

LIVING THE CREED

SESSION 1

BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

Every *YDisciple* session has three parts: CONNECT, DISCUSS, and COMMIT. The CONNECT section is designed to build trust, transparency, and community in the group. The DISCUSS section is designed to introduce topics of the faith, engage critical thinking, and facilitate discussion. The COMMIT section is designed to help students take ownership of their faith and put it into practice. This Parent Sheet is designed to give you a look into each section of the session so that you can have a follow-up conversation with your teenager about his or her experience in the small group and encourage spiritual growth.

SESSION OVERVIEW

The fruits of Christ's death and resurrection are dispensed in our lives today through the sacraments. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us: **"Christ manifests, makes present, and communicates his work of salvation through the liturgy of his Church"** (CCC 1076).

For Catholics, the word sacrament might convey a sense of ritual and religious experience, but for those not familiar with the Church, the idea of a sacrament can be puzzling. What is a sacrament? How do the sacraments work? Do I really need all of this ritual? Can't I just have a simple relationship with God?

These are some of the questions your teen discussed in this session. The students began by looking at the seven sacraments instituted by Christ in general and then focused more specifically on two sacraments of initiation: Baptism and Confirmation. The discipleship group discussed how Baptism is considered the "gateway" to the Christian life as well as the significance of Confirmation. In the next four sessions, your teen will consider the other sacraments of the Church. Along the way, he or she will see how the sacraments draw us into the story of salvation, deepen our union with God, strengthen us in the Christian life, and assist us in the key moments of our lives!

CONNECT

We started with an activity called "Hope Floats." The students each shared about a friend that was having a bad day, and the group discussed ways this day could be turned around, showing that any miserable day can be turned around with some hope. Ask your teen if there is a difference between a hopeless or hopeful mindset.



DISCUSS

- » **The Sacrament of Baptism achieves what it symbolizes: a spiritual death and rebirth in Christ. How would you respond to someone who asks: “Why have you Catholics made Christianity so complicated with all your rules and rituals?”**

(The simple answer to that question is: “Because Jesus ascended into heaven and we need to think seriously about how we worship Him and live our lives as His disciples until He returns in glory. Just before He ascended to His Father, Jesus commissioned His disciples to make disciples of all nations, and He promised that He would be with them always” [Matthew 28:18-20]. His disciples had to be thinking: “How will He remain with us if He ascended to heaven?” Their question was answered when the Holy Spirit descended upon them at Pentecost, and the Church, the Body of Christ, was born. Through the liturgy and sacraments of the Church, Jesus continues the work of salvation that He began during His earthly life. Rules and rituals are about truth and grace. Jesus saves us through truth and grace.)

- » **Romans 5:18 contrasts Adam with Jesus. It says: “Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.” How would you respond to someone who says it is unfair that God would punish everyone for Adam’s sin?**

(While it is true that we have inherited a sinful nature from Adam, it is not true to say that God has punished us because of Adam’s sin. When we face God on our day of judgment, we will not be held responsible for Adam’s sin; we will be held responsible for our own sins. Original sin is a state we are in, not a personal sin. Having a sinful nature and the difficulties it brings into our lives makes us aware that we need to be saved from our sins and the effects of sin. Having difficulty in our lives because of the effects of sin gives us the opportunity to overcome these difficulties with God’s grace and become holy. And, that is the goal of our lives—holiness.)

- » **What does it mean that the sacraments are our toolkit as we step out every day as believers?**

*(The sacraments give us grace and “**grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life**” [CCC 1997]. So, stepping out every day in the state of grace assures you that you are not alone! You have the presence of God within you and have available to you the power to resist temptation, persevere through challenges, and bring blessing to others. Frequent reception of the sacraments and prayer strengthen our relationship with God.)*



COMMIT

Teens are challenged this week to take their baptismal promises into their daily prayer; it's a challenge you can take as a parent as well. Ask yourself whether you believe in these promises so strongly that you would stake your life on them:

- 1) Do you reject Satan?
- 2) And all his works?
- 3) And all his empty promises?
- 4) Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?
- 5) Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?
- 6) Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?



"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin."

—Romans 6:3-6



PARENT TIP

To understand this topic more deeply, consider purchasing "Changed Forever: The Sacrament of Baptism" and "We Must Go Out: The Sacrament of Confirmation" by Father Michael Schmitz through Lighthouse Catholic Media.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/changed-forever-the-sacrament-of-baptism#

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/we-must-go-out-the-sacrament-of-confirmation

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SESSION 2

THE EUCHARIST

Every *YDisciple* session has three parts: CONNECT, DISCUSS, and COMMIT. The CONNECT section is designed to build trust, transparency, and community in the group. The DISCUSS section is designed to introduce topics of the faith, engage critical thinking, and facilitate discussion. The COMMIT section is designed to help students take ownership of their faith and put it into practice. This Parent Sheet is designed to give you a look into each section of the session so that you can have a follow-up conversation with your teenager about his or her experience in the small group and encourage spiritual growth.

SESSION OVERVIEW

The Sacrament of the Eucharist lies at the very heart of the Catholic faith. When we receive Holy Communion, we are united with Jesus in the most intimate way possible here on earth. In this session, the teens dove into the truth that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ. The almighty God, Creator of the universe, humbles Himself so that He can become one with us each time we attend Mass and receive communion. The idea that a sliver of bread and a drop of wine can truly be changed into Christ's Body and Blood can be difficult for teens, and all people, to grasp completely. After all, they still look like bread and wine!

The discipleship group discussed that while the Eucharist has the outward appearance of bread and wine, it is the Body and Blood of Christ that we must consume to have eternal life. This is a central mystery of our faith: Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist, yesterday, today, and until the end of time. Throughout the session they examined why Jesus couldn't have been speaking metaphorically when He said to eat His Body and drink His Blood, and also how the sacrifice of the Mass makes present Christ's sacrifice on the cross—and how knowing that makes a crucial difference for our participation in the liturgy.

CONNECT

This week the teens participated in an opening activity called "Thankful Memories," in which they drew some of their favorite memories they are thankful for in different periods of their lives—including a drawing of something they think they might be thankful for in the future. Ask your teen to describe the memories he or she drew in this activity.



DISCUSS

- » When speaking of Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist, we profess that His body, blood, soul, and divinity is present. Why do you think Jesus' real presence is often expressed in this way?

(When Protestants began breaking away from the Catholic Church and rejecting or changing Catholic teaching, the Church held the Council of Trent to identify Protestant errors and reaffirm and clarify Catholic teaching. The Council taught that the Eucharist contained the whole Christ—body, blood, soul, and divinity. We receive Jesus as He is now in heaven—the fullness of His divinity and the completeness of His humanity, nothing less.)

- » Father Riley said in the videos this week: “We gather at Mass, not merely to watch or witness, but to be drawn into the great mystery.” What does it mean to be drawn into the Mass?

(The great mystery is that Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice on Calvary is made present and perpetuated in the Mass. The Catechism teaches: “Our prayer ascends in the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father—we bless him for having blessed us; it implores the grace of the Holy Spirit that descends through Christ from the Father—he blesses us” [CCC 2627]. This movement of prayer happens in the Mass. In the Holy Spirit, we unite ourselves to Christ in a prayerful offering to the Father for the salvation of souls. The priest, standing in the person of Jesus, presides at the Mass and offers our prayers to the Father. Our union with Jesus in the Mass is a “Holy Communion” in which we are transformed.)

- » What would you say to a non-Catholic who says he feels “second class” because he is not allowed to receive communion in a Catholic Church?

(The Eucharist is a sign of unity in the Catholic Church. Jesus prayed to His Father: “That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” [John 17:21]. Our unity is vital to the mission of the Gospel in the world. Therefore, Catholics take unity very seriously. Restricting non-Catholics from Holy Communion is not meant to make them feel bad but is meant to create awareness of how important working toward unity is. Secondly, St. Paul wrote about how dangerous it is to receive communion unworthily: “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself” [1 Corinthians 11:29]. The Church is showing mercy to those who might otherwise receive the Lord unworthily without knowing.)



COMMIT

In the videos this week, Dr. Sri asked the teens, “Will you take time to visit Jesus in the Eucharist?” Or in other words: What is preventing you from visiting Jesus in the Eucharist? This week, we asked the teens to reflect and think if they really believe that He is truly present and waiting for them to visit Him in the Eucharist. Their challenge is to take some time in their week to visit Jesus in the Eucharist.



"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.' The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.'"

—John 6:51-58



PARENT TIP

To understand this topic more deeply, consider purchasing "True Worship" by Father Michael Schmitz and "Understanding the Eucharist" by Dr. Scott Hahn through Lighthouse Catholic Media.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/true-worship

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/understanding-the-eucharist#

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SESSION 3

WALK THROUGH THE MASS

Every *YDisciple* session has three parts: CONNECT, DISCUSS, and COMMIT. The CONNECT section is designed to build trust, transparency, and community in the group. The DISCUSS section is designed to introduce topics of the faith, engage critical thinking, and facilitate discussion. The COMMIT section is designed to help students take ownership of their faith and put it into practice. This Parent Sheet is designed to give you a look into each section of the session so that you can have a follow-up conversation with your teenager about his or her experience in the small group and encourage spiritual growth.

SESSION OVERVIEW

From the time of the Apostles, Christians have gathered on Sundays to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Early Christians would read the Scriptures, listen to a homily, and pray prayers of petition. The priest then offered bread and wine, and the people received the Eucharist in Holy Communion. It was the Mass then—and it is the Mass today.

In order to better appreciate the sacred mysteries of the Liturgy, in this session the teens were led to understand how the Mass is arranged and what happens in each of its four basic parts. Then, they were walked through how Christ's one sacrifice on Calvary is made present to us through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Lastly in this session, the teens entered more profoundly into the sacred Liturgy to encounter Jesus, present and alive for us today.



CONNECT

During this session, the teens participated in an opening activity called "Once-in-a-Lifetime Party." The teens brainstormed what kind of a party they would throw if they had an unlimited budget. This led into our introduction of the topic of the celebration of the Mass and its connection to the heavenly liturgy. Ask your teen what kind of party he or she would throw.



DISCUSS

» Why do you think it is important that the Mass we celebrate today closely resembles the worship of the early Church?

*(Jesus commanded His Apostles to “do this in remembrance of me.” He willed that we worship in a particular way and He purposely handed this on to His Apostles who in turn handed down to their successors. Apart from this Apostolic Tradition of the Mass, worship will be experimented with in many different, even deadly, ways. For example, Pastor Coots of Full Gospel Tabernacle in Jesus Name Church in Kentucky died in 2014 from a rattlesnake bite he received during a worship service. “Snake handling” is a practice that developed through an interpretation of one verse in the Bible: “**They will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them**” [Mark 16:18a].)*

» How do you think we can be discerning of the message God desires for us personally?

*(In Luke chapter 24, we read about two of Jesus’ disciples walking on the road to Emmaus. In verse 32, they describe their experience with Jesus: “**They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?’**” In other words, they were aware of something happening in their hearts. God’s Word can do the same for us. There may be a movement in our hearts, a sense of peace, a sense of hope, inspiration, or even a solution comes to mind for a problem. The key is to pay attention to the words of Scripture and be aware of what is happening in our thoughts, feelings, and desires.)*

» What would you say to a friend who says it is not necessary to attend Mass every Sunday?

(St. Padre Pio, who was known to celebrate Mass for 2–3 hours, said: “It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without the Holy Mass.” Though we receive Jesus in the Word and the Eucharist, the Mass is not just for our benefit. We are offering our prayers with Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice for the salvation of souls. In other words, the world needs the Mass, and Jesus desires our cooperation with Him. Also, we are transformed through our worship of God. So, why go to Mass? Because God wants to transform us and through us transform the world. The penalty of mortal sin shows us just how important the Mass is for the world.)



COMMIT

The challenge this week for your teen is to arrive at Mass at least 15 minutes early so that he or she can adequately prepare for full, conscious, and active participation.



"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this 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



PARENT TIP

To understand this topic more deeply, consider purchasing "The Mass Explained" by Father Larry Richards through Lighthouse Catholic Media.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/the-mass-explained#

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SESSION 4

PENANCE AND ANOINTING OF THE SICK

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SESSION OVERVIEW

God, in His infinite mercy, understands that we will fall short, we will sin—but He doesn't leave us in that sin. Through the Sacrament of Penance, we can be restored to love and friendship with God and receive the grace to mend our relationships with each other. Like the father of the prodigal son, He welcomes us back at the smallest sign of our sorrow and repentance.

Just as Jesus did not condemn the adulterous woman, He forgives us completely and tells us to "Go and sin no more." Little wonder then that the Sacrament of Penance, also known as Reconciliation, is one of the last and greatest gifts Jesus left us. When He told his Apostles after the Resurrection, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven," He gave them authority to bestow the Father's tangible mercy to all generations that follow.



CONNECT

The group opened the session with an activity called "Circle of Trust." One of the members stood in the middle of the circle and fell into the arms of the others with his/her eyes closed and body rigid. The group passed the individual around for a short period of time. Then they discussed these questions:

» **Why was it difficult to trust the group?**

(We have to let go of control and entrust our well-being into the hands of others.)

- » God has promised us His mercy, the forgiveness of our sins, and the grace of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. Why can it be difficult to trust His promises?

(Faith is trustful surrender. Adam and Eve fell into sin because they failed to trust that God's will for their lives would bring them the most happiness. We are the same. We fear what God will ask of us if we entrust our lives to Him.)



DISCUSS

- » A Catholic college student joked with his fraternity brothers: "I live out the story of the prodigal son every weekend! I sin on Friday night, go to confession on Saturday, and then Mass on Sunday." What is wrong with this mindset?

(The Church teaches that this mindset is itself sinful. It is the sin of presumption. The Catechism teaches: "There are two kinds of presumption. Either man presumes upon his own capacities, (hoping to be able to save himself without help from on high), or he presumes upon God's almighty power or his mercy (hoping to obtain his forgiveness without conversion and glory without merit)." You cannot be forgiven of sin without true contrition. Perfect contrition is when we are sorry for our sins because we love God and never want to offend Him again. God's mercy will mean little to us if we are not truly sorry or committed to avoiding sin. This is why Jesus told the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee in Luke 18:10-14. The Pharisee presumed he was righteous while the tax collector begged for God's mercy. He said: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Jesus wants our contrition to imitate that of the tax collector.)

- » Father Chris told a group of college students on retreat: "Catholics are obliged to confess their sins to a priest because Jesus ascended into heaven." What did he mean by this?

(Jesus conquered death and ascended into heaven so that we could rise from the dead and enter heaven. He sits at the right hand of the Father and exercises His kingly authority and high priesthood through His Church here on earth. He told His Apostles: "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" [John 16:7]. In other words, it is better for us that Jesus forgives our sins by the power of the Holy Spirit working through His priests. Why? In order to increase our faith, hope, and charity. If Jesus were still present on earth for all of us to see, there would be no need for faith since we would see Him clearly. He wants us to know, love, and serve Him freely.)

- » A grandfather groaned as he got out of the chair. His grandson asked: "Is it your arthritis, Grandpa?" The grandfather jokingly answered: "No, I was just reminded that I was made to fall apart!" Why are we made to fall apart?

(We have to fall apart in order to be rebuilt for heaven. The Catechism teaches: "God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living....It was through the devil's envy that death entered the world" (Wisdom 1:13; 2:24) [CCC 413] and "As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin" [418].

*Sin is the reason we all will experience suffering and death. However, the good news is that because of sin, suffering, and death, we were given a Savior who has made our situation even better than before. **"The victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us: 'where sin increased, grace abounded all the more'" (Romans 5:20) [CCC 420]. In other words, suffering and death are worth it because God has given us grace to forgive us of our sin, the grace to give us strength throughout our lives, and ultimately the grace to overcome suffering and death to be glorified in heaven.)***

COMMIT

The challenge this week is to commit to confession every 2–3 weeks and to go to the same priest each time so that he can be of more help to you with his counsel.



"If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

—John 6:51-58

PARENT TIP

This session teaches that God gives us grace in the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick to heal us. To understand this topic more deeply, we recommend the Lighthouse Catholic Media Talk "Confession" by Father Larry Richards.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/confession#

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SESSION 5

MATRIMONY AND HOLY ORDERS

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SESSION OVERVIEW

We all know the familiar words: “To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.” They are part of the time-honored traditional vows of marriage, and they form the cornerstone of the Catholic rite of matrimony. But the wedding ceremony is just the beginning of the Sacrament of Marriage. A marriage is shaped day by day, as the husband and wife grow in love, trust, and mutual self-giving over their lifetimes.

Marriage takes a lot of work. It is often noted that about 50 percent of all marriages in the U.S., including Catholic marriages, end in divorce. Of the remaining 50 percent, many do not emulate the daily sacrificial love that God intended marriage to be. All in all, living an authentic Catholic marriage in today’s world is a real challenge. That’s why Marriage is a Sacrament of Service as is Holy Orders. Through the graces offered by the sacrament, Jesus gives us the strength to love our spouse as Christ does and offer our own life to our spouse as a witness of that love.

CONNECT

We did an activity called “Scar Show and Tell.” The group members each shared a story of how they got a scar—or they told about an injury or most embarrassing moment. Share a story of one of your scars/injuries/most embarrassing moments with your teenager.

Here’s how the activity relates to the session topic of the Sacrament of Marriage:

Tragically, many have been scarred by failed marriages. The Church calls divorce “**a plague on society**” because of the grave harm it causes to families (CCC 2385). But there is a remedy to this

plague and it is found in God's own scars—on the hands, feet, and side of His Son, Jesus Christ. The grace of the sacraments flow from Jesus' scars, that is, His death and resurrection. Marriage, along with Holy Orders, is a sacrament of service. God unites a husband and wife in marriage and gives them the grace to grow in selfless love for one another and for their children. This love builds up the Body of Christ and is a witness of God's love for the world.



DISCUSS

- » **Genesis 2:25 reads: “And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.” But after they sinned, they were ashamed and covered themselves with fig leaves. What do you think changed in their relationship?**

(The Catechism teaches: “The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul’s spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination” [CCC 400]. As a result of their sin, Adam and Eve lost their trust with God and with one another. In the absence of trust, they felt vulnerable and insecure. They covered themselves since lust and domination was a new reality they had to battle in their hearts, and marriage has been troubled ever since. This is why Jesus made marriage a sacrament.)

- » **Since the Church teaches that sex is designed by God to be within the covenant of marriage and ordered to bring children into the world, how does the Church help people with same-sex attraction?**

(The media has portrayed the Church as being anti-gay. This is a lie. The Church loves all people. The Church is a hospital for the sick and we are all sick. Mother Teresa best represents the Church when she said she did not like the term “homosexuals.” She asked to refer to those with same-sex attraction as “friends of Jesus.” She understood their identity was not in their sexual attractions but in their dignity as children of God. She was the first to open hospices in countries around the world to care for those dying of AIDS. In addition, the Church has a ministry called Courage, which ministers to those with same-sex attraction and their families. We are all called to holiness. The sacraments offer the grace to be forgiven and the strength to be chaste.)

- » **A priest said: “While it is true that no one will ever call me daddy, thousands call me Father.” Why do we call priests “Father”?**

(We call him “Father” because we are his spiritual children. Just as God gives fathers the power to generate life, so God gives priests the power to generate eternal life. Every man is called by God to marriage. His bride is either a woman or the bride of Christ, the Church. The man is called to give himself selflessly to his bride in order to bring forth new life and bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. As a husband, he accepts children lovingly. As a priest, he brings forth thousands of spiritual children through his sacramental ministry.)

COMMIT

The challenge this week is for your teenager to commit to praying the “The Courageous Prayer” every day.

The Courageous Prayer

Lord Jesus, give me the desire for the vocation You desire for me—whether that is the priesthood, consecrated life, or marriage—and give me the grace to respond to that desire generously.

Be mindful of the ways that you might support your teen in discerning his or her vocation. Like all of us, your teen will find the most fulfillment and happiness in life in the vocation God is calling him or her to do.



“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it’...Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

—Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24

PARENT TIP

This session teaches that God gives us grace in the Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders in order to build up the Body of Christ. We recommend the Lighthouse Catholic Media Talk “Marriage and Family—Love Unveiled” by Dr. Scott Hahn.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/marriage-and-family-love-unveiled#

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SESSION 6

A CATHOLIC MORAL VISION

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SESSION OVERVIEW

The word morality is often viewed as something negative today. It is associated with “rules” that keep us from having too much fun. But that’s not the Catholic view of morality. For the Catholic Church, morality is all about the quest for happiness. In Catholic teaching, living a moral life means following the plan of the God who made us so that we can be fully alive. It means becoming all that God has created us to be.

So why does the world have such a different take on morality than the Catholic Church? Much of the world today holds to moral relativism: the idea that everyone can make up their own morality, that there isn’t really anything right or wrong, true or false—all that matters is that you follow what you believe.

One problem with moral relativism is that it is focused on self. Without a higher standard outside of ourselves calling us to generosity, perseverance, loyalty, and heroic sacrifice, we become trapped in self-interest. Instead of following God’s plan for our lives, we follow our own plan, making up our own ethics, which, instead of challenging us to give ourselves more in sacrificial love, often supports our own advantage, comfort, or pleasure.

In this week’s session, we learned that morality is simply following our Maker’s plan for our lives and in doing so, we become authentically whole and holy.



CONNECT

Ask your teen what name meanings he or she came up with in this opening activity.

1. Write your full name at the top of the paper with a dash at the end. Next to the dash, write a funny meaning for your name in 10 words or less.
2. Next, write a meaning for your name that is an accurate portrayal of your personality.
3. Finally, write a heroic meaning to your name, something that you aspire to be.

If you were to write an “and” following your heroic meaning, what would your next sentence say?



DISCUSS

Freedom is not simply a choice but an achievement that requires skills. For example, someone may value classical music but they will not have the freedom to play classical music if they have not acquired the skill to play an instrument. The skills needed in the moral life that brings true freedom are the virtues.

» **Ron Garofalo is a three-time world champion powerlifter. He trains young men in the sport of powerlifting in his gym called Virtus, which is Latin for virtue. What is the relationship between strength and virtue?**

(The will is like a muscle. With training it can be strengthened. Without training muscle can atrophy [waste away] and become weak. Virtue is strength of will, and vice is weakness of will. To strengthen a muscle you need to subject it to heavy weight. The resistance causes the muscle to respond and grow. In the moral life, the heavy weight is temptation and difficulty. Pushing through this resistance strengthens the will, and resisting temptation and pushing through difficulty becomes easier and easier. Doing what is right with relative ease is what brings freedom and happiness.)

» **Why is helping someone to form their conscience in the truth a spiritual work of mercy?**

(The Catechism teaches: “The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings” [CCC 1783]. To instruct the ignorant and counsel the doubtful is to help form their conscience according to the truth so that the truth will set them free. If we fail to act according to God’s plan, whether we know it or not, we will suffer the consequences. This is why it is merciful and loving to share the truth with others.)

Charles Dickens begins his novel *David Copperfield* with the sentence: “Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.” St. Paul, however, makes it sound that it is impossible to be the hero of your own life. He writes to the Romans: **“For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members”** (Romans 7:22-23).

» **How does the Good News of Jesus Christ reconcile these two statements?**

(Ephesians 2:8-10 reads: **“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** In other words, we can be the hero of our own lives by placing our faith in Jesus and cooperating with His grace in order to be set free from the “law of sin” and perform the good works God has prepared for us. With God’s grace, we can be heroes—strong, brave, and self-sacrificial.)

COMMIT

St. Augustine said that humility is the foundation of all virtues. The challenge this week is for your teenager to commit to praying the “The Litany of Humility” every day.



“For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

—Romans 7:22-25a

PARENT TIP

To understand this topic more deeply, consider purchasing “Seven Deadly Sins—Seven Lively Virtues” by Bishop Robert Barron through Lighthouse Catholic Media.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/seven-deadly-sins-seven-lively-virtues

THE CREED SESSION 7

A LOVE THAT LASTS- DISCOVERING AUTHENTIC LOVE

Every *YDisciple* session has three parts: CONNECT, DISCUSS, and COMMIT. The CONNECT section is designed to build trust, transparency, and community in the group. The DISCUSS section is designed to introduce topics of the faith, engage critical thinking, and facilitate discussion. The COMMIT section is designed to help students take ownership of their faith and put it into practice. This Parent Sheet is designed to give you a look into each section of the session so that you can have a follow-up conversation with your teenager about his or her experience in the small group and encourage spiritual growth.

SESSION OVERVIEW

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)*, St. Pope John Paul II stated, **“God created man in His own image and likeness: calling him to existence through love, He called him at the same time for love. God is love and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being”** (FC 11).

In the world’s view, love is often defined by the Greek word *eros*—the passionate love that seeks pleasure in the company of a beloved. This kind of love focuses on what we can get out of the relationship, particularly a romantic relationship. It’s about good feelings, emotion, and pleasure. It’s primarily about getting, not giving.

The kind of vocational love St. John Paul II talks about is called *agape*—a total, committed, and unconditional love that centers not on what we can get from the other person, but on what we can give. This kind of love mirrors the love of the Trinity and the love that God has for each one of us. It’s a selfless and self-sacrificing love. But in a divine paradox, the more we practice *agape* love, the more we give of ourselves to another, the more we discover the deep, lasting love our hearts desire. We will only find our fulfillment and happiness when we live total self-giving love in relationship with God and the people in our lives.

Pope Benedict XVI taught that *eros* and *agape* are not intrinsically opposed. If the passionate love of *eros* ascends to the sacrificial love of *agape*, *eros* and *agape* can become united in Jesus Christ, who loves us so much he gave up his life for us. Such a love then becomes **“concern and care for the other,”** a true self gift (*Deus Caritas Est*, 6, 10). For as the *Catechism* explains, **“To love is to will the good of the other”** (CCC 1766).



CONNECT

THE DIFFERENCE JESUS MAKES

In our opening activity, teens considered which of the following were their top three priorities right now. They were then asked to reflect on how much influence their relationship with Jesus has on each of those areas—either directly, indirectly, or not at all. And finally, teens were asked: What would it look like for Jesus to have a direct influence in the most important areas of your life right now?

1. Being accepted by my peers
2. Getting along with my family
3. Feeling good about myself
4. Dating
5. Going to heaven
6. Succeeding in school or work
7. Savings account
8. Discerning your vocation



DISCUSS

Following our video teaching, we discussed the following questions:

» **How has music, media, and the entertainment industry distorted the meaning of love?**

*(You have heard the expression “sex sells.” Well, when it comes to music, media, and entertainment, “eros sells.” Rarely is **agape** love identified in music, movies, entertainment, and popular culture. Relationships are portrayed as emotional, sexual, and self-serving. Sex is portrayed as a passionate driving force, difficult to resist, and its purpose is more about recreation and self-satisfaction than expressing selfless love. It is a tragedy that too many people settle for a counterfeit when in reality they were made for **agape** love.)*

» **Leah’s boyfriend jokingly described his relationship with her as “leasing with the option to buy.” How is this a violation of her human dignity?**

(We lease things, not people. Eros without agape reduces a person to a thing. The Catechism teaches: “Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone” [CCC 357]. The Catechism also teaches that “respect for the human person considers the other “another self” [CCC 1944]. As we want to be respected and treated with dignity so we are called to treat others with respect and dignity.)

» **What do you think it means that “man cannot fully find himself, except through a sincere gift of himself”?**

(Made in the image and likeness of God we were made to love as God loves. In fact, we are to become like God and share in His life here and now and gloriously in heaven. As we grow in selfless love, by the grace of God, we discover more deeply the meaning of our existence. This is why we can never be fully satisfied with our life here on earth. We are ultimately made to abide in God forever in heaven.)

» St. John writes: **“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear”** (1 John 4:18).

How does perfect love cast out fear?

*(Leah shared how her fear and insecurity was at the heart of her selfish desires. Fear is often the result of pain and difficulties experienced in life. The anecdote to fear is perfect love, and that perfect love is God. St. Paul writes to the Romans: **“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship”** [Romans 8:15]. In other words, when we surrender our lives to God and trust in Him, then fear will lose its grip on us and we will be able to make a sincere gift of ourselves in love.)*

COMMIT

Dr. Sri invited us to examine our relationships and evaluate how much we are making a sincere gift of ourselves in those relationships. Teens are challenged this week to take a journal into their prayer time and have a conversation with Jesus about the people in their lives, asking Him to reveal the relationships in which they need to become more selfless. They’re also challenged to have the courage to apologize to people they have failed to love as God loves.



“Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.”

—1 Corinthians 13:4-8

PARENT TIP

To understand this topic more deeply, consider purchasing “Love or Lust?” by Jason and Crystalina Evert through Lighthouse Catholic Media.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/love-or-lust#

THE CREED SESSION 8

A LOVE THAT LASTS- GOD'S PLAN FOR SEXUALITY

Every *YDisciple* session has three parts: CONNECT, DISCUSS, and COMMIT. The CONNECT section is designed to build trust, transparency, and community in the group. The DISCUSS section is designed to introduce topics of the faith, engage critical thinking, and facilitate discussion. The COMMIT section is designed to help students take ownership of their faith and put it into practice. This Parent Sheet is designed to give you a look into each section of the session so that you can have a follow-up conversation with your teenager about his or her experience in the small group and encourage spiritual growth.

SESSION OVERVIEW

The Catholic view of human sexuality is that it is a great gift to humanity. It is part of God's beautiful and transformative plan to bring a husband and wife into the deepest possible union within the Sacrament of Matrimony—when a man and woman unite their very selves in a total gift of self, a gift of self that is open to creating new life. In the Catholic view, all love, but especially marital love, is supposed to be self-giving, and the sexual embrace is when spouses give themselves totally to the other, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Sex is not just a physical act but the outward expression of what God means when he says that two shall become one.

The reality is that God wants to transform our lives—every aspect of our lives, including our sexuality—so that we can live the abundant life Jesus promised to his followers. That's why the Church proclaims the truth about the proper use of our sexuality. The Church's teachings on sexuality are intended to help us say "yes" to God's plan for love so that our sexuality can become the great gift of self that it was created to be. Just as the banks of a river channel the water so that it can be a powerful force instead of a wasteful flood, so, too, the Church's teaching on marriage and sex helps channel our sexuality into a life-giving, creative force that brings the love of Christ more into the world.

CONNECT

We did an activity in which participants were each given ten Skittles and challenged to use them to help prove that they were the "most deprived" in the group. They took turns telling about one thing they have never done—but that they expected most everyone else had done, for example: "I've never been to the ocean." Then everyone who had been to the ocean had to give that person

a Skittle. However, he/she would have to pay a Skittle to everyone in the group who also had not been to the ocean. The person with the most Skittles at the end of our game was the winner.

While the game was fun, it's clearly not fun to be deprived. We transitioned this to the point of the lesson: allowing yourself to be deprived of authentic love. If our relationships are healthy, they should not be deprived of love, respect, appreciation, and encouragement. In God's plan, intercourse is not just a sexual act, but a profoundly personal act meant to draw couples into deeper, authentic love.



DISCUSS

- » It has been said that sex is like atomic power. When used according to God's plan, it creates massive amounts of energy...but when used contrary to God's plan, it destroys. What are some examples that demonstrate this point?

(Abortion, divorce, abuse, prostitution, human trafficking, rape, pornography, contraception, the objectification and exploitation of human beings...these are all serious consequences of using sex contrary to God's plan. St. Pope John Paul II wrote: "The family is the center and the heart of the civilization of love" [Letter to Families, 13]. The misuse of sex destroys families and results in the moral decline of society.)

- » The fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God means sex is more than a physical act. How so?

(We have been created body and soul. It is the soul that gives the matter of the human body life, consciousness, and freedom. In philosophy we understand "image and likeness" to be our intellect and will. This means we have the ability to reason and the will to act according to reason. We are not purely instinctual and therefore sex is not purely instinctual. In theology, we understand that God is a communion of persons and an eternal exchange of love. Therefore, we are created in the image and likeness of love. The body expresses the soul. We are made to be loved and to love. For this reason, sex is a profoundly personal act meant to draw couples into deeper union.)

- » A marriage therapist said: "While many people are capable of having sex, only married couples are capable of making love!" How would you interpret this statement?

("Making love" implies that the sexual act is an expression of love and not a selfish act with someone who happens to give us pleasure. The therapist is implying in this statement that sex outside of the marital covenant is ultimately a selfish act. We are more than just our bodies. We have souls and our bodies express our souls. In holy matrimony, the mutual, lifelong, faithful commitment to love one another in good times and bad is expressed in sexual intercourse—our wedding vows made flesh.)

» **Why does pornography make a man less of a man and a woman less of a woman?**

*(To be virtuous is to be strong and to offer that strength for others. Pornography trains men and women to objectify people for personal pleasure, and it becomes very addictive. This is weakness. The Church teaches that **"chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom"** [CCC 2339] and **"self-mastery is a long and exacting work"** [CCC 2342]. Real men and women work hard to achieve self-mastery and freedom so that they can love authentically.)*

COMMIT

1 Peter 5:8 says: **"Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."** A common way the devil prowls and devours is through the Internet. The challenge for teens this week is to set up boundaries to protect themselves when they are on the computer. They were asked to commit to putting accountability software on their computers.

Check out fortifyprogram.org or covenanteyes.com.



"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."

—1 John 4:7-12

PARENT TIP

To understand this topic more deeply, consider purchasing "The New Sexual Revolution" by Chris Stefanick through Lighthouse Catholic Media.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/the-new-sexual-revolution#

LIVING THE CREED SESSION 9

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: BUILDING A CIVILIZATION OF LOVE

Every *YDisciple* session has three parts: CONNECT, DISCUSS, and COMMIT. The CONNECT section is designed to build trust, transparency, and community in the group. The DISCUSS section is designed to introduce topics of the faith, engage critical thinking, and facilitate discussion. The COMMIT section is designed to help students take ownership of their faith and put it into practice. This Parent Sheet is designed to give you a look into each section of the session so that you can have a follow-up conversation with your teenager about his or her experience in the small group and encourage spiritual growth.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Have you ever heard the expression “Actions speak louder than words”? Christians have believed that since the very beginning. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read how Jesus’ disciples served the poor, aided the sick, tended to the widows and orphans, confronted the evils of the day, and generally went about building a civilization of love. Then, as the faith spread and became more accepted, people began to reflect more on the reasons behind their actions and discuss what it is that makes Christian living so different from the rest of the world. Over the next 2,000 years, this combination of practical action and contemplation has formed the basis of what is called Catholic social teaching. This tradition has much to offer the world today as it faces a wide range of social, economic, and cultural issues such as abortion, poverty, immigration, healthcare, and marriage in the family. Catholic social teaching affects the way we act every day in our families, our places of work, our communities, and ultimately in the entire world. What’s more, Catholic social teaching isn’t just for Catholics. It embodies Christ’s message to serve and is meant for the entire world. It is the love of neighbor in concrete action, united to build a civilization of love.



CONNECT

Your teen had the opportunity to hear from his or her peers in the group. From the following list, the members picked characteristics of Jesus they saw in your teen.

JESUS THE HEALER: Your genuine interest and compassion for others helps them to know they are loved and gives them hope.

JESUS THE SACRIFICE: You are willing to give up everything for God.

JESUS THE PREACHER: You are not afraid to share your faith with others.

JESUS THE REBEL: You have the courage to go against the flow and not give into peer pressure.

JESUS THE CRITIC: You have the courage to say what needs to be said, even when it is not politically correct.

JESUS THE SERVANT: You would give the shirt off your back for others.

JESUS THE LEADER: You inspire others to imitate you in following Jesus.

JESUS THE TEACHER: You have the gift of explaining the things of God and His plan for our lives.

JESUS THE RECONCILER: You bring peace into relationships and situations.



DISCUSS

» St. Gregory the Great believed that his generosity to those in need was giving them what was theirs and not his own. Why did he believe his wealth was theirs?

(Everything we have is a gift from God—our lives, our health, our family, our talents, our opportunities, and our possessions. St. Gregory recognized he would not have had his wealth if God had not given it to him. Jesus made it clear that those who are blessed with wealth have an obligation to help those who are in need. In the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, the rich man was damned for failing to meet the need of the poor man, Lazarus, who laid at his gate [Luke 16:19-31]. In Jesus' description of the Last Judgment He says to the damned: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" [Matthew 25:45]. Therefore, St. Gregory recognized his wealth was theirs because it really wasn't his to begin with.)

» How does this statement embody Catholic social teaching: “To know Jesus is to want to make Him known”?

(Jesus said: **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you”** [John 13:34]. Jesus raised the bar from **“you shall love your neighbor as yourself”** [Matthew 22:39]. It is difficult to love ourselves until we understand and experience the depth of God’s love for us. The reality is that the more we know and love Jesus, the more we know and love ourselves. And the more we know and love ourselves, the more we are able to love others. The love of Jesus within us is the reason and inspiration we love and serve others. The Church will serve more heroically and be able to meet more needs in the world when more Catholics grow in intimacy with Jesus. This intimacy is cultivated in prayer, the sacraments, and study.)

» Blessed Teresa is quoted as saying: “What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.” How can we achieve world peace by loving our family?

(The United Nations recognizes the family as the basic unit of society. The Catechism teaches: **“The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society”** [CCC 2207]. The family is essential to Jesus’ work of salvation in the world because the family is meant to reflect the love and life within the Blessed Trinity. Every human being is called to this blessed life in heaven. However, **“without love the family cannot live, grow and perfect itself as a community of persons”** [Familiaris Consortio, 18]. The breakdown of the family has had devastating effects on society. In fact, problems in family life is the number one reason Catholics leave the Church. If there is no peace in the family, there is no peace in society.)

» How is “encounter” at the heart of social justice?

(St. Paul writes to the Philippians: **“Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves”** [Philippians 2:3]. When we put others first then we are more present to them. Too often in our daily lives we forget that the people around us have immortal souls that God desires to be with Him forever. Our smartphones, our televisions, our music, our cars, our clothing, etc. are not immortal, and yet we often put our things and our own interests before others. We often choose comfort in things over the joy we experience from encountering others.)

COMMIT

The commitment this week is for your teen to plan and carry out an act of service. They were asked: "Who is someone in your life that most needs an 'encounter' with you?"



"Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

—John 13:12-17

PARENT TIP

To understand this topic more deeply, consider purchasing "Encountering the Poor: Biblical Roots for Catholic Social Teaching" by Dr. Tim Gray through Lighthouse Catholic Media.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/encountering-the-poor-biblical-roots-for-catholic-social-teaching

LIVING THE CREED SESSION 10

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: PROTECTING THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Every *YDisciple* session has three parts: CONNECT, DISCUSS, and COMMIT. The CONNECT section is designed to build trust, transparency, and community in the group. The DISCUSS section is designed to introduce topics of the faith, engage critical thinking, and facilitate discussion. The COMMIT section is designed to help students take ownership of their faith and put it into practice. This Parent Sheet is designed to give you a look into each section of the session so that you can have a follow-up conversation with your teenager about his or her experience in the small group and encourage spiritual growth.

SESSION OVERVIEW

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” Cain’s question to God after the murder of his brother Abel often echoes in our own hearts. Am I the keeper of the addict on the street? The unwed mother? The homeless veteran on the corner? The widow on my block? The elderly in the nursing home? The Gospel tells us, “Yes, we are responsible for them; we are responsible for all in need. We are our brother’s keeper because we are all part of the one human family.”

This solidarity with every other person lies at the heart of Catholic social teaching. Despite our modern individualistic attitude and general indifference to the plights of those who are suffering, the Church tells us that we have the responsibility to carry on Jesus’ mission—which involves serving the sick, the poor, and the needy, and defending the dignity of all human life from conception to natural death. In fact, how we treat the “least of these” will be the ultimate standard by which we are judged at the end of our lives, for Jesus tells us whatever we do to the poor and needy, we do to him.

The bottom line of Catholic social teaching is that when we encounter those in need, we encounter the Lord himself. That’s why Catholic social teaching isn’t just for Catholics; it’s for the entire world. It is a way to think about and act on the issues that face all of us in order to bring about a greater flourishing and happiness of every human person. It’s a way to help all people live in accord with basic human dignity and to bring about true and lasting peace in the world. As Pope Paul VI said, “If you want peace, work for justice.”



CONNECT

Teens had the opportunity to be honest about their love lives. Not romantic love, but the standard of love that St. Paul sets before us in 1 Corinthians 13. They evaluated on a scale of 1–10 how well they felt they loved according to each characteristic.

LOVE IS PATIENT: I don't get irritated and take out my frustrations on others.
I pray for those who frustrate me.

LOVE IS KIND: I smile, share encouraging words, and do thoughtful things for others.

LOVE DOES NOT ENVY: I do not resent but rather celebrate others' gifts, abilities, and blessings.

LOVE DOES NOT BOAST: I don't feel the need to talk about myself or be the center of attention.

LOVE IS NOT PROUD: I don't think of myself as better than others.

LOVE IS NOT RUDE: I don't make cutting remarks or crude comments when I don't get my way, nor do I give the silent treatment.

LOVE IS NOT SELF-SEEKING: I put others before myself and give them emotional and spiritual support.

LOVE IS NOT EASILY ANGERED: I am not easily provoked to anger, and I do not retaliate.

LOVE KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS: I don't keep track of the number of times someone has wronged me, and I don't bring it up with them when we have a conflict.

LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL: I am loving and accepting while not approving of sinful behavior.

LOVE REJOICES IN THE TRUTH: I conform my life to the truth and share the truth in love with others, even when it might be difficult.

LOVE ALWAYS PROTECTS: I stand in the breach for others, protecting their purity and well-being.

LOVE ALWAYS TRUSTS: My faith and security in God's love frees me to risk and trust others.

LOVE ALWAYS HOPES: I expect the best and try to bring the best out of others.
With Jesus there is always hope.

LOVE ALWAYS PERSEVERES: I know I will let myself down and people will let me down, but I will not give up on myself or others.



DISCUSS

- » What would you say to someone who criticizes the work of Blessed Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in India as proselytizing Hindus?

(There is no question that Blessed Teresa believed that Jesus is the way, truth, and life for every human being and that He established the Catholic Church for the salvation of souls. And it is true that Hindus were converted to Christianity and many of the dying were baptized with their consent. However, Blessed Teresa was motivated by love and not by some quota for converts. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI clarifies the difference between evangelization and proselytism: "Charity, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays considered proselytism. Love is free; it is not practiced as a way of achieving other ends. But this does not mean that charitable activity must somehow leave God and Christ aside" [Deus Caritas Est, 31]. In other words, Christianity is always an invitation and never coerced. As the hymn goes: "They will know we are Christians by our love.")

- » The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: **"No one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family for everyone, especially those who 'labor and are heavy laden'" (CCC 1658).** How is this statement a good summary of Catholic social teaching?

(The Catholic Church defends the dignity of every human person and works to create environments where every human being is known, loved, cared for, and can flourish. The Church is the family of God, and it is the responsibility of all baptized Catholics to both share in the life and love of this family and invite all people into the life and love of this family. Social justice is the extension of the family of God to all people, especially those who are "heavy laden." John 3:16 reads: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Therefore, the Catholic Church so loves the world and brings the truth and grace of Jesus to the world.)

- » Since the first century, the Catholic Church has taught that abortion is a moral evil and is an act of violence against an unborn child and the mother. Why is it important to view a pregnant mother as two lives with equal dignity?

(The Catechism teaches: "Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God" [CCC 2319]. The life of the unborn child and the life of the mother are sacred. Abortion rights activists often criticize pro-life activists of being anti-woman. However, it is illogical to think that those who recognize the sacredness of human life in the unborn child would fail to recognize the sacredness of human life in the mother. In reality, abortion exploits and harms women.)

» What is the responsibility of Catholics when confronted with political and economic problems?

(“Responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation” [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB]. Catholics are obliged to fulfill Jesus’ command of being “salt of the earth” and a “light to the nations” [Matthew 5:13-14]. We must do all we can to defend the dignity of the human person and promote the common good. In other words, we need to take our Catholic faith into the voting booth and into the public square. St. Pope John Paul II is a powerful example of working toward justice under unjust political and economic systems. As a young man in Nazi occupied Poland, he secretly studied for the priesthood and founded an underground theater while the Nazis were attempting to destroy the Church and eliminate the cultural identity of Poland. As Holy Father, his visits to Poland drew millions of people and gave them courage as a community while the Communists were attempting to atomize the Poles and keep them apart from one another and afraid. His influence was key to the fall of Communism.)

COMMIT

The commitment this week is for your teen to schedule an hour to pray peacefully outside of an abortion clinic. Prayer works and saves lives! If you are not near an abortion clinic, your teen can pray a holy hour before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for an end to abortion.



“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’”

—Matthew 25:37-40

PARENT TIP

To understand this topic more deeply, consider purchasing “The New Conversation: Changing Hearts and Minds on Abortion” by Stephanie Gray through Lighthouse Catholic Media.

lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/the-new-conversation-changing-hearts-minds-on-abortion