

Formation in Christian Chastity + Grade 4

Dear Parents,

The Church states with confidence that parents are the primary educators of their children. This is most true when we speak of the religious education of your children. This teaching flows from the natural bond that exists between parent and child, and from the very basis of our faith. You know your child best. While many parents seek the assistance of others to impart some of the systematic elements of education in faith, in Catholic schools or in parish religious education programs, you retain the primary duty to form your children in the faith. From you, your children will learn their first prayers, and with you they will first experience the worship of God. They also need to learn from you how to live responsibly in this world. This program is intended to assist parents in the formation of their children in the virtue of chastity.

Why Chastity?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) introduces the discussion of chastity by calling it a “vocation”. (See CCC #2337 ff) Chastity is the virtue whereby we regulate our use of sexual activity in accord with our state in life. We want to emphasize the good elements of the Christian life that are ours as followers of Jesus Christ. Every disciple observes chastity, though the manner of how it is observed varies according to our state in life. The married person, the priest or religious, and the young person all observe chastity, though in different ways. For example, a young person practices chastity by remaining pure in all of their relationships. A married couple observes a holy life in their exclusive commitment to each other. Priests and religious dedicate themselves exclusively to God. We want our children to grow up with a proper, healthy and holy understanding of themselves and their gift of human sexuality.

How will this program work?

This program is based on the premise that parents know their children, where they are in their own personal development, and can best judge when their child is ready for specific lessons or information. The natural innocence of young children may be protected in this way. During the first four grades, parents will be the teachers. For each year, we will provide a series of ideas and recommendations for you to review with your children. These will outline some of the basic concepts that are building blocks to understanding a chaste life and one that looks forward to a holy family life for their future. In later grades (5 to 8), we will assist parents with some classroom activity to support part of what they will be teaching at home.

What can parents teach to Fourth Graders?

The basic theme is the mystery of God and our personal relationship to Him. Starting with God, we see how we grow to love Him in our life, and how our lives can be offered in service to Him. A listing of the teaching points follows, and concludes with some ideas of how you might present these concepts.

My place in God's family.

- The one God is a family – The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- The three persons of the Blessed Trinity love each other perfectly and completely.
- We are to imitate their love.
- Love is giving yourself fully to another person without looking for something in return.
- To truly love another, you have to give.
- Love is not a 50/50 proposition. To truly love, as we ought, we must give ourselves totally.
- God loves us so much that He gave us His only begotten Son, Who gave His life so that we can have life to the full and be happy with Him forever.
- Jesus showed us His self-giving love in all of His actions, and especially by giving His life on the Cross-to open heaven for us.
- Jesus' death on the Cross-shows us that true love involves sacrifice.
- Jesus said, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." –John 15:13
- Because we are made in God's image, we are called to love others as He loves us.
- For most people this will not involve dying physically for another, but it will involve many, many self-giving acts.
- God calls different people to love Him in different ways. The word we use for God's individual call to each person is "vocation."
- Many people are called to love God and neighbor as married people. Some are called to love as religious brothers or sisters, others are called to love as single people in the world, and some men are called to love God and neighbor as ordained priests.
- A married man and woman promise to love God and each other by faithfully loving each other for life and by welcoming and loving the children God may wish to give them.
- Married people are given grace by God to help each other to be holy and to teach their children the ways of God and to help them to be holy.
- A consecrated brother or sister is someone who follows God and tries to come to perfection, by making certain promises (poverty, chastity, and obedience) to live in a certain way, and to live in community with other people who promise to live the same way.
- A single person in the world is someone who is not a married person, or a priest, or a member of a religious community, but who strives to become perfect through living a holy life in the everyday circumstances of the world.
- Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the Lord gives bishops and priests the power to consecrate bread and wine, changing them into His Body and Blood in the celebration of the Eucharist, and to forgive sins in the Sacrament of Penance. The priest has a special role in teaching God's people, in helping them to become holy, and in using his special authority to serve His people.

Teaching Examples

- (1) Speak to your child about your own marriage and the love you have for your spouse. Share your wedding photos and stories from that day. Tell your child how you met and decided to get married; this is the story of your own vocation.
- (2) Introduce the word vocation, explaining that it comes from the Latin word, “vocare” meaning “to call”. It represents our understanding that God has a special task for each person in their life, a task we need to discover through prayer and by listening to others who can help us to see what calling we may be best suited for. List the vocations of some members of your larger family, and then perhaps of people in your parish. Talk to your child about religious vocations and how important they are to the life of the Church.