

## Formation in Christian Chastity Grade 6

Dear Parents,

The purpose of this letter is to assist you with information on what is being covered in your child's religion class regarding Church teaching on the virtue of chastity. During the first four years of your child's schooling, the formation program in chastity is presented almost exclusively by you, the parents. As students reach the middle school years, there are some elements of formation that will be covered in the school or parish catechetical programs.

However, we operate on the expectation that parents will communicate the more intimate and personal information to their children regarding human sexuality. Since *each child differs in their needs and personal rate of development*, it is highly likely that the needs of one child are very different from the needs of another. Therefore, in the interest of preserving the innocence of those who are not ready for certain information regarding their developing sexuality, these conversations are expected to happen between parents and their children. The religious instruction on chastity intends to explore the calling God has placed on our hearts to know, love, and serve Him as people created in His image out of God's love alone.

There are three things that we are providing for you at this time. The **first section** is an overview of moral and spiritual formation topics. The **second section** deals with social aspects of development and chaste living. These first two sections summarize the key teaching points that will be covered within the Religion curriculum. We also encourage to review these first two sections with your children at any time of the year. The **third section** is a summary of the key details of personal development. It is your responsibility as a parent to judge when and how much information on human development you want to provide for your child. This summary will be provided each year for your reference along with additional references that you may find helpful in your discussions on human development with your child.

### **God made us to know the truth.**

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

- Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
- He wants us to know Him and follow the Truth.
- Knowing the Truth helps us to choose what is good and to live joyful lives.
- God reveals His Truth through Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the teaching office of the Church (i.e. the magisterium – the Pope and the Bishops in union with him).
- We can also know the Truth about what is good and right through reason (our ability to think, understand, and judge).
- God gives each of us a conscience, which is His inner voice that inspires us to do good and avoid evil. (CCC 1795)
- A well-formed conscience, aided by grace, helps us to avoid the persons, places and things that can easily lead us to sin.
- We need to form our consciences correctly by listening to the Word of God, praying daily, going to Mass and Confession, following the teachings of the Church, and obedience to our parents.

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

- Each person has inherent dignity.
- Every baptized person is an adopted son or daughter of God.
- Because of the dignity that God gave us, we are to respect others and ourselves in thought, word, and deed.
- The first and most important way in which we demonstrate respect for ourselves and others is by upholding the right to life.
- Every human being is a gift from God to be cherished from conception to natural death.
- We have a duty to care for the sick and suffering. A sick or suffering person must never be killed in the name of compassion (i.e. euthanasia). This is a grave violation of the 5th commandment. All persons have the right to life from conception until natural death.
- We must pray for those who harm themselves or others through abortion, or euthanasia, or through the support of abortion and euthanasia.
- Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of human life, 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 the change that occurs in our bodies. As part of God's plan, boys and girls develop at different times. It is not necessarily a cause for alarm if a boy or girl is developing somewhat more slowly or quickly than others of the same age. You can explain to your child the changes that occur as he or she enters puberty. As you judge them ready, you can explain more fully the biological aspects of procreation along with the moral implications involved in the marital act.

As parents, the love and support that you give your children during this time of transition (childhood – adolescence – adulthood) will pay big dividends down the road. It is important to find a healthy balance between respecting your child's increasing need for privacy *and* making sure to give them proper supervision.

Peoples' physical expression of love can never be separated from the emotional and spiritual dimensions of that love. The fullest physical expression of love takes place in 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 unity between husband and wife for which God intends two primary purposes: the generation of life (procreative end) and the deepening of the union between husband and wife (unitive end). Every marital act must be open to these two ends. In marriage, the physical intimacy of the spouses becomes a sign and pledge of their spiritual communion. This bond between a baptized man and woman is sanctified in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

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

Pontifical Council for the Family: *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (1995) Copyright © 1996 Pauline Books and Media, Boston, MA. (NOTE: this is free online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va))

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

### **Additional Recommendations for Parents**

For young people, friendships outside the home are very important. Parents should know who their child's friends are as well as 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. Also be conscious of the adults that spend time with your children. Do they meet with your approval, and are the time and circumstances of their involvement appropriate? Media influences are very much parts of the cultural formation young people receive. Monitor movies, books, and especially computer and mobile device usage. Children alone and unsupervised on the Internet are susceptible to the activity of strangers. Mixed group activities are best for young people in the middle grades. Single dating is not recommended until much later in the high school years.

#### **TECHNOLOGY USAGE TIPS**

- Closely monitor computer use by your children.
- Computers used by children should be in a common area of the house.
- Purchase a good web filter to keep out unwanted and harmful materials (i.e. SafeEyes, BeSecure, Barracuda, etc.).
- Set your Google Image search to "strict" or use another "safe" search engine.
- Children should not be using "chat" rooms.
- Use of social networking and media sites for viewing, and especially for creating a user profile, should not be allowed (i.e. Facebook\*, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). (*\*Be aware of Facebook guidelines for usage...they do not want to allow users who are under 13 years of age.*)
- Children should protect their privacy and modesty on the computer just as in other public settings like restrooms.
- If a child has a cell phone, do not enable texting. If you deem it necessary for some reason, then periodically check your child's text history on the phone...READ the conversations.
- Smartphones for children are strongly discouraged.
- Consider limiting the number of hours playing video games and monitor the games children play for violence and sexual suggestiveness.