in my life that I have placed conditions on my trust? What are the conditions? Do I really believe that God has a plan for me?

Reader 3: Do I continue to trust God when He seems to delay in answering prayers? Do I trust that God’s love for me is bigger than my ability? “…but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength” (Isaiah40:3).

The virtue of Fortitude reveals the true meaning of strength, “Strength is determined not by bone and muscle, but by the human heart and God’s hand.”

Group Reflection (Silent): Do I really believe that God is big enough for all the challenges in my life? How have I made my heart stronger in Him? When have I relied on my own strength and abilities more than God’s providence?
Reader 4: Jesus Christ said, "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (John 13:34). When it comes to loving another person, or loving God, the virtue of Justice makes me ask myself this question: “Who do I serve, myself, or do I serve my God?”

**Group Reflection (Silent):** Do I trust God with my future? Is it more about His will or mine? Do I trust God to guide and direct all my relationships? family? friends? dating? enemies? Where do I need help letting go and letting God? Have I taken ownership over my mistakes and surrendered them before God? Have I completely entrusted my vocation to God’s guidance? Do I trust God with the ordinary moments of each day, not just the big decisions? I cannot trust someone that I do not know. Do I set aside time in prayer? Do I listen for God’s voice? Do I look for His presence and direction?

Reader 5: God, help me to trust you with all of these things. With the intercession of Saint Maria Goretti we pray:

Dear Saint Maria Goretti! The world teaches that we must please others in order to be popular. Conscience demands that I please God more than one who asks an evil thing in the name of false love. Teach me by your example to instill into others a real respect for modesty and purity.

Reader 6: Through your powerful intercession, help me to make of this evening an occasion for helping others to become spiritually stronger. Grant that others may see in me reason to change their ways, if that be necessary, and that I may have the courage to resist any temptation to sinful conduct. Let others be led closer to Jesus and Mary by my example.

All: Oh Little Saint who wanted to be popular only with your Divine Master and His Blessed Mother, help me to imitate you. Amen.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be….

Reader 1: Saint Maria Goretti,

All: Pray for us! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Prayers Found through:** Friends of St. Maria Goretti USA - Br. Goretti Zilli, Director email: gzilli@maryknoll.org - P.O. Box 0043 Maryknoll, NY 10545-0043 www.mariagoretti.org
Telephone: (914) 941-6372 – FAX: (914) 945-0715
OPENING PRAYER

Lord God,

You have made all humanity in your image, and have given us a share of your likeness. Help us to recognize that image and likeness in all people. Make us aware especially of those who find themselves subjected to inhuman conditions and unable to live in freedom. May we always remind the world, through our words and especially through our actions, of the dignity you have given us and of our responsibility to safeguard that dignity on behalf of all.

Guide us to protect the rights of all who have been victimized. May they and their families be protected from harm, may they be granted freedom from their oppressors, and may they be granted a full recognition of the dignity which is theirs.

Guide our nation, our state, our city, and all people and organizations, to work for an end to human trafficking and to all types of injustice as we seek to live as your children and as brothers and sisters to one another.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
ACTIVITY

Talking About
What We Wear and What We Do

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TALKING ABOUT SITUATIONAL EVALUATIONS

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The Lord does not see as mortals see:
they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

(Student Handout)
Internet Safety
WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

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