

FORMATION IN CHRISTIAN CHASTITY – GRADE 7

During the first four years, the formation program in chastity was presented almost exclusively by you, the parents. The teaching points that were provided to you accomplished this. As the young people reach the middle school years, there are some elements of formation that will be covered in the school or parish catechetical programs. However, the parents will give the intimate and very personal information. Since each child differs in their needs and personal rate of development, the information needed by one child is often very different from others. There are three things that we are providing for you at this time. One is an overview of the moral and spiritual formation topics that will be covered in your child's class. The second section deals with social aspects of development and chaste living, also classroom topics. The parents are encouraged to review these first two sections with their children, in addition to their classroom presentations. The third section is a summary of the key details of personal developmental information. You, as the parent, judge when and how much information on human development you want to provide for your child. This summary will be repeated each year for your reference. There are also additional references that may be helpful to you in making these presentations to your child. These are listed at the end of the section on human development.

God made us to be happy

I. Moral / Spiritual Component – How we know the truth.

- True happiness comes from living in union with God.
- Our ultimate and perfect happiness is living with God forever in heaven.
- God gives us the 10 commandments, the Beatitudes, and the teachings of the Church to show us how to be happy.
- Disobedience to these commandments and teachings will make us unhappy.
- The 10 commandments are like "guardrails" that keep us on the road to true life and happiness and which keep us from "going over the cliff to unhappiness and spiritual death.
- God calls each person to live in a particular way. The term for this call from God is "vocation."
- Chastity is a spiritual power that helps us discover and live out our vocation.
- Prayer, Holy Mass, and a regular reception of the Sacrament of Penance help us to know more clearly what God is calling us to.

II. Social Component – How we live out the truth.

- God gives us the freedom to choose what is right and good. We call this free will.
- Your parents are to guide you to choose what is good. The 4th commandment tells us to honor our father and our mother.
- Because of free will, you are responsible for the decisions that you make.
- If you choose what is wrong and sin, God gives us the Sacrament of Penance as a remedy.
- You should not do something just because your friends do, you should do the right thing.
- It is important for your friends to accept you for who you are, a child of God and a "soldier for Christ."
- It is good to have friendships with members of the same sex and of the opposite sex.
- Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, help and protect us and our families!

III. Human Development and Maturity

As your child matures, it is your privilege and responsibility to communicate the truth and meaning of human sexuality to your child and to help him/her through the stages of development. The relationship and trust you establish now will help your child to navigate his/her way from childhood, through adolescence to adulthood in a virtuous and successful way.

Our bodies express the truth of who we are. God prepares boys and girls to eventually become fathers and mothers. One of the ways that this happens is that changes occur in our bodies. As part of God's plan, boys and girls develop at different times. The fact that a boy or girl is developing somewhat more slowly or quickly than others their age is not necessarily a cause for alarm. You can explain to your child the changes they begin to see in themselves and in their classmates as they enter puberty. As you judge them ready, you can explain more fully the biological aspects of procreation in conjunction with the moral dimensions.

As parents, the love and support that you give your children during this time of transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood will pay big dividends down the road. While making sure to give proper supervision, it will be important for parents to respect their child's increasing need for privacy.

People express their love physically, as well as emotionally and spiritually. The fullest physical expression of love takes place with the marriage of a man and a woman. The act of intercourse (the marital act) is the sacramental expression of love between a husband and wife, which is founded on the marriage covenant. This act is a sign of deep love and self-giving between husband and wife and is intended by God for two primary purposes: the generation of life (procreative end) and the deepening of the union between husband and wife (unitive end). Every marital act (act of intercourse between husband and wife) must be open to these two ends. In marriage, the physical intimacy of the spouses becomes a sign and pledge of their spiritual communion. Marriage bonds between a baptized man and a baptized woman are sanctified by the sacrament.

An additional information sheet on some of the basic biological information, in nontechnical language, is available to parents from the school or parish catechetical office (Appendix 2).

For further information on these and other important questions and issues related to human growth and sexuality, we recommend the following resource:

Aquilina, Mike - General Editor, Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parents' Guide; Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Copyright © 1995 Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh. All rights reserved.

Additional Recommendations for Parents

For young people, friendships outside the home are very important. Parents should know who their child's friends are, and with where they spend their time. Especially note if your child is "hanging around" with students who are several years older. This is always a red flag for parents. Media influences are very much a part of the cultural formation that young people receive. Monitor movies, books, and especially computer use. Computers with Internet access should be in a "public" area of the home under the watchful eye of parents. Children alone on the computer can be susceptible to the activity of strangers via chatrooms. We strongly discourage single dating for young people; that should be put off until late in the high school years. Mixed group activities are best for children in the middle school and early high school grades.

Safety Review – Safe Environment Plans

Parents will receive the safety information tips from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. As children grow, it is helpful to review the information provided there and apply it to the new set of circumstances that children face in these pre-teen and early teenage years. Take the time to go over the information with your child and discuss the various items presented by the safety information sheet.