

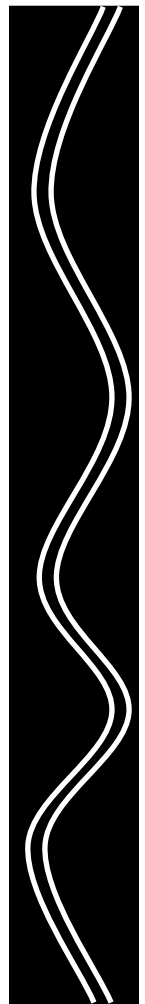
THE
CATHOLIC
Vision of Love
Diocese of Pittsburgh

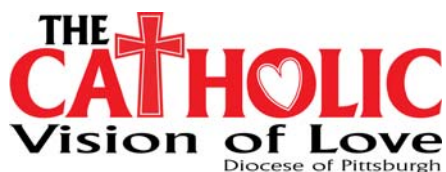
**CHASTITY EDUCATION AND
PERSONAL SAFETY CURRICULUM**

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

GRADE 8

Catechist's Notes





Section Two

**CATECHIST'S NOTES
for Grade 8**

Table of Contents

CLASS 1: Your vocation: To make the world a better place 3

CLASS 2: Living in a world that suffers from AIDS 7

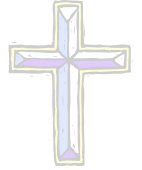
CLASS 3: Christ and my conscience 11

CLASS 4: The Eucharist and love 15

CLASS 5: Personal Safety 19

YOUR VOCATION: To make the world a better place

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

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

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

Specific objectives

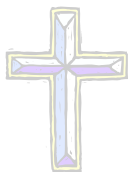
1. To help students understand how the Holy Spirit assists us in discerning the Father’s will for our lives.
2. To help students realize their social responsibilities in this world: “We are all really responsible for all!”
3. To show students why they should be firmly on the side of life in the abortion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

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

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



Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

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

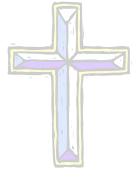
Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

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

Introduction to the lesson

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

Faith teaches us that we have a duty to care for and to have compassion for others — we must show a kindness to others as we live in a world that has been wounded by the effect of so many sins. Jesus has told us that we come to eternal life by two kinds of faithfulness. First, we are called to eternal life by refusing to do evil. We do this best by keeping the commandments, so that we do not harm others: that we do not kill others, or steal from them, or hurt them by our lustful deed, or swear falsely about them. Secondly, we come to everlasting life by doing deeds of love. Scripture makes it clear that one can lose one’s soul by refusing to care about the sufferings of others and that we can be saved by caring with great love (see Matthew 25 for an account of some of the concerns we need to have).



There are also *spiritual works of mercy*. When people harm the world deeply by their sins, by creating slavery and crushing the lives of many innocent people, by forms of genocide, in which some people support one another in killing great numbers of other people, we have a duty to seek to end these sins, for the sake both of those who commit these crimes, and those who suffer them. The Gospel teaches us clearly what Pope John Paul II has said: “We are all really responsible for all!” (Encyclical, *On Social Concerns [Sollicitudo Rei Socialis]*, 1987, n.38).

1. A pro-life stand

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

A) Why are there so many abortions today?

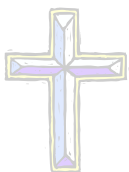
Why do people harden their hearts, and kill these wonderful little babies? The class plan spells out reasons, and shows how the world’s carelessness about honest love and pure hearts leads to such a terrible crime. This is an important section to be covered clearly.

B) Compassion is needed

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

REFLECTION: The problem of abortion and a question of law

Both of these should be gone through thoughtfully to help the students digest the strong material that has been given. The media have made the students much more aware of “pro-choice” than of what abortion really is in itself. We should help them to understand: A) Freedom of choice is important in human life. In moral matters, people must act freely. B) We should show students as well how we cannot make something that is very bad “good” for us simply by choosing it. Real freedom is always the freedom to choose what is good and true. We are not free when we choose bad things (see Pope John Paul



II's *Veritatis Splendor*). No one really believes that it would be right to let people enslave other people, or to permit fathers and mothers to kill tiny born babies, if they "chose" to. D) We do not have the right to crush the rights of anyone, even if we choose to.

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

2. Caring about justice

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

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

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

REFLECTION: The rich man and Lazarus

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

Tying things together

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

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 544-546; 678; 2401-2414; 2419-2442; 2443-2449.

YOUR VOCATION: To make the world a better place

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



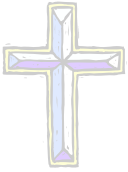
Introduction

General aim of the lesson

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

Specific objectives

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



These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

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

Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

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

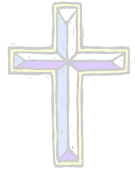
1. AIDS and the challenge of living intelligently

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

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

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

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



2. How to avoid getting AIDS

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

3. Who has AIDS?

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

4. What is this “safe sex” concept?

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

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

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

5. Other sexually transmitted diseases

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

The reflection is important. It reaffirms the Church’s constant teaching on the practice of a life of chastity as a value in and of itself, regardless of whether or not dangerous sexually transmitted diseases are present. The logic and consistency of the teaching of Christ and His Church need to be reviewed.



6. What is chastity?

The catechist here reiterates the definition of chastity which the students have learned from earlier lessons in previous years. This section, following from the previous section, establishes the value of chastity as a life calling truly worth living.

7. Is chastity normal?

Chastity is a normal way of life and has been accepted as such for thousands of years in multiple cultures. Jesus taught and lived chastity. The message of the many voices in our contemporary society, from the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960's on, would say something much different.

Yet the truth, constancy, and beauty of the teaching of Jesus needs to be stressed.

8. Is chastity too difficult for me?

The catechist should be able to present the points in this section with great clarity. He or she must show that to lead chaste lives is not really difficult at all. Chastity means treating sexuality intelligently and responsibly. Chastity is entirely normal. Students are led to believe by the media that no one is chaste today. Facts prove otherwise — studies continue to show how many young people are choosing to refrain from sexual activity until marriage — chastity is NORMAL.

Even when lots of people use sex foolishly and suffer terribly from that, intelligent handling of sexuality is normal for sensible people. Even those who have been sexually active can become chaste and find intelligent living a good thing. Students must be *encouraged* to embrace a life of chastity.

9. How should we think about people who have AIDS?

It is crucial that the Church's teaching on compassion for victims of AIDS be clearly spelled out.

First of all, not all persons who contract AIDS do so because of mistaken moral conduct. For example, prior to the adopted universal precautions now in effect, hemophiliacs contracted AIDS. (Ryan White will be an example many students will have known.) While the lesson points out the virtual impossibility now, it was a tragic earlier reality. Also, unborn babies can contract AIDS in the womb from an infected mother.

Secondly, and more importantly, regardless of how a person contracted AIDS, Christ calls us to show genuine and active love and compassion toward these persons. "We are really all responsible for all."

Typing things together

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

For further background and reference, the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2337-2350*.

CHRIST and my conscience

Grade 8 • Class 3

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

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

Specific objectives

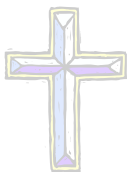
1. To help students get a clear and honest understanding of what conscience is, and of the importance of a good conscience.
2. To help them appreciate that what Christ teaches us about conscience is really true, and that my life will be more honest if I allow the Holy Spirit to guide my conscience.
3.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

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

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



Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

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

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

Response: And You will make new the face of the earth.

(**Note:** The students are to say this. The teacher might have this written on the board).

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

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

1. The importance of a good conscience

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

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

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

C) In the paragraphs beginning with “*My conscience is . . .*” we talk with the students about what conscience is. Conscience is not concerned with “guilt feelings: or with self-righteous claims that “It seems all right to me.” To be conscientious one must be seriously concerned about what is really good and what is really bad. The catechist might want to read the beautiful (and very understandable) words that the Second Vatican Council says about conscience in *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 16 (“In the depths of his conscience...”).



Honest and dishonorable ways... These paragraphs remind the students of the need to be honest in thinking about their sins. Go carefully with them through these sections:

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

REFLECTION: About conscience

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

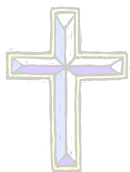
2. How a good conscience faces sexuality

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

3. Christ's teaching and my conscience

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

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

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

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

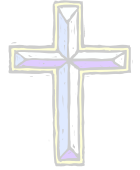
We should consider it a very disturbing thing when our "consciences" tell us to do things that are wrong. We have good consciences only if we are willing to follow truth of Christ.

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

Tying things together

At the end of this lesson, it could be very useful to bring together the various parts of the lesson, as listed in the student's section. For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1385-1395; 1420-1470; 1480; 1776-1794; 1806; 1849; 2490.

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

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

Specific objectives

1. To help us see why the Eucharist is a gift of pure love, love that is generous and honest, and gives warmth to life.
2. To recall that Jesus gave us this sacrament, so we could love purely too; to have honest love for the Lord and for each other.
3. To remember that we must be free from the selfishness of mortal sin to receive Communion well. We must be in the state of grace, seeking honestly to love God and one another, and so to make all the world a richer place.
4. To see why it is true that impure acts, which are such powerful forms of selfishness, and turning from what is really good, especially make the joy of Communion fade.
5. To help the students see why we should trust Christ, and to know that He will make it very possible for us to have generous and truthful hearts, if we come to Him with honest and truthful hearts in Communion.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

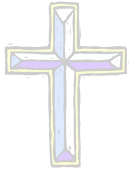
Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

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

Path through the lesson

Grade 8



Class 4

Opening prayer

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

Then the prayer said together could be this familiar one:

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

1. Eucharist as gift of pure love

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

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

2. Eucharist and the power of love

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

- ❑ *Jesus with us.* We should not be afraid to teach the doctrine of the Eucharist plainly. Jesus does not only give us Himself in the Eucharist. He also, generously, gives us faith, the power to believe in this great sacrament. It is at the heart of Catholic faith. Faith in the Eucharist comes easily to young people, if we teach them out of our own faith. We want to help them feel that the bread and wine you receive into your heart at Communion is really Jesus, our Savior and our God. Be glad in receiving Him!
- ❑ *The Paschal Mystery of Jesus* is with us. In this section we are teaching great and most important ideas. Everyone knows that love is recognized in faithfulness, in standing by another, even when it is hard to be faithful. But Christ stands by us forever. He died for us. We have to help the students realize what faith teaches. When we are around the altar at the Eucharist, we are really around the cross and resurrection of the Lord. We are with Him who gladly died for us and then rose from the grave. Help the students see that anyone who understands the Eucharist knows that the Lord loves us with a mighty love.

Eucharist and sin

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

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

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

3. Impurities lead us away from the Eucharist

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

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

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

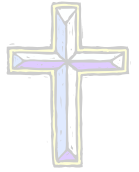
We ought to remind students clearly of the strong ideas taught in this section. But we should do it gently, reminding them that no one commits mortal sins *accidentally*. It is always something quite deliberate. And Jesus gives us power to escape such sin and gives us a way to have our sins forgiven,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

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

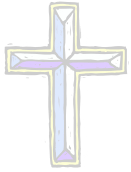
Note: How the second half of this section explains why sins of impurity are so wrong. This is a very *scriptural* teaching. The catechist might read through 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 and 11:27-32 before class. This need not be read to the students, but reading it before class helps the catechist recall the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

4. The Eucharist empowers us to live chastely

It is important that we constantly encourage those we teach. Our Lord was always giving comfort and support to those He loved, and He wishes us to do so also.



Grade 8



Class 4

We need to help our students feel the power of the words of Christ in this section. He does not give us excellent and difficult commandments and then abandon us. He really gives us the power to live the good and generous lives He wants us to live, and He does honestly make it easy, if we come to Him.

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

Tying things together

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

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1322-1405; 1849-1864; 2337-2355.