

FORMATION IN CHRISTIAN CHASTITY – GRADE 8

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.

Love and Responsibility

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

- God created man and woman in His image, with dignity, to live in relationship with each other and to make a gift of ourselves to others.
- In the sacrament of marriage, the husband and wife are called to make a total gift of themselves to each other through the marital act. *Note: If the teacher or catechist is asked by a student what the marital act is, they should simply state that it is the act by which a husband and wife give themselves totally to one another, body and soul, and that this act is so good and powerful, that God sometimes chooses to create a new human being through it. There is information, which is to go to each parent, which gives more specifics on what the marital act involves - particularly on a biological level. This biological explanation is to be reserved to parents, in accordance with # 133.4 of Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality.*
- The marital act must always be open to life and love.
- The marital act is reserved for marriage.
- Sexual acts outside of marriage are a grave sin.
- Some of these sins include: adultery, pre-marital sex, and any other act intended to sexually arouse yourself or others.
- True marriage can exist only between one man and one woman.
- There can never be a true marriage between a man and a man, or between a woman and a woman.
- Homosexual acts are always gravely sinful.
- If one has committed a sexual sin(s) it should be confessed in the Sacrament of Penance. This sacrament gives the grace and strength to live purely in the future. We have to cooperate with this grace through prayer, going to Mass, frequently going to Confession, and through effort.

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

- God's love for us includes freedom.
- True freedom means the freedom to do what is good and right.
- Because we are free, we are responsible for our acts.
- We cannot be truly free if we are not living chastely and purely.

- Dating is inappropriate until you are able to maturely evaluate your relationships with others.
- If you begin dating too early it is difficult to resist the pressures others may put on you.
- This is the time to happily enjoy friendships without the pressures of dating.
- We should avoid public discussions of private matters. If we see this happening, we should change the subject.
- We must look away from immodest images, people, and things.
- It is always sinful to use pornography, whether in pictures, magazines, or the internet.
- Television, movies, and music that have immoral themes can be an occasion of sin. We should search out movies and TV shows with wholesome, moral themes.
- It is always sinful to physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse anyone, or to treat them in a degrading manner.
- It is never OK for anyone to physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse you or treat you in a degrading manner. If this happens, immediately tell a parent or trusted adult.
- St. Thomas Aquinas, patron of students and of chastity, pray for us!

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.