

## Parents First

*Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2223)*Church Teaching *Redemption*

There are a number of common misconceptions about sin and redemption that often creep into our understanding of the relationship between God and human beings. Frequently, Christians have an idea that getting into heaven is about being “basically a good person.” This is often described using the image of a set of scales with our good deeds on one side and our bad on the other. As long as our good outweighs the bad, we get our foot in the door and we are safe.

Unfortunately, it’s not that easy (CCC 1989-1994).

Freshmen will tend to learn quickly that this is also not the way that human relationships work (CCC 1913). One cannot be mostly good to friends and still occasionally, lie, cheat, or steal. When a relationship becomes broken it needs to heal. This begins with saying we are sorry, making restitution, and making a firm resolution not to continue the offense (CCC 1450-1460).



When we commit sin we are not offending a human but God (CCC 1440). This means that consequences are eternal. While we do not have the power to heal that relationship on our own, God reaches out to us through Jesus Christ in the sacraments, particularly Reconciliation, and allows us to hear with our own ears that we are forgiven (CCC 1441-1442).

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## Growing in Virtue

**Charity** is also the virtue known often in Scripture as love. As children move into high school, they and perhaps some of their friends may begin dating. It may be prudent at this point to reiterate that the love that the world teaches and the love that the Church teaches are often two very different things. St. Paul reminds us of this virtue often at weddings (1Cor 13) when we read his description of true love as opposed to infatuation. He tells us that love requires the sacrifice of our own desires for the

good of the other while infatuation seeks only to possess the other for the sake of personal gratification.

In these same relationships **temperance** is also a necessary virtue. Temperance helps to find balance or moderation in our thoughts and feelings. It requires that we find an understanding that all things have an appropriate time and place; also finding a happy middle ground between being prudish and without morals. Temperance requires an understanding that God gave us good things to enjoy, but that He wants us to share that joy with others as well. We should eat, but not overeat, we should drink but not become drunk, we should temper our sexual desires within the commitment of a loving marriage.

## Culture Alert...

48% of teens (13-19) have sent or received sexts

## Signs of sexting

- Increased secrecy on phone (will not let you see who they are messaging)
- New circle of friends
- Change in sleeping patterns
- Drop in performance.

## Guidelines for Answering Questions

- Ask for more information before answering, (i.e. "Why do you ask?", or "Tell me more.") Your child's response will provide you with insight, context and time to think.
- Pause to ask God for the wisdom and grace to provide an appropriate answer.
- Phrase your answer in the context of your family's Catholic values (i.e. "When you are grown and married" or "As Catholics, we believe...").
- If you don't know the answer, say "That's a great question but I'm not sure of the exact answer. I will look it up and get back to you later today." Make sure to follow up later with an answer.

### Example: What's wrong with pornography?

Know the context of the question (see above guidelines) i.e.: Did they hear peers talking about it? Did they see something on TV or the computer?. The information your child provides to these questions will help frame your answer in a way that is meaningful to him/her. **Remember that 80% of 15-17 year olds have had multiple hard-core pornography exposures and the largest consumer group of Internet pornography is 12-17 year-olds.**

#### Possible responses:

- "Pornography diminishes the God-given value and dignity of each person."
- "It devalues God's purpose for sexual attraction and sexual intercourse."
- "Pornography causes the viewer to objectify the body rather than the person and depicts women as just objects to be used for sex and increases the likelihood of sexual violence."
- "Viewing pornography can be very addictive, especially for boys and men."
- "Males who regularly view pornography often find themselves needing to view more and more as well as harder core porn to get the same pleasure."
- "Viewing pornography can also lead to unrealistic expectations about sex and can make it difficult to form relationships in the real world."

## Practical Suggestions



Today's technology makes it easy for kids to stumble across or find pornography. Here are a few steps you can take to protect your kids from

the dangers of pornography:

- ◆ It's your responsibility to monitor your children's electronic devices and social network apps. Many of these sites have age restrictions but no way to enforce underage usage.
- ◆ Check privacy settings, often, for the internet and social media sites to make sure they are set on the strictest settings. Use filtering software.
- ◆ Create ground rules; if your kids are old enough to be using computers and social media they are old enough to understand there

are rules. Create a social media contract, which includes phones. Remember, kids will be tempted to use their phone instead of sleeping.

- ◆ Keep the computer in a central location where it is easy for you to monitor activity.
- ◆ Teach your kids about online dangers and about an online reputation.
- ◆ Maybe most importantly, be a good example.
- ◆ Keep phones and tablets in your room overnight.

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## May We Recommend...

Circle of Grace Parenting and Sexuality Handout

Parenting with Grace: The Parent's Guide to Raising almost Perfect Kids  
by Gregory and Lisa Popcak

Beyond the Birds and the Bees: Raising Sexually Whole and Holy Kids.  
By Gregory and Lisa Popcak

Theology of the Body for Teens: High School Edition, Ascension Press, 2006

<http://integrityrestored.com/>  
<http://family.archdiocese.org/respecting-life/human-sexuality-formation/>

(YouTube videos are recommended for parent viewing only)  
YouTube: Jason Evert – How Far Is Too Far?

Teens & Tech National Report by Institute of Family Studies

For more program information please contact the Office of Child Protection & Safety via email: [opcysupport@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:opcysupport@arlingtondiocese.org)

To contact the Office of Victim Assistance please call (703) 841-2530

If this is an emergency call 911