

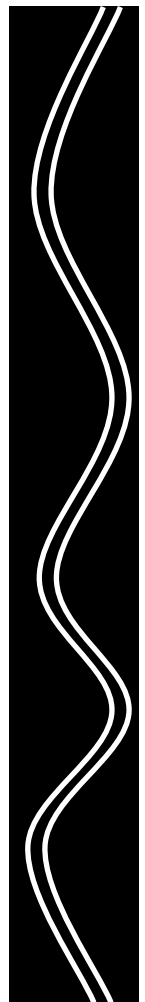
THE
CATHOLIC
Vision of Love
Diocese of Pittsburgh

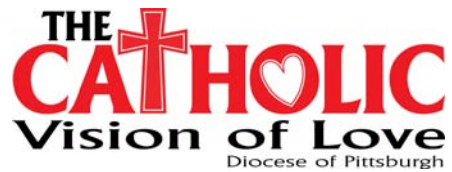
**CHASTITY EDUCATION AND
PERSONAL SAFETY CURRICULUM**

REVISED 2011
**A Curriculum for Christian Education in
Sexuality and the Family**
Reverend Kris D. Stubna, S.T.D.

GRADE 6

Catechist's Notes





Section Two

**CATECHIST'S NOTES
for Grade 6**

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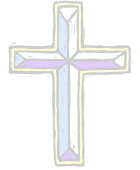
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Introduction

General aim of the lesson

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 help students understand again the general idea of having a vocation by reflecting on the vocation of Christ to be our Savior.
2. To help students realized 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 students how it is that one comes to realize what his or her special vocation is.
4. To reflect with students 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.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

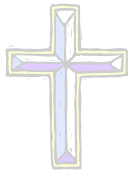
Opening Prayer

1. God's own "vocation" was to bring us to salvation.
2. God creates each person for a specific vocation or mission.
3. God calls people to live life through one of several vocations.
4. God has ways of guiding us to understand what He wants of us.
5. Every vocation requires a chaste heart.

Path through the lesson

Prayer for vocations (from the National Catholic Vocation Council)

Creator God,
Life is your gift to me.
Through Baptism, you invite me to share the gift of my life in service
to others.
Be with me as I choose each day to show your presence in our world.



Give me the courage and generosity to respond to your love, to your call.
I pray especially for those who serve you as priests, brothers, sisters,
deacons, and lay ministers.

Keep them close to you.

Open the minds and hearts of many other men and women that they may
accept your challenge to build the Kingdom. Amen.

1. Our Lord's vocation

One should not give too much time to this section. It is an introduction, and not the basic subject of the class. Yet it speaks of great ideas of faith. It should be handled as background to personal vocation. Elements to touch briefly: A) There is a reminder of the larger background of salvation. The context of our lives is not just that we are in this world, wondering what we would like to do. We are in a world in which we must make efforts to work out our salvation, to care about our love for God and one another so that we can come to that earthly and eternal fulfillment for which God made us. B) We live in a world that has sinned, and in which Christ has saved us and made both happiness in this life and life with God forever possible. The vocation of Jesus was to save us, and He gladly paid all it cost to do that. We too have vocations to do great things for the Lord and one another, and we find satisfaction in doing what we are called to be and do.

2. Your vocation is important also.

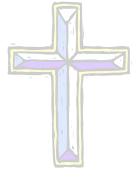
This is one of the most important points to stress in the class. Note especially the points made in this section: "Your vocation is important also" and the next, "God calls all people to a vocation." Here the effort is to draw out of the students a realization: God cares about my life! There are things I am called to do in this world, and that I can do as no one else can. My life is meant to achieve something important and precious! God has a destiny for me which is important, worth seeking out and following. Questions can arise: Am I free? Will I necessarily become what I am called to be? And we must help students recall that God calls us, but He does so freely. He wishes us to choose what He invites us to. He does not force us, but our happiness will be the greatest if we accept His invitation.

DISCUSSION: Thinking about vocation

These questions can be important in helping the students realize the universality of vocation: *Everyone* is called by God to be important to the whole world! Especially the last question may be stressed.

3. God calls all people to a vocation

While this section is brief, it is very important. If we can make the question clear, it will be very interesting to the students. "You are made for something special and important. How can you come to *know* what it is that God is calling you to?" That means also: "How can you know what kind of life will be best for you?"



Our answer to this question includes points like these: 1) God really calls us, but not by loud voices in the night. 2) He leads us gently to realize what He wishes us to be, and what the inner hopes of our own hearts are calling us to be. 3) God shows us our vocation gently by planting in our hearts an attraction for the kind of love He wishes us to have. 4) He helps us to encounter in this world people we like, whose own lives help us to see that this is the sort of life I want, and that the Lord calls me to. 5) Since coming to know what God calls us to is so important, we should pray for grace to grasp His calling rightly. His graces, in answer to our prayer, will help us find our way.

4. How can we know what God wants us to be?

This section helps to make the lesson more concrete. We can begin with pointing out that there is not any “best vocation” in general, for everybody. The best vocation for each person is the one that the Lord calls that person to live. People can be close friends to God, and immensely important to other people, in every vocation.

Point out also that we are not just called to a kind of vocation, but to a very specific vocation. People are not just called by God to be a father or mother, but a parent married to this person and having these children. All the details are important to God, and to our lives! People are not just called to marry, or live a single life, but to do this or that work which God fitted them to do, and which they will find rewarding and good.

Then, as time permits, attention can be given to different kinds of vocations. General questions can surround this: How does God let people know he is calling them to marriage, or to religious life, to priesthood, or to the single life?

Although time is limited, the largest space of the lesson is given to this section, and the students should be urged to read it over very carefully.

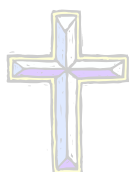
5. Vocation and chaste hearts

Efforts should be made to save time for this section — the general aim should be clear. Realization that we have a vocation in life, that we have important things to do, helps us to realize that there is a necessity to have charge of our own lives, and not to drift along in the ways of the world.

Chastity needs to be given clear and simple explanations by the teacher. Chastity is handling our sexuality, our love, or emotions and feelings (which need to be alive and strong for our lives to be effective) in intelligent and good ways.

One of the reasons why we have to think about sexuality, and how the Lord wishes us to live as boys and girls, as men and women, is this: We have important things to do, and precious good things to care about. Life is not just a party, though it should be happy and filled with much joy. But for that to be, we have to avoid the irresponsible ways of thinking about sex that the world presses upon us. We have to realize that sexuality is meant to serve homes and make the lives and growth of children secure; it is meant to give warmth and energy to responsible hearts that care about the reasons why God created sexuality. To drift into the mindless uses of sexuality causes much pain: pregnancy in very

Grade 6



Class 1

young people, abortion, diseases, and an inability to learn that strong love lasts a whole lifetime, and makes life plans work well.

Every life that makes sense requires chastity. Certainly a married vocation requires self-possession and self-control. For the married persons, their children, and the strength of the home rely upon faithfulness and strength governing the life, love and emotions of the parents. And all the other kinds of vocations require chastity; they require the strength and freedom that chastity brings with it.

Tying things together

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

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1-3; 542-543; 1601; 1604; 1694.

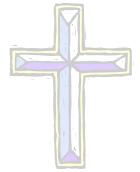
BEING RESPONSIBLE

for our own lives

CATECHIST'S
NOTES

Grade 6 • Class 2

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

This lesson seeks 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, and he 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

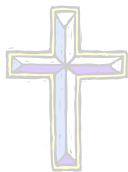
1. To help students realize that they are responsible for their own life and that *it is a good thing for them that they are*.
2. To help students see for themselves why the excuses we make for the bad things we do are often silly and irresponsible.
3. To help students realize that, even though it is 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 seem often impossible to escape, their lives are in their own hands. They have the freedom to live good and responsible lives, and Christ will protect their freedom if they wish to guard it.
5. To help students realize, in a world that seems not to, what sin is. Doing things that are really bad not only offends God, but also makes us feel miserable and unhappy.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. Life includes the ability to choose whether we want to make a good life for ourselves or not.
2. You are responsible for the free decisions which you make in life.
3. We are all called to guard our sexuality with chaste hearts and lives.
4. Deliberately doing immoral things is sinful.



Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

A suitable prayer could be the words from Psalm 8. The catechist could, after the Sign of the Cross, read these words (after telling the students that the prayer is aimed at helping us realize the importance of the great ideas we are about to study), and conclude by reciting the “Glory Be” with the students.

O LORD, our Lord,
 How majestic is thy name in all the earth!
 When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
 the moon and the stars which thou hast established;
 What is man that thou art mindful of him
 and the son of man that thou dost care for him?
 Yet thou has made him little less than God,
 And dost crown him with glory and honor.
 Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;
 Thou hast put all things under his feet.

After the prayer you could note the connection of the prayer with the class to come. God has created us to rule and govern all the things that he has made: that is why we are into so many things, even space travel. But among the greatest things we can rule is our own lives. God does give us power to be in charge of our own lives, if we wish, and to be responsible for the whole of our lives.

1. Life and freedom — You are really in charge of your own lives

There are important ideas in this section. The catechist should be well prepared to get things off to a good start, to help students feel that, though it often seems as though life runs on out of control, they are persons and their life is their own, and that in most important ways they can rule it.

Obviously, many things — good and bad — just *happen* to us. There is much about life that we cannot control.

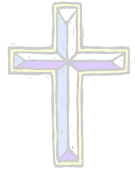
But our life as a whole is not uncontrollable. Our life is much more *what we do* than *what happens to us*. Study carefully the examples for this given in the lesson and help the students see this clearly.

As Scripture says most truthfully: their lives *are* in their own hands. Even when things are not promising and full of problems, neither their freedom nor the Providence of God can be quite overcome.

DISCUSSION: When bad things happen

The point of this is to help students realize that, although they cannot change all that happens to them, what their lives will really be depends very much on what they *do* about what happens to them.

Have them go carefully through the “some think” — “others think” sections to get firm possession of this key idea.



2. You are responsible for your own life

Remind them of some things. One joy of getting older is that we are given more and more freedom. In fact, those who love us very much want us to learn how to be free, and be free without going in wrong directions. God Himself clearly wants us to be free!

But to be free does not mean to have a right to be bad! Learning to be free responsibly is learning to do things that are good and fair and right, out of our own hearts, our own decisions.

Now things happen to you, but your life does not. The kind of person you become does not happen to you. You decide that by the decisions you make every day, by the way you decide to live. That makes you become the kind of person you will be.

DISCUSSION: Talking about responsibility

- Important ideas — Help the students see for themselves WHY we sometimes blame people when things go wrong, and sometimes we do not. Can they see why it would be fair to blame people for some things, but not to blame them for other things?
- Special cases — Go through the three cases where people are making excuses that do not hold water. The last question present Christ as a fair and good critic. What they think Christ would say about this is also what they really think would be right. It is often good to present Christ gently as a fair and right-minded person passing honest judgment on what we do.

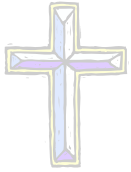
3. Sexuality and our lives

The point in this section is to show them that many areas of their lives can be influenced by sexuality — the movies we see, the way we talk with our friends about sex, the deeds we do when we are alone, or the way we act with friends — but are in our own power. It is true that the world tends to pressure people very much, and people who want to be good sometimes lose control. But what we *do* is in our own hands, and what happens to other people is in their own hands.

Think of the sad things that happen today because sexuality is misused. Sometimes people contract AIDS. Very young people become pregnant. People commit sins, and gradually lose their remembrance of Christ and their friendship with him. People are selfish and use other people, really do them harm, for the sake of their own pleasure.

Abortion is usually a result of sexual sins. People kill beautiful unborn babies that they called into being by acts that were not generous acts of love, open to life, but sinful acts. And then they end innocent lives that long to continue to be to save themselves trouble.

Do sinful acts that lead people to so much trouble just happen? Or do people deliberately commit sinful acts? This does not mean that we look down on people who commit sins and run into all kinds of trouble. We commit sins too. What this should help us realize is how important it is that we ourselves live



wisely. We should not be misled by a world that goes so often after instant pleasure that it refuses to realize how much people hurt themselves and others when they use important things like sex foolishly.

Do people indulge in impure acts, and keep their minds filled with impure thoughts, because they cannot help it? Not really. Our lives are in our own hands. When the world presses hard on us, we have many ways of getting control of our lives here too. Christ is our friends, and he gives us power and grace to be able to run our lives well, if we want to. We need to be good friends of his, and rely on his help, through Reconciliation and the Eucharist. He never fails his friends, and helps them always to be honest with themselves and others.

Students are reminded what Christ teaches about sexuality: that it is important, and needs to be treated well if homes are to be strong, and love is to be honest, and people are to have happy and generous lives. It is right, and it works. What the world often teaches about sexuality — that people can treat it as something trivial, a toy to play with, and ignore the important things sex is really about is wrong. And all around us are unhappy lives that make this clear.

4. The seriousness of sin

Sin is a strange word for people growing up in our world.

A major point to make here is this: Sin is not something that *happens* to us. It is something we *do*. We are responsible.

“Doing something bad” is much worse than “Having something bad happen to me.” Help them see for themselves that, even something like “getting pneumonia” is not as bad as doing something seriously wrong, like “torturing a child to steal his money.” Getting pneumonia does not make me become a bad person. Doing cruel and wicked things does make me a bad person. And it is worse to be bad than to have sickness or troubles. Can the students understand why?

Bring attention to the statement, “Some people say that sexual activity outside of marriage is OK.” But some people also say that eating too much rich food will not make people get fat. Saying something is OK and will not hurt our lives does not help, if what we do really is something that hurts our lives.

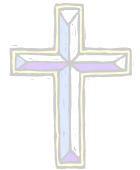
Our lives are worth too much to hurt them by foolish misuses of sex. Sex itself is something God created, and it will serve well the lives of those who live in ways that Christ teaches us to be wise and good. He is not like some contemporary entertainers or advertisers who misuse sex, and misuse people, to make money and have their own way. Christ teaches really good ways, because he loves us.

Tying things together

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

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; 310-311; 1730-1742; 1749-1756; 2270-2272; 2322-2323; 2353; 2380-81.

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Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

This lesson has a very basic message. God made us to *live* and 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 heart 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 begin to live it with style and great hearts. Of course it is true that not all of us can be great athletes, or great mathematicians. But Christ promises that all can live a great life, with the help of God's grace, if they deeply want to, and come to Him for help.
3. 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.
4. To help students understand the moral life as new life in the Spirit.
5. 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.
6. 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.



These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. Christ teaches us that it is a joy to live our lives well.
2. Jesus is the best of all teachers of life.
3. Sexuality is good, as God wills it.

Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, teach us to be glad about our lives. You came in to this world to teach us about life, so that our lives would be rich and happy. You always teach the truth. You care about us, and want us to understand our lives, and know what will make our lives really work. Only You can give us courage, energy, and the power to lead lives that are worth living. You know us and will never abandon us. Keep us always faithful to Your teaching, and do not let us ever be separated from You. We ask this of Your great mercy. Amen.

Ask the students to pray the "Hail Mary" together.

1. Doing things well

Being happy about life — This lesson begins with a central point of Christianity that many forget today. Those who belong to Christ have a right and a duty to be filled with joy. Of course there will be moments when we can have reasons to be sad for a while, when we have done something wrong, or when those we love meet troubles. But we should never remain permanently in gloom and doom. We know the Lord is near, and the His providence will care for us. The spirit that rules our lives should be one of joy: "Rejoice in the Lord always!" (Philippians 4:4)

Our joy comes both from our trust in God and from living in the way He invites us to live.

Happiness of doing things well — There is a certain everyday happiness that comes from doing even small things well. The world celebrates people who do things well, even if they are not the most important things. We praise people who play sports very well, or who are magnificent musicians. Seeing people do any good thing well tends to make us happy. Even in less than world-class way this is true. We are happy with ourselves when we can do small things well: baking a cake, solving a problem, playing a video game.

Doing the best thing well — The best thing people can do is live their lives well. We might admire a great athlete, but if he appears selfish and mean, the pleasure in seeing his skill lessened. It is more important that a person live life well than to have a great talent. Of course, not everyone can become a great



scholar or a great athlete. But Christ promises that all of us can have a great life, if we want it very much and come to him for help. If we find someone who helps the suffering and the poor, who cares about children in trouble, and helps them; if we find someone with courage and kindness, spending his or her time generously — then we know we have found someone really great. (Point to examples of this happening in the world — for example, Mother Teresa.)

DISCUSSION: Doing it right

In this exercise, we are trying to help the students remember how good it is to do things well. *In the first several questions*, try to have them remember, and talk about, the things they can do and feel good about doing. It can be helpful to remind them how grateful we need to be to God for being able to do things well. *In the last question* we are approaching the more important point, developed in the next section. Have them think seriously: Have you heard of, or do you know personally, any people who have led really great lives? And with this question, ask them what they would really like their lives to be like, if they could shape it anyway they wanted. Help them see how much better it is to have a life in which we do great and good things.

2. How Christ helps us to live life as we like it

This material is for *reflection*. Ask the students: “If you were a great athlete and fabulously rich but were also selfish and mean, would that be a great life?” “If you were able to spend your life doing great things to help the suffering and the poor, and brought gladness to many lives that might have been bitter (but you were *not* very rich or famous), would that be a great life?” *Why or why not?*

Ask them to think about the characteristics of a worthwhile and meaningful life. “Do you think that the politicians who were successful, and have statues in Washington, all led really great lives? Do famous baseball players whose pictures are on collector’s cards all lead great lives?”

Certainly some politicians led great lives, like King St. Louis IX. Some poets, musicians, and athletes were not only great at poetry, music, and sports, but also lived great lives. St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa, and St. Sebastian are all great models. (It is good to know saints who were musicians, athletes, teachers, doctors, and great friends to young people — like St. John Bosco).

God created us to live great lives. He promises to help us if we want to do what is right. Is there anything more important than that? If our life turns out to be troubled because of wrong choices, how would we feel?

What does a person have to do to lead a great life? There are three main points:

- A) “Coaches and teachers are important.” We cannot do anything well, without the knowledge of how to do it. We learn from great teachers who follow the example of Christ, who is the *greatest teacher* of all.



- B) "Life means learning to love." No one can become good at football or the guitar if they do not like those activities. And no one can learn to love people, and the good things that make life full if they make poor life decisions. We have to learn to love people, and to have that generosity, courage, and kindness that makes people love us. All of us have a vocation to become great persons.
- C) "Christ is the best teacher of life." We need to model our lives on the one who came to show us how to live, Jesus Christ.

3. Learning love and sexuality well

Jesus did not teach people how to live by giving them all kinds of tough rules. He showed them by example how to make the right choices and how life was meant to be lived. He let them see how happy people can be if they learn to love and care about one another as God intended. He let them see how miserable we are when we are selfish and turned in on ourselves.

So, Jesus first showed us how a great and honest love could develop. Then he told us that our responsibilities come from a loving God, who wants us to love others. (Show them how Jesus says this plainly in the Gospel: e.g., in Matthew 22:36-40.) Have someone read the passage from 1 Corinthians 13 in the lesson. Ask: What would people like if they had honest love like that?

God and sexuality — Sexuality was made by God. Sometimes it is treated so badly that people strangely think it is a bad thing. But God made it as something important and precious, meant to go only with real love and serve the most important things in the world. Sexuality was made to tie closely together the lives of people who come to love each other with generous love in marriage. It was made to be a way of bringing children into this world out of the love and generosity of their parents, as well as out of the love and generosity of God.

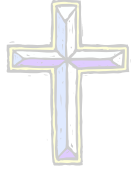
Help the students realize the concepts this section of the lesson speaks of: Sexual activity was never meant to be something trivial, or to be engaged in outside the strong and committed love of marriage. Sex is not just a game for fun. When it is used just for fun it goes wrong and hurts people deeply. Sex was made for people to grow into gradually, first learning how to be great people who have honest and generous love. Sexual activity was made by God to go with marriage, a committed and sincere love that will last a whole lifetime.

Sexual acts that are not surrounded with committed love are bad ones, because they hurt people and abuse the important gift of sexuality. That is why the Lord teaches us in the Scriptures and in the Church that irresponsible sexual activity is always gravely wrong (i.e. pornography, masturbation, premarital sexual activity).

Television, movies, songs, magazines, websites — Much of the world around us treats sexuality very badly, and encourages young people to use it badly. This exploitation, first in lustful and impure thoughts and desires, and then in impure acts of many kinds, has led the world to much suffering.

In some cases it has led to AIDS and to other sexually transmitted diseases. It has led to pregnancies of very young people who are not able to take care of a baby. It has led to abortion, and other cruel and tragic consequences. It has disrupted home life very much, and has led people to despair. Learning God's kind of love and intelligent acceptance of God's gift of sexuality are necessary to make intelligent love flourish and get strong.

Grade 6



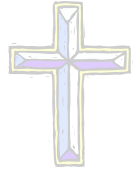
Class 3

Tying things together

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

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 457-460; 1716-2029; 2013-2014; 2331-2356; 2360-2363.

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Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

This lesson aims at helping the students to 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

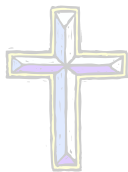
1. To explain why Christ is the best teacher of how great love is (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) and of how we learn to find honest love, in a world which so much wants honest love, but suffers because so many confuse real love with phony love.
2. To show that Jesus teaches us that generous love is necessary 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.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. Jesus shared with us the great commandment to love God and neighbor.
2. Generous love of other persons is the most basic kind of love.
3. We are called to a love which guards life and truth.
4. Real love guards life in all forms and at all stages. (Abortion and euthanasia destroy life.)
5. True and generous love is lived with a chaste heart.
6. God's grace gives us the power to love this way.



Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

The catechist should remind the students that we should know many different prayers by heart. Then, when we are alone and quiet, we can more easily speak to God in the words of a prayer that our hearts know well. Some prayers which we should know by heart are: the Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity (love), and the “Act of Contrition.” Since today’s class is about the greatness of love, it is good to begin by praying an “Act of Charity”:

O my God, I love You above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because You are all-good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of You. I forgive all who have injured me and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.

1. Christ is the best teacher of love

Love is the greatest of realities, but it is sometimes very difficult to talk about. The honest and strong love that all people, young and old, care so much about gets mixed up with other things.

In movies, stories, and songs, honest love is the thing that people really want. Everybody in the home wants to be sure that other people “really care about me,” that “they will stick by me,” that “they love me.” School gets tough. We do not feel that the teachers like us or that others in our class care about us. Love is something that life always needs, just as plants need the sun and rain.

Even people who have unfortunately not found much faith in Jesus know that He was right in saying that, above all else, we must have honest love. For life never works unless we come to love one another and care about one another. Every commandment is based on love. We should not do bad things, not just because there are rules, but because if we love we will not want to hurt one another by such acts. Every duty we have, Jesus teaches, is based on the central duty of love: to love God and one another. All life becomes easier if we learn to love rightly. The Great Commandment is really the Golden Rule for a life of happiness.

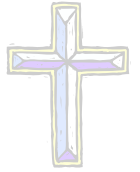
DISCUSSION: Thoughts about love

It is good to use this section to make clear how broad and generous is the love Christ teaches. Each of the questions helps them see that love must not be small, limited to those to whom I cling most of help. Love cares about all.

2. Generous love leads to fulfillment and happiness

In a way, we may “love” movies, or hamburgers, or basketball, or money. But this is not the kind of love that makes people great and good, or that makes life glad. The love that Christ teaches is, above all, the love of God and the love of one another.

Various parts of this section may be stressed by the catechist. Many students do not know what “loving God” means. The catechist might show from



the example of St. Francis how love of God is so important for our happiness. When we know and remember that God deeply loves us, and is close to us, the whole world is much friendlier to us. To love God is to have the confidence that enables us to love others. Those who love God find the world a place in which we must give love. This makes those who love God much loved by others.

The example of love in our homes is useful also. Of course homes sometimes are not as loving as they ought to be. But everyone wants love at home, and we have to help people see that by giving love at home, we come to be loved more at home too.

We have to show that “loving” people is more than doing nice things for them, though it includes that. What poor people need even more than help is what love brings: the confidence that help will never be lacking, because there is really personal love. It is love that gives anyone confidence that things will go well.

Among other things, it is important to show, as the section seeks to do, that we really have been loved not only by God, but by many other people too. We would not have survived without the love of those who have helped us!

Friendship is a generous kind of love. The idea of friendship is a strong and encouraging idea. Here we help the students see the difference between generous love or real friendship, and being “pals” who do not really care a lot about each other.

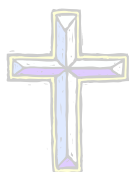
REFLECTION: Gospel images

The Sermon on the Mount says much about the kind of love we should have, but we might stress Matthew 5:43-47. Young people often have a difficulty in believing that they should try to love those who do not love them and even hurt them. But the catechist should be able to show them why generous and forgiving love is so important, and why we all need to be loved even when we do not deserve it. The Good Samaritan story tells us that we need to love strangers as well as friends. We help students see this by reminding them how much we like it if, when we are in trouble and away from home, strangers are very good to us. Christ said He wants to be my friend! Help the students see how real is His desire to be the friend of each of them and how they can grow in His friendship.

3. Generous love guards life

It is true that we can have lots of pleasure and gladness. Bodily satisfactions, like the joy of eating good things, can be good. But they are not always intelligent and right things. It might taste good to eat lots of foods, even at times when that would make us sick. And it can seem good to have impure pleasures, even when we know they are really bad for us.

We often know how impure acts hurt us and people we want to like. They are sinful, and they lead people to do things that are bad for honest love and for strong homes and happy lives. While bodily pleasure sometimes urges us to do things we know are foolish, for passing pleasure, chaste love, which Christ gives to His friends, urges us to do what is really good and right, what will



not hurt others, what will make their lives richer and better. It learns to control slavery and to master mere pleasure, so that our lives can really be good.

4. Abortion and euthanasia destroy life

The catechist should stress to the students that “love” is a word which can be used loosely in terms of contemporary life. It seems an act of “love” to have extramarital sex, to take life so as to end suffering through euthanasia or assisted suicide, to ease the plight of a young, unmarried, pregnant woman through the “choice” of abortion.

Real life sees each person as created by God. God alone is the author and creator, the destiny and end of life.

5. Generous life leads to purity and chastity

The catechist’s emphasis here is on the consistency of a chaste love as one which reflects real truth and generosity. Chastity seeks the ultimate good of oneself and of all others in one’s life. It is a free expression of authentic life.

6. God’s grace gives us the power to love purely

The catechist should emphasize that God is all-powerful, and that He shares that power with us through grace.

Typing things together

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

For further reference and background, the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1655-1658; 1716-1724; 1822-1829; 1889; 2196-2231; 2270-2278; 2337-2350; 2360-2363; 2517-2527.