

## GRADE SEVEN

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# JESUS AND THE GOSPEL MESSAGE



*The Gospels reveal Jesus as the Savior and Risen Lord who calls us to advance the kingdom of God through discipleship.*

### OBJECTIVES

- To broaden the young adolescent's understanding of the Gospels through a study of their formation, themes, message, and literary aspects.
- To help the young adolescent grow in a personal relationship with Jesus by encountering him in the Gospels and learning to live his message.

## I. INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE

### *A. Revelation*

Scripture, in both the Old Testament and New Testament, contains God’s self-revelation; Jesus is the fullness of that revelation. [75, 79, 108]

- God reveals himself in Scripture and invites us into a relationship of faith and love with him. [142-43]
- The Old Testament tells of God’s teachings and saving actions before the coming of Jesus. It is an indispensable part of Scripture. Through the history of the Hebrew people, God reveals himself as the one and only God. [121-23, 128-30]
- The New Testament tells of Jesus’ teachings and saving actions and the work of the Spirit in the Church. These represent the fulfillment of all the promises of the Old Testament. [124]
- Jesus is the fullness of God’s self-revelation to us. [65]

Reading Sacred Scripture and using it for prayer can lead us to a deeper relationship with God, and thus change our lives. [104, 131-33, 141]

### *B. Inspiration and Authorship*

Both God and human writers are truly the authors of Sacred Scripture. [105-6, 109, 135-36]

- The Holy Spirit enlightened the minds of the human authors of Scripture. This work of God is called “inspiration.” [81, 106]
- The Bible imparts religious truth about God, the world, and our relationship with God and one another. This truth is free from error. [107-8, 136]
- Understanding the various literary forms and historical contexts in which the Sacred Scriptures were written helps us to grasp the truths they contain. [110]
- Tradition and Church teaching also help us to understand what the Scriptures have to say to us today. [80-83, 85-86]

### *C. Stages of Gospel Formation*

The entire process of Gospel formation was inspired by the Holy Spirit. [75]

The Church recognizes three stages of Tradition by which the life and teaching of Jesus have come down to us. [83, 126]

- **The Life of Jesus:** From his birth to his death and resurrection and ascension.
- **The Oral Tradition:** The period of time during which the first disciples, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gave oral witness to the life and message of Jesus.
- **The Writing of the Gospels:** The span of time in the early Christian community when the evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) put the apostolic preaching into writing.

The fourfold Gospel, according to the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is the foundation of our faith. [125, 127, 139]

Our appreciation of Scripture is enriched by Scripture scholars who work to deepen our understanding of the Word of God in accordance with the teachings of the Church. [119]

### ***D. Literary Aspects of the Gospels***

Many factors influenced the style of the different Gospels.

- The written style of each Gospel varies according to the language, background, personality and experience of the human author. [110]
- The human authors developed their themes by selecting historical details, stories and sayings from the life of Jesus. In order to interpret Scripture properly, we must always be attentive to what the human authors wanted to affirm. [109, 137]
- Each Gospel is also influenced by the needs of the community to which it is addressed. [126.3]

To convey their message, the human authors of the Gospels used various literary forms, for example:

- Narrative, such as Mark 6:53-56 and Luke 19:1-10.
- Parables, such as Mark 4:1-20.
- Passages from the Old Testament presented in a new context, such as Luke 4:16-19 and John 6:31-33.

Because the literalist and fundamentalist approaches to reading the Scriptures do not take into account either their literary form or their historical context, they are misleading. [82]

### **PRAYER EXPERIENCE**

- Invite the young people to reflect on the Gospels and ask them:  
*What Gospel story do you remember best?*  
*What do you like about it?*  
*How does the story make you feel: Challenged? Supported? Encouraged?*
- Read John 20:30-31 to the group. Invite the young people to thank God for giving us Sacred Scripture as a true guide for life. Have them ask God for help in appreciating how the Bible leads them to know, love, and serve God better.

## **II. INTRODUCTION TO JESUS**

In the Gospels we meet the living Jesus, a person who is fully human and fully divine. [425, 480-83, 515]

In Hebrew, the name Jesus means, “God saves.” [430]

We hear Jesus call us to be his disciples, and we learn to offer him a personal, loving response. [520-21]

Through the Gospels we encounter the Risen Lord, ever present in his Church. [639, 641, 669]

### ***A. Jesus, Son of Mary***

Jesus is fully human.

- Jesus was Jewish and was born of Mary in Palestine in the first century. Joseph was his foster father (Matthew 1:1-17; 2:1). [423, 525]
- As a human being, Jesus grew and developed naturally from childhood into adulthood, maturing physically and spiritually in age, wisdom, and grace (Luke 2:1-38; 2:39-40; 51-52). [472, 514, 518, 531]
- Jesus experienced the joys of life. He also experienced real suffering, misunderstanding and rejection (Mark 6:1-6). [461, 478, 520]

### ***B. Jesus, Son of God***

Jesus is fully divine.

- When Christians call Jesus “Lord,” we are confessing belief in his divinity.
- Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, was always God (John 1:1-5, 14). [464, 479]
- In the words and actions of his life, Jesus revealed God the Father and the love that God has for us (John 14:8-10). [458-59, 516]
- Jesus is God present in our midst (Matthew 1:23, 28:20; John 20:24-31). [444-45]

#### **PRAYER EXPERIENCE**

- Slowly read aloud Matthew 16:13-15.
- Give the young people time to silently consider how they would answer Jesus’ question: Who do people say the Son of Man is?
- Invite them to listen prayerfully as Jesus tells them who he is: John 6:35 (the Bread of Life); John 8:12 (the Light of the World); John 10:14-15 (the Good Shepherd); John 11:25 (the Resurrection and the Life).
- Have the young people conclude by speaking to Jesus about who he is in their own lives.

### **III. INTRODUCTION TO EACH OF THE GOSPELS**

Each of the synoptic Gospels is different in the way it helps us to grow in our understanding of the mystery of Jesus. Several distinctive features of each Gospel follow.

## ***The Gospel of Matthew***

*Author:* Matthew, the tax collector and apostle

*Date:* AD 75-85

*Audience:* Greek-speaking Christians of Jewish descent

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is proclaimed as the fulfillment of all the promises of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah (Matthew 2:1-12, 3:13-17, 16:16). [122, 422, 522, 1223]

Jesus is portrayed as the new Moses, bringing a new law or new commandment to the new Israel, which is the Church. Matthew gives a careful account of the teachings of Jesus and shows them to be the culmination of the Old Testament Law and the message of the Old Testament prophets (Matthew 17:1-8, 5:17). [1964, 1968-68]

Matthew's Gospel is sometimes called the "Gospel of the Church," because the community of disciples is presented as the nucleus of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 18:20). [541, 546, 763-64]

### **PRAYER EXPERIENCE**

- Invite the young people to listen to the parable that Jesus tells in Matthew 13:33.
- Explain what yeast does for bread and what bread looks and tastes like without yeast. Then have them consider why Jesus says that God's kingdom in this world is like yeast. Have them share their reflections in a way appropriate for the group.
- Jesus is inviting each of us to be like yeast in the world. Reflect prayerfully how God is at work building his kingdom in the world through you.

## ***The Gospel of Mark***

*Author:* John Mark of Jerusalem

*Date:* AD 65-75

*Audience:* Mostly Gentiles; those new in their faith and facing persecutions

Mark's Gospel is full of action. He emphasizes the many miracles of Jesus. Jesus in Mark's Gospel heals and casts out demons, revealing the power of God in this world. (Mark 1:32-34). [547-50]

Mark's Gospel is a proclamation of good news (Mark 1:14-15). The good news to be proclaimed is Jesus himself (Mark 1:1). [422, 425-26]

Yet, Jesus is presented as a mystery, and his disciples only come to understand him gradually. Often Jesus speaks in parables that not everyone can understand (Mark 4:11). Only when they have traveled the whole of Jesus' journey with him – including his journey to the cross (Mark 15:39) – do his disciples really come to know who he is. They then are able to proclaim him to the world (Mark 16:15). [515, 546]

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Read aloud Mark 10:46-52, the story of the man born blind, in which Jesus confronts human suffering and overcomes it.

Give the young people time for silent, prayerful reflection on:

- How the blind man asked Jesus for help
- How other people treated the blind man
- How Jesus responded to the blind man
- How the blind man's whole life was changed

Remind the young people that physical healing is only one of the ways in which Jesus can heal us. Tell them we all have "blind" spots. Give them time to think about how they've been blind to the needs and concerns of others. Remind them that Jesus always wants to help us. Take time to think and then ask how they would answer Jesus' question: What do you want me to do for you?

- Invite the young people to share with the group any of their reflections on the above.
- Conclude with the following prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to understand that you want each of us to grow to our full potential. You give us your love without conditions. You give us your Holy Spirit, who enables us to respond to your love. Jesus, be the Way for us, and may the Spirit be the power enabling us to cooperate with you. Help us to listen and follow your call to grow. Amen.

### ***The Gospel of Luke***

*Author:* Luke, Physician and companion of Paul

*Date:* AD 75-85

*Audience:* Gentile Christians

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as our Savior (Luke 2:1-10). Through his life, death and resurrection, he helps us to overcome the evil of sin and its effects, including suffering and death. Jesus saves us especially from the evil of refusing God's love, as well as, refusing to love and forgive others. [430, 457]

Luke's gospel is called the Gospel of mercy or the Gospel of great pardons, because in it Jesus often shows compassion and forgiveness. He welcomes sinners and eats with them. The parables of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) are found in Luke's Gospel. [545, 588-89]

It is also called the Gospel of the poor, because in it Jesus' love for the poor and outcast is often expressed. Luke's account of the birth of Jesus shows that the poor and lowly are the first to whom God has revealed the birth of His Son and are given the greatest privileges (Luke 2:8-14), and Luke's account of the Beatitudes proclaims, "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours." (Luke 6:20). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus found in Luke (Luke 16:19-31) demonstrates the response called for by all disciples to meet the needs of the poor. [543-44, 2443-44, 2831]

A spirit of joy and wonder permeates Luke's gospel. More than any of the other evangelists, Luke notes the admiration of the crowds and individuals who meet Jesus. The songs (canticles) of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon are all found in Luke (Luke 1:46-55, 68-79, 2:29-32). [722, 2619, 2640]

Luke's gospel is also called the Gospel of prayer and the Holy Spirit because these themes are emphasized throughout the Gospel. At every important juncture in Jesus' life, Luke shows him at prayer and gives witness to Jesus' insistence that his disciples be people of prayer as well (Luke 11:1-13, 3:21-22, 4:1, 4:14). [728, 2600, 2759]

### PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Ask the young people to think about some people in their lives who they have helped and who have helped them.
- Read Luke 10:25-37 to the group.
- Give them time to reflect on the scripture passage by asking them to:
  - Think about a time when you were helped by another person. How did you feel?*
  - Think about a time another person helped you when others didn't. How did you feel?*
  - Think of a time when you could have helped and failed to do so. How did you feel?*
- Encourage the young people to pray to Jesus for the grace to forgive those who have hurt them. Ask Jesus for the courage to help another person when others won't.

### *The Acts of the Apostles*

*Author:* Luke, Physician and companion of Paul

*Date:* AD 80-90

*Audience:* Gentile Christians

The Acts of the Apostles, the fifth book of the New Testament, may also be described as the second volume of the Gospel of Luke. In Acts we see the fulfillment of the promises made by Jesus to the Apostles. One learns that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the salvation promised to Israel in the Old Testament has been extended to the Gentiles. In the book of Acts Luke describes the development of the early Church from the resurrection of Jesus to Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Read Acts 2:42-47 to the group and ask the young people to listen carefully and think about how the Church today is like the Church in the first century.
- Encourage the young people to share their reflections.
- Conclude with the following prayer:

*Lord Jesus, help us as we continue the work of the Church that began many years ago. Be with us as we worship and serve you and give us the courage to proclaim the Good News to those we meet. Amen.*

### ***The Gospel of John***

*Author: John, son of Zebedee*

*Date: AD 90-100*

*Audience: Mixed audience; mostly Jews, some Gentiles and Samaritans*

John's Gospel is the most highly symbolic of all the Gospels. Rather than expressing Jesus' teachings in parables or simple moral instructions, John offers longer passages that use symbolism. Jesus describes himself, saying "I am ... the Bread ... the Light ... the Shepherd ... the Resurrection ... the Way ... the Vine ..." (John 6:51, 9:5, 10:14, 11:25-26, 14:6, 15:5). [515-516]

Jesus' words and actions found in the Gospel of John often point to the sacramental life of the Church. For example, the water turned into wine at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11), the life-giving water that comes from Christ (John 3:5-7, 4:10-14, 7:37-38), and the bread that is his flesh (John 6:51). [1151-52, 1406, 1613, 2560-61]

In John's Gospel, many passages about Jesus unfold as dramatic dialogues between Jesus and someone else who asks a question, such as Nicodemus (John 3:1-8) or the woman at the well (John 4:7-14). In these dialogues, Jesus states a profound truth, and the other person misunderstands what he says, leading Jesus to delve more deeply into his subject. [728, 2560-61]

At the very beginning of John's Gospel, Jesus is proclaimed as the Incarnate Word of God, who existed from all eternity (John 1:1-3) and who speaks into our world the richness of the life of the Trinity (John 14:23-26). [241, 257, 458, 461]



## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Have the young people close their eyes, relax, and become aware of the quiet in the room. Remind them that God dwells within each person.
- Take some time to reflect on this and ask that they:
  - Think about their day so far.*
  - How has God been present in their experiences?*
  - Think about the rest of the day.*
  - Consider how it could be different if one remembers that God is within each one of us, always loving us.*
- Conclude by reading John 15:9 to them, slowly, and prayerfully.

### ***IV. Paul – Apostle to the Gentiles***

The letters of Paul to various early Christian communities are the earliest writings found in the New Testament. These letters give testimony to his encounter with the resurrected Jesus and his subsequent conversion from persecutor of Christians to a devout disciple of the crucified Christ. The influence of Paul's writing did much to shape the understanding of the faith among the early Christians.

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Invite the group to listen as you pray:

*Dear Jesus, help me to recognize God's presence in my day and in myself and others. Amen.*



# GRADE SEVEN

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# SACRAMENTS



*The mystery of Christ continues in the Church through the sacraments, which are visible signs of the love and saving action of Jesus.*

## OBJECTIVES

- To help the young adolescent understand, appreciate, and celebrate the continuing presence and saving action of Jesus in the Church.
- To lead the young adolescent to a full and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

## I. THE SACRAMENTS

Jesus, through his person, words and actions, is a sign of God's love for us. Through Jesus, God's life (grace) is shared with us. [515-16, 774]

The Church, the Body of Christ, continues the mission of Jesus, who is the Head of the Church, and is a sign of God's love for us. Through the Church Jesus shares God's life (grace) with us. [774-76, 1111]

The sacraments are signs by which Jesus, through the Holy Spirit and the Church, continue to manifest God's love. Each sacrament gives us grace. [1084, 1086, 1091, 1111, 1131]

The Sacraments of Christian Initiation are [1212]:

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- The Eucharist

The Sacraments of Healing are [1421]:

- Penance
- Anointing of the Sick

The Sacraments at the Service of Communion are [1534-35]:

- Matrimony
- Holy Orders

The sacraments both presuppose faith (the faith of the believer and the faith of the Church) and help faith to grow. [1123-1124]

## II. BAPTISM

### A. Introduction

Baptism is the foundation of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit. It enables us to receive all the other sacraments, which deepen God's life within us. [1213, 1267]

Jesus gave the apostles the mission to baptize (Matthew 28:18-19). [1122, 1226, 1276]

The Church has always affirmed that Baptism is necessary for salvation (John 3:5). Baptism may be experienced in a variety of ways: water, blood, desire. The Church recognizes that those who seek God with a sincere heart, and through ways known only to God, may achieve eternal salvation. [847-48, 1257-61, 1277, 2506]

Baptism is the sacrament of faith. The community of believers fosters growth in faith in each of the baptized. [166, 1253-55]

## ***B. History***

In the early Church, people preparing for Baptism were called catechumens. They spent a long period of time – several years if necessary – learning the Christian way of life by living it with others. [1229-30]

The process of becoming a Christian was marked by rites that gradually incorporated the catechumen into the community of faith. The culmination of the process of initiation took place at the Easter Vigil, when the catechumens received Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. [1230]

The growing practice of infant Baptism led to a change in the process of initiation into the Christian life. It became the practice that after infants were baptized, the sacrament of Confirmation would be delayed and take place at a later date. The Eucharist was received either before or after Confirmation. The process of learning the Christian way of life took place after Baptism. [1231, 1252, 1290-92]

## ***C. Baptism Today***

Adults and children over the age of seven preparing for Baptism today follow a process similar to that of the early Church. This process is called the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, and each person goes through it in four periods:

- **Evangelization:** The person is called an *Inquirer*.
- **Catechumenate:** The person is called a *Catechumen*.
- **Purification and Enlightenment:** The person is called an *Elect*.
- **Mystagogy:** The person is called a *Neophyte*.
- The *Period of Evangelization* or *Pre-Catechumenate* is the time when those interested in the Catholic faith meet members of the parish community, listen to the Word of God and ask questions about God, the Church, and how they may be called to follow Christ in their lives.
- When the inquirers decide that they definitely wish to become catechumens, the Church celebrates a ritual in which they are welcomed by the parish community and marked with the sign of the cross. From that time on the *Period of the Catechumenate* begins.
- During the *Period of the Catechumenate*, the catechumens learn to embrace the teachings of the Church, to live the Christian way of life, to take part in the liturgy, and to become active members of the community, sharing in the mission of Christ. Each one has a sponsor, a member of the parish who becomes a special friend to the catechumen through sharing his or her faith.
- When the Church judges that the catechumens are ready, they take part in a ritual with the bishop on the first Sunday of Lent, called the Rite of Election, in which the Church celebrates God's choosing of them. In that rite they sign their names in the Book of the Elect to show their commitment. The catechumens are then called the *elect*.
- The season of Lent becomes for the elect, and indeed for the entire parish, a time of prayer and spiritual preparation for the sacraments. This is called the *Period of Purification and Enlightenment*.
- On the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent, the community and the elect examine their lives in light of the Gospel. These examinations are called *Scrutinies* and include prayers for the elect, asking that they be given the strength to turn away from evil and remain free from sin (exorcism).

- At the *Easter Vigil*, the elect profess their faith and receive the three Sacraments of Initiation in the midst of the community.
- The Easter season, which then follows, is called the *Period of Mystagogy*. It is a time of celebration for the parish and a time of deepening understanding of the sacraments on the part of the newly-baptized, who are now called neophytes. [1075]

In the case of infant Baptism, a simpler process is followed:

- Parents and godparents prepare to celebrate the child's Baptism by reflecting on the sacrament and on the responsibility they are taking to foster the child's growth in faith throughout life. [1250-51, 1253]
- In infant Baptism, many of the rituals that are celebrated more fully and over a longer period of time when the candidate for Baptism is an adult or older child are incorporated into a single ceremony. [1231] For example:
  - The sign of the cross is traced on the forehead of the infant at the beginning of the baptismal celebration. Adults, however, have a separate rite for this, early in their conversion process. [1235]
  - Infants have a brief prayer of deliverance from evil (exorcism) prayed for them in the baptismal celebration, whereas adults devote three Sundays of Lent to prayers of this kind (the Scrutinies). [1237]
  - After Baptism, parents, godparents, and the parish must strive to fulfill their commitment to support the faith development of the child. [1254-55, 2220]
  - By its very nature, infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal Catechumenate. This recognizes the need for both instruction and the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. [1231]

#### ***D. Celebration of Baptism***

A profession of faith comes immediately before the Baptism. Adults and older children make this profession themselves, but in the case of infants it is made by their parents and godparents. [232, 1236-37]

The heart of the celebration of Baptism, for both infants and adults, is the immersing in or the pouring of water with the words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." [232-33, 1239-40, 1278]

A bishop, priest or deacon is the usual minister of the sacrament of Baptism; however, in an emergency, anyone may baptize. [1256, 1284]

Confirmation and Eucharist are not usually received by the newly baptized infants and these sacraments are delayed until the child has reached the age of reason. [NB: Eastern Rite Catholics, following ancient tradition, do receive all three Sacraments of Initiation at the same time: CF 1203-06, 1290-92.] However:

- The infant is anointed with sacred chrism to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly-baptized. [1241-42]
- The infant is brought to the altar to pray the Lord's Prayer in order to show the connection between Baptism and Eucharist. [1244]

Two “explanatory rites” follow the baptismal cleansing:

- Being clothed in a white garment, which symbolizes having “put on Christ” and having entered into a new way of life.
- Receiving a lighted candle which symbolizes bearing “the light of Christ” in the world. [1243, 1691-92, 1695]

In the Baptism of infants, the blessing of the mother and father has a special place. [1245]

### ***E. Effects of Baptism***

There are two principal effects of Baptism: purification from sin and new birth in the Holy Spirit. [1262, 1987]

#### **Purification from sin:**

- When we are born, we inherit the sin of our first parents, which is called original sin. [390, 404, 416-18, 1250]
- Through Baptism we are freed from original sin and our own personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. [405, 977-78, 1263]

#### **Rebirth in the Holy Spirit:**

- Through Baptism we receive sanctifying grace, the very life of God, and therefore may be called “children of God” (1 John 3:1) [1265-66, 1692]
- Sanctifying grace is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. [2023]
- By Baptism we become members of Christ’s body, the Church, and share in the life of the Risen Lord. [1213, 1267, 1271, 1694]
- Through Baptism we share in the priestly, prophetic and royal mission of Christ. We become part of the common priesthood of all believers, offering our lives to God united to the sacrifice of Christ. [1268, 1546-47]
- Baptism requires us to participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God. [1270]

Baptism is received only once. It seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (character) belonging to Christ. This new identity endures forever. It cannot be destroyed, even by mortal sin. [1246, 1272-74, 1280]

### ***F. Living the Sacrament of Baptism***

As baptized Catholics who share in Christ’s priesthood, we are called to a life of holiness and service. We respond to that call in our daily lives by all our actions. The shape and direction that our life takes – whether in the ordained ministry, as members of the laity (single and married), or in consecrated life – flows out of our Baptism. [1268-70, 1547]

We share in the mission of Christ to bring the good news of God’s love to the world. We work to foster the dignity of each person. We also do all we can to build a just and peaceful society, and to be people of justice and peace ourselves. [1270]

## PRAYER EXPERIENCES

- Proclaim Matthew 3:13-17 (The Baptism of Jesus) to the group.

- Lead the young people in a renewal of their baptismal promises:

*Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth? **I do.***

*Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father? **I do.***

*Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting? **I do.***

*This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

- Encourage each young person to learn more about his or her own baptism by suggesting the following:

*To learn the date of his/her baptism and visit the church where he/she was baptized;*

*To ask parents, grandparents, godparents or other relatives about what happened on the day of his/her baptism.*

- Lead the group in a prayer of thanksgiving for those who have brought them to faith and Baptism.
- Ask the young people to pray for those who are preparing to be baptized.
- Encourage the young people to find out when Baptism is celebrated in their parishes and participate, if possible. Encourage their participation at the Easter Vigil in their parishes when Baptism will be celebrated.

## III. CONFIRMATION

### A. Introduction

Confirmation is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation into the Body of Christ, the Church. Along with Baptism and Eucharist, it is necessary for full initiation. [1285, 1306, 1321]

Confirmation completes baptismal grace. [1285, 1316]

In Confirmation we receive the Holy Spirit in a special way, helping our faith to grow and making us stronger witnesses to Jesus. [1285, 1303]

### B. History

Review the history of baptism, especially the original unity of the three Sacraments of Initiation.

Confirmation continues to make present in the Church for all time the gift of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). [1287-88, 1302]

In the early Church, the apostles laid hands on those who were baptized, in fulfillment of Christ's wish, and they received the Holy Spirit. This is the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation. [1288, 1299, 1315]



From a very early time, anointing with sacred chrism (perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass) was added to the rite. This anointing and laying on of hands symbolize the gift of the Holy Spirit. The name “Christian” means “anointed.” [1289]

### ***C. Confirmation Today***

Every baptized person not yet confirmed can, and should, receive the sacrament of Confirmation. [1306]

The aim of preparation for Confirmation is to lead the candidate to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Church, so that the responsibilities of life as a disciple and witness can be fulfilled. [1309, 1319]

Like all the sacraments, Confirmation is God’s gift. It is not earned. The fruits of the sacrament, however, depend on the disposition of the one who receives it. [1128, 1308]

The bishop is the usual minister of Confirmation. This practice emphasizes the unity of the Christian with the bishop, and therefore with the apostolic origins and mission of the whole Church. [1313]

A priest may confirm [1290, 1312-14]:

- When adults and older children are baptized or received into the Church,
- When special permission is given,
- In the Eastern Catholic Churches,
- When a Christian is in danger of death.

Under special circumstances when a priest confirms, the connection with the bishop is maintained because the oil used in the sacrament has been consecrated by the bishop. [1290, 1297]

### ***D. Celebration of Confirmation***

In Confirmation, the bishop extends his hands over those to be confirmed and prays that the Holy Spirit will descend on them. [1299]

He lays his hand on each candidate’s head, anointing the candidate with the sacred chrism as he says, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” [1300, 1320]

The sign of peace that concludes the rite of Confirmation expresses unity with the bishop and all the faithful. [1301]

When Confirmation is celebrated separately from Baptism, it may take place in the context of a Eucharistic liturgy and begins with a renewal of baptismal promises, thus underlining the unity of the Sacraments of Initiation. [1298, 1321]

### ***E. Effects of Confirmation***

- Confirmation brings about a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as experienced by the apostles at Pentecost. [1302, 1315]
- It increases and deepens baptismal grace. [1303, 1316]

- Like Baptism, it imprints on the soul a permanent character or sign, which is indelible. [1304, 1317]
- It imparts a power to publicly profess faith in Christ. [1305]

## ***F. Living the Sacrament of Confirmation***

As Jesus' witnesses in the world today, we work to further God's kingdom, a kingdom marked by unity, justice, charity and peace. Accordingly, we work with others in our society to change unjust social structures and ensure that they are replaced by structures which respect the dignity of each person. [541, 1869, 1879, 2420]

When we open ourselves to receive the completion of baptismal grace in Confirmation, the Spirit works in us so that people see manifested in our lives the life of God within us. [1316]

Confirmation increases in us the *gifts of the Holy Spirit* received at Baptism. These gifts sustain our moral life. They are: *wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord*. [768, 1266, 1303, 1830, 1845]

The outward signs of the Spirit at work in us are: *charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity*. Saint Paul calls these the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). [736, 1832]

### **PRAYER EXPERIENCE**

Read Acts 2:1-12 (The Coming of the Spirit) to the group.

Read the following prayer (from the Rite of Confirmation) that is said by the bishop who will administer the sacrament:

*All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life.  
Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and guide.  
Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of right judgment and courage,  
the spirit of knowledge and reverence.  
Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen!***

Pray with the young people for an increase of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

## **IV. EUCHARIST**

### ***A. Introduction***

The Eucharist completes Christian initiation. [1212, 1322]

The Eucharist is the sacrament in which the Lord Jesus himself is present under the appearances of bread and wine. To receive Holy Communion is to receive Christ himself. [1374, 1376]

The sacrament is celebrated in the Eucharistic sacrifice, in which the redemptive offering of Christ on the cross is continually made present to the Church. [1085, 1323, 1362, 1364-68]

The Eucharist is both sacrifice and sacred banquet. Sacrifice and sacrament are inseparable parts of the same mystery. [1382-83]

Jesus instituted the Eucharist on the night before he died, at the Last Supper (Luke 22:19-20). [1323, 1337-39]

The Eucharist is the summit and source of Christian life. The Mass is the central act of worship. [1324-27]

We believe in the continuing presence of Jesus under the appearances of bread and wine which have been consecrated by the priest. The Blessed Sacrament, reserved in the tabernacle and displayed for veneration at special times, is truly the Body and Blood of Christ present in our midst. [1378, 1380]

### ***B. History***

After Jesus' death and resurrection, the early Christians met in one another's homes to celebrate through a shared meal the death of Christ and his continuing risen presence among them. Their central act of worship was the special meal of bread and wine that Jesus had commanded his followers to share in his memory (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). It was called Eucharist, which means thanksgiving. [1345, 1360]

Rather than give up the celebration of the Eucharist, early Christians were willing to face martyrdom. [2473]

From a very early time, Holy Communion was taken from the community celebration to the homes of those who were sick and dying, and were thus unable to be present at the Eucharistic celebration. [1379]

Over the centuries the Church has developed special devotions to Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. Two ways this is done as Catholic communities are Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and the Corpus Christi procession. [1378-80]

### ***C. Celebration of the Eucharist***

The bishop or priest presides at the Eucharist. [1142, 1411, 1552]

The Eucharist (The Mass) is one single celebration with two main parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. [1346-47]

- In the Liturgy of the Word, God speaks to us through the Scriptures from the Old and New Testaments, which are proclaimed, preached and heard as God's Living Word. The Liturgy of the Word concludes with prayers of intercession for all people. [79, 1190, 1103, 1154-55, 1348-49]
- In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, bread and wine are presented, a prayer of thanksgiving is said and through the prayer of consecration the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus and are shared in Holy Communion. [1346]

In the presentation of the bread and wine, we offer ourselves along with these gifts. A collection for those in need is also appropriate at this time. [1350-51]

The prayer of thanksgiving and consecration at the heart of the celebration is called the Eucharistic Prayer. In it the Church:

- Prays a great thanksgiving for God’s work of creation, redemption and sanctification; [1352, 1359-61]
- Asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit on the bread and wine; [1104-07, 1353]
- Remembers Jesus’ Last Supper when the priest speaks Jesus’ own words over the bread and wine and they become the Body and Blood of Christ (transubstantiation); [1353]
- Recalls the passion, resurrection and future glorious return of Christ; [1103, 1354, 1362-64]
- Offers prayers for various members of the Christian community. [1354]

The communion rite begins with the Lord’s Prayer. It is followed by the sign of peace and by the breaking of the “bread of heaven.” In Holy Communion the faithful receive the Body and Blood of Christ who gave himself “for the life of the world” (John 6:51). [1355, 2770]

### ***D. Celebrating the Eucharist Throughout the Liturgical Year***

Sunday is the principal day on which the faithful gather to celebrate the Eucharist (The Mass). Every Sunday the Church celebrates the paschal mystery, that is, the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. On Saturday evening we begin the vigil for Sunday. [1067-68, 1166-67, 1193, 2177]

Over the course of the liturgical year, we celebrate the whole mystery of Christ: [1163, 1165, 1171]

- During Advent we prepare for his coming at Christmas and his coming again at the end of time. During the Christmas season we rejoice at his birth as did Mary, Joseph, the angels, shepherds and the magi. [524, 525, 1095, 1171]
- During Lent we prepare by prayer and penance to celebrate the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection and to renew our Baptismal promises at Easter. We celebrate the great joy of Easter for fifty days, ending with the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. [540, 1095, 1438]
- During the rest of the year, referred to as Ordinary Time because we call each Sunday by an ordinal number (second, third, etc.), we learn more about the life of Christ and our calling to be his followers.

The heart of our liturgical year is the Paschal or Easter Triduum, which begins on Holy Thursday and comes to a joyful conclusion on Easter Sunday. The light of the resurrection fills the whole year with its radiance. [1168-69]

### ***E. Effects of the Eucharist***

- The Eucharist unites the Church as one with Christ and one another. [1108, 1391, 1396, 1398, 1416]
- It strengthens us for living the Christian life and renews and increases the life of grace begun in us in Baptism. [1392]
- It commits us to the poor. [1397]
- It cleanses and preserves us from sin. [1393-95]
- It fills us with hope of eternal life. [1402, 1407]

## ***F. Living the Sacrament of the Eucharist***

Catholics must worship at Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. According to Church law, Catholics are to receive the Eucharist at least once a year during the Easter season (Can.920). Since in order to receive Holy Communion we have to be in a state of grace, we must receive the Sacrament of Penance, if necessary. [1384, 1385, 1388, 1389, 2180-83]

The Eucharistic Liturgy reminds us that we are united with God and with one another because of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nourished by the Eucharist, we work to live justly and at peace with one another, to assist the poor, and to witness the abiding love of Christ for us and for the world. [1068, 1109, 1344, 1396, 1398]

### **PRAYER EXPERIENCES**

In consultation with your parish director or coordinator of religious education, school principal and/or parish clergy, plan to offer the following group experiences:

Visit your parish church and spend some quiet time in the presence of Jesus who is present in the Eucharist reserved in the tabernacle.

Arrange for Eucharistic Adoration (Holy Hour) during session time and have the young people pray to Jesus who is present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Encourage the young people to participate in the solemn celebration of the Easter Triduum in their parishes, which begins with the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper.

## **V. PENANCE**

### ***A. Introduction***

When we do not live up to the demands of God's call to holiness, God does not abandon us. Instead, God calls us to conversion, that is, a change of heart. [1402-21, 1846]

The forgiveness of sins was an integral part of Jesus' ministry (Luke 5:24-25). [525, 1441, 1443]

Jesus gave to the apostles the power to forgive sins (Matthew 16:19, John 20:22-23). This same power is extended to all ordained priests today. [981, 983, 1442, 1444]

Penance is that sacrament of healing by which we receive God's merciful forgiveness for our personal sins and are reconciled with God, the Christian community, ourselves and all creation. [1422, 1440, 1469]

With each reception of the sacrament of Penance we receive the grace to more faithfully live our baptismal call to holiness. [1425, 1446]

Throughout our lives, as we become aware of our sins, the sacrament of Penance is always available to us for healing and reconciliation. [1442, 1848]

## ***B. History***

Baptism was the primary sacrament for the forgiveness of sins in the early Church. It remains the first and principal sacrament of forgiveness of sins today. [977-980]

In the early Church, when those already baptized sinned seriously, Penance gave them the opportunity to return to their baptismal covenant, fully restoring their relationship with God and with the community. Penance was rarely offered. In some places a person might receive Penance once in a lifetime. [1446-47]

Penitents confessed their sins to a bishop or priest, were assigned strenuous acts of repentance that were public and took a long time to perform. They were received back into the community with absolution. [1447]

During the seventh century, Irish missionaries introduced to continental Europe the practice of “private penance.” It was based on the experience of monks to whom people came for spiritual counsel. [1447]

The penitents confessed their sins, were given absolution and then performed a penance afterwards. Because the penances were lighter and did not have to be performed publicly, this practice led to a more frequent use of the sacrament of Penance. [1447]

The present Rite of Penance, which was revised after the Second Vatican Council, retains the order of confession, absolution and penance. It seeks, as well, to restore the public aspect of the sacrament by providing a rite to be celebrated in the gathered community. The revised rite also includes the reading of Sacred Scripture. [1447-48]

## ***C. Celebration of Penance***

We prepare to celebrate the sacrament of Penance by calling to mind our sins in an examination of conscience. Often we are helped in this by reviewing our lives in light of the Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments. [1454]

A bishop or priest is the minister of the sacrament of Penance. He is a sign and an instrument of God’s merciful love for the sinner. Only priests who have received from the authority of the diocesan bishop the faculty of absolving sins can forgive in the name of Christ. However, if someone is in danger of death, any validly ordained priest can forgive that person’s sins. [1461-62, 1465-66]

After the Word of God is proclaimed, we confess our sins and express sorrow for having committed them (Act of Contrition). [1451, 1455-56]

*My God, I am sorry for my sins with my whole heart.  
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,  
I have sinned against you, whom I should love above all things.  
I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more,  
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.  
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.  
In his name, my God, have mercy.*

We rededicate ourselves to live anew our baptismal life. As a sign of our conversion of heart, we accept the penance that the bishop or priest gives us. [1459-60]

The bishop or priest prays the following words to absolve us from our sins:

*God the Father of mercies,  
through the death and resurrection of his Son,  
has reconciled the world to himself  
and sent the Holy Spirit among us  
for the forgiveness of sins;  
through the ministry of the church  
may God give you pardon and peace,  
and I absolve you from your sins  
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. [1449]*

There are three forms of the Rite of Penance or Reconciliation. The most frequently used are the (1) *Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents* and the (2) *Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution*. [See the outlines provided at the end of this section.]

The third form which is rarely used, and then only when the diocesan bishop judges that the necessary conditions are present (that is, in a time of grave necessity, for example, when there are many penitents and not enough confessors available to hear individual confessions properly). It is called the *Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution*. [1480, 1482-83]

Every Catholic guilty of mortal sin must receive the sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion. Frequent reception of the sacrament is helpful for spiritual growth however, even if one is guilty only of venial sins. [1457-58, 2042]

In Penance, our confessor can help us to look honestly at our lives, and can give us advice to help us grow closer to God. [1466]

The priest (or bishop) is bound by the “Seal of Confession.” He may never reveal to anyone the sins confessed to him. [1467]

#### ***D. Effects of Penance***

Baptism establishes a relationship between God and each one of us, as well as a relationship to one another in the Church. When we sin, we either break that relationship (mortal sin) or weaken it (venial sin). [1213, 1849-50, 1854-55]

Repentance that arises from faith and love of God above all else is perfect contrition. [1452]

When we receive the sacrament of Penance, our sins are forgiven and our relationship with God and with the entire Church is fully renewed. [1468-69]

We are also strengthened to avoid sin and the people, places and things which might lead us to sin (temptations). [For further information, see *Grade Eight: Morality, section III, F. and G.*] [1468]

#### ***E. Living the Sacrament of Penance***

There are many forms of penance in daily life that cultivate and express the conversion of heart that comes from God. Some of these are:

- Fasting, prayer, and almsgiving;
- Works of mercy, justice and reconciliation;
- Examination of conscience and revision of life;
- Worship and devotion;
- Observing the seasons and days of penance in the liturgical year;
- Acceptance of suffering in imitation of Christ, and enduring persecution for the sake of what is right. [1428, 1434-39]

When we are reconciled to God and to the Christian community, we are better able to spread peace and reconciliation to the world. [1469]

### ***Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents***

- Reception of the penitent (Sign of the Cross, greeting, prayer);
- Reading of the Word of God (may be done in preparation);
- Confession of sins and acceptance of penance;
- Prayer of the penitent (Act of Contrition) and absolution;
- Proclamation of the praise of God and dismissal.

### ***Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution***

- Introductory rites (hymn, greeting, opening prayer);
- Celebration of the Word of God;
- Homily;
- General confessions of sins (e.g. “I confess to almighty God ...,” followed by a litany and the Lord’s Prayer);
- Individual confession and absolution;
- Proclamation of praise for God’s mercy;
- Concluding prayer of thanksgiving;
- Concluding rite (blessing and dismissal).



## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Encourage the youth to reflect prayerfully each day on how they have lived or failed to live as Christians that very day. Introduce them to the Daily Examen practiced by St. Ignatius:

- Recall that you are in the presence of a God who loves you.
- Thank God for all the gifts you have received.
- Be aware of how the Holy Spirit has aided in your actions this day.
- Examine how you have lived (positively and negatively) this day.
- Ask for forgiveness, hope, and courage as you move toward tomorrow.

Pray the Act of Contrition with the young people:

*My God, I am sorry for my sins with my whole heart.  
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,  
I have sinned against you, whom I should love above all things.  
I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more,  
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.  
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.  
In his name, my God, have mercy.*

## VI. ANOINTING OF THE SICK

### A. Introduction

Illness is one of the most difficult trials in human life. In experiencing serious illness, we become aware of our limitations and powerlessness and we glimpse death. Often illness provokes a search for God and for that which is truly essential in life. [1500-01]

In the midst of illness and suffering, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is a sign of Christ's compassion. Through this sacrament, which may be received more than once, Christ continues to touch us in order to heal us in the most fundamental way: by sharing with us his victory over sin and death. [1503-04]

Anointing of the Sick is the sacrament in which the priest anoints with oil the seriously ill or the aged, so that through the power of Jesus they may be comforted and restored to health in spirit, and sometimes also in body. [1520, 1526]

### B. History

In the Gospels we see Jesus cure those who were ill. When he sent his apostles out two by two, they "preached repentance ... and they anointed with oil many who were sick, and cured them." (Mark 6:12-13)

The practice of anointing the sick was continued in the early Church. In his epistle, James says: “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the Church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, they will be forgiven.” (James 5:14-15) [1509-10]

St. Hippolytus, a bishop and martyr who lived in the late second and early third centuries, tells of the bishop consecrating the oil “that it may give ... health to those who use it.” Today, the Oil of the Sick, along with the Sacred Chrism and the Oil of the Catechumens, is consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass that takes place each year during Holy Week.

In later centuries, this anointing became known as the sacrament of “extreme unction,” and was conferred on those who were dying. [1512]

The Second Vatican Council, however, reaffirmed that this sacrament is not only for those who are at the point of death. The Council restored its use to any who are sick or aged. [1513-14]

### ***C. Celebration of the Anointing of the Sick***

When people become seriously ill, or are in danger of death from sickness, old age, or an accident, it is most appropriate that they receive this sacrament. [1514-15, 1528-29]

It is especially desirable that the person be conscious and able to participate in the celebration of this sacrament. However, when there is danger of death, even if the person is unconscious, a priest should be summoned to anoint the sick. [1516]

The minister of the sacrament is a priest or bishop. [1516, 1530]

The Liturgy of the Word that accompanies the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is very important. It awakens our faith and opens our hearts to ask for the strength of the Spirit. [1518]

The essential signs of the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick are:

- The laying on of hands;
- The prayer of the priest: *Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.*
- And the anointing with the oil of the sick of the forehead and hands of the sick person with the Sign of the Cross. [1519, 1531]

By the sacred anointing and the prayer of the priest, the whole Church commends those who are ill or aged to the suffering and glorified Jesus, asking that he may lighten their suffering and save them from their sins. [1499]

The sacrament is a liturgical and communal celebration, whether it takes place at home, in the hospital, or at church, with one sick person or several. It is very appropriate to celebrate this sacrament within the celebration of the Eucharist. [1517]

## D. *Effects of the Anointing of the Sick*

- **Gift of the Holy Spirit:** Through this sacrament, a person receives grace from the Holy Spirit and is strengthened spiritually, and sometimes physically. Those receiving this sacrament are forgiven their venial sins and their mortal sins as well, if they are truly sorry for them but are unable to confess them. [1520]
- **Union with the Passion of Christ:** Strengthened by the grace of the Spirit, those who are sick, “contribute to the good of the people of God by freely uniting themselves to the passion and death of Christ.” (*Lumen Gentium*, #11) [1499, 1521-22]
- **Grace for the Whole Church:** The sick and the aged have an important role to play in the community. Through their sufferings, accepted in faith, they participate in the redemptive suffering of Christ. They complete “what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church.” (Colossians 1:24) [1508, 1522-22]
- **A Preparation for the Final Journey:** Anointing of the Sick completes the holy anointings of the Christian life that began with Baptism and strengthens us for the end of our earthly life. When a person nears death, the Eucharist given is called “viaticum,” which means Christ accompanies that person on the journey. [1523-25]

## E. *Living the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick*

When we ourselves are seriously ill, we ask for the Sacrament of the Sick and receive it with openness and faith. As members of the Christian community, we also have a responsibility to pray for the sick and the aged, to care for them and to see that they have an opportunity to receive this sacrament whenever they need it. [1503, 1509, 1516]

By treasuring life when it is most vulnerable, we show our conviction that human life is a sacred gift from God. [2258]

### PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Proclaim one of the following Scripture passages to the group:
  - Mark 6:53-56 (The Healings at Gennesaret)
  - Acts 3:1-10 (Cure of a Crippled Beggar)
- Remind the young people that Jesus still heals today. Tell them the story of St. Bernadette and Our Lady of Lourdes.
- As Jesus did in Scripture, we, as a Church, pray for the sick in the General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful) at Mass.
- Invite the young people to suggest names of sick people they know and pray for them.
- Conclude by praying the following from the *Order for the Blessing of the Sick*:

*Lord, our God, who watch over your creatures with unfailing care, keep us in the safe embrace of your love. With your strong right hand raise up your servants and give them the strength of your own power. Minister to them and heal their illnesses, so that they may have from you the help they long for. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## VII. MATRIMONY

### *A. Introduction*

Matrimony is the sacrament by which a baptized man and a baptized woman freely enter into a permanent, loving, monogamous and life-giving covenant of fidelity with each other. Thus they are united in the intimate community of life and love as husband and wife. [1601, 1646]

The mutual love of man and woman, rooted in creation, is good, very good, in the eyes of the Creator (Genesis 2:24). Sin has disrupted the original order of creation, however, including the relationships between men and women. Jesus, by coming to restore the original order of creation, gives to men and women the grace to live Marriage within the reign of God. [1603-04, 1615]

By their nature, Marriage and conjugal love are oriented both to the good of the couple and to bringing children into the world. [1601, 1660]

### *B. History*

Jesus taught that the bond of Marriage is unbreakable (Matthew 19:5-6). This quality of being unbroken is called indissolubility. It means that the Marriage bond lasts until the death of either the husband or the wife. [1639-40, 1644, 1646]

St. Paul compares the relationship between husband and wife to that which exists between Christ and the Church. Marriage is an image of Christ's love for his people. This is what the Apostle Paul makes clear when he says: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her," adding at once: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church." (Ephesians 5:32-33) [1616]

Over the centuries, the Church grew in its understanding of the sacredness of Marriage. In the Middle Ages, it began to include Marriage in its list of the sacraments.

Later, in the sixteenth century, as a response to the teachings of various Protestant reformers, the Council of Trent reaffirmed the sacramentality and indissolubility of Marriage.

For many centuries, the legal aspect of Marriage was emphasized. In our own day, however the Second Vatican Council has underlined the covenantal aspect of Marriage. [1601, 1612]

While a covenant includes all the elements of a contract, the term covenant emphasizes the loving relationship between the two parties involved. [1612-13]

Today, two authorities sanction the union of Marriage: the Church and the State. For various reasons, the civil authority may grant to a couple a civil divorce. Such a divorce is only a civil dissolution of a Marriage and does not break the bond of the sacrament of Matrimony. [1650-51]

For serious reasons, the Church can declare certain Marriage contracts null and void. The official statement by which the Church declares a Marriage null and void is properly called a Declaration of Nullity, but is usually referred to as an "Annulment." A declaration of nullity indicates that, in fact, there never was a sacramental Marriage. [1629]

*(Divorce and other serious family problems are frequent occurrences in our times. Sensitivity to these realities needs to be maintained when teaching this sacrament.)*

### **C. Celebration of Matrimony**

The essential sign of the sacrament of Matrimony is the public exchange of consent between the man and woman. They make a commitment to be faithful to each other as husband and wife for life. [1626-28]

The man and woman are themselves the ministers of the sacrament of Matrimony. The official witness of the Church is a priest or a deacon. Two other witnesses are also required. [1623, 1630]

### **D. Effects of Matrimony**

Through the sacrament of Matrimony, a husband and wife become signs in and to the world of God's steadfast love for us. [1604, 1617, 1640, 1647]

In the sacrament, the man and woman receive the graces necessary to help them in all aspects of their married life, including raising their children as faithful Christians. Spouses help one another to attain holiness through the grace of Marriage. [1641-42]

### **E. Living the Sacrament of Matrimony**

Like the other sacraments, Marriage has a community dimension. The husband and wife give witness to the faithful love of God. They give this witness:

- To each other
- To their children
- To the community

The community of faith gives witness and support to married couples as well. [1604, 1617, 1640, 1647]

Strengthened by the sacrament of Matrimony, the husband and wife are the first to communicate the faith to their children. [1656-57]

As part of living the sacrament of Matrimony, the husband and wife strive to create a home which reflects God's love for us. This love is shown by willingness to accept children lovingly from God, the care of members of the family for one another, and their hospitality toward others. For this reason, the family has been called "the domestic Church." [1655-57, 1666]

With other people of good will, married couples strive to promote laws and structures in society that will support the family, protect the proper role of parents, and ensure that the needs of families will be met. [2207-11]

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Read St. Paul's exhortation on love found in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

Have the young people reflect on the sacrament of Matrimony by reading *The Nuptial Blessing* from *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*:

*O God, who by your mighty power created all things out of nothing, and, when you had set in place the beginnings of the universe, formed man and woman in your own image, making the woman an inseparable helpmate to the man, that they might be no longer two, but one flesh, and taught that what you were pleased to make one must never be divided;*

*O God, who consecrated the bond of Marriage by so great a mystery that in the wedding covenant you foreshadowed the Sacrament of Christ and his Church;*

*O God, by whom woman is joined to man and the companionship they had in the beginning is endowed with the one blessing not forfeited by original sin nor washed away by the flood.*

*Look now with favor on these your servants, joined together in Marriage, who ask to be strengthened by your blessing. Send down on them the grace of the Holy Spirit and pour your love into their hearts, that they may remain faithful in the Marriage covenant.*

*May the grace of love and peace abide in your daughter, and let her always follow the example of those holy women whose praises are sung in the Scriptures.*

*May her husband entrust his heart to her, so that, acknowledging her as his equal and his joint heir to the life of grace, he may show her due honor and cherish her always with the love that Christ has for his Church.*

*And now, Lord, we implore you: may these your servants hold fast to the faith and keep your commandments; made one in the flesh, may they be blameless in all they do; and with the strength that comes from the Gospel, may they bear true witness to Christ before all; may they be blessed with children, and prove themselves virtuous parents, who live to see their children's children.*

*And grant that, reaching at last together the fullness of years for which they hope, they may come to the life of the blessed in the Kingdom of Heaven. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Give the young people time to reflect upon the meaning of this prayer and how the sacrament of Matrimony strengthens the couple to face the challenges of today.

## VIII. HOLY ORDERS

### A. Introduction

Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues in the Church until the end of time. It is the sacrament of apostolic ministry, through which Christ continues to shepherd his people. [874-79, 1536, 1591]

Following ancient tradition and the example of Jesus, who chose men to be his apostles, the Church confers Holy Orders only upon men. [1577-78]

Holy Orders today constitute the following: the episcopate (bishops), the presbyterate (priests), and the diaconate (deacons). [1536, 1593]

There is one priesthood of Christ. Through Baptism, all the faithful participate in Christ's priesthood through the priesthood of all believers. Bishops and priests, however, also take part in what is called the ministerial priesthood. The ministerial priesthood of bishops and priests serves the priesthood of all believers. [1546-47, 1591-92]

Bishops receive the fullness of Holy Orders. [1557, 1594]

- Theirs is the chief office in the Church, because they are the direct successors of the apostles. [1555-56]
- Each bishop who has a responsibility for a particular diocese serves as Christ's vicar in that diocese. He is also concerned to promote the welfare of the universal Church. [1560]
- Each bishop has a special relationship with all other bishops (collegiality) and to the Pope, who guards the unity of the whole Church. [1559]
- The Eucharist celebrated by the bishop, with the local Church gathered around him, is an expression of the whole Church and a significant image of the Church's identity. [1561]

Priests are co-workers with the bishop in carrying out the apostolic mission entrusted to them by Christ. [1562, 1595]

- In each local assembly of the Church, they represent the bishop. They depend on the bishop, have a relationship of trust with him, and promise to obey him. [1567]
- They are consecrated to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful and celebrate the worship of God. [1564]
- In the Eucharistic assembly of the faithful, they exercise their sacred office in its highest degree. They unite the offerings of the faithful to Christ and make present Christ's unique sacrifice on the cross. [1566]
- All priests are part of one brotherhood because of the sacrament of Holy Orders. They also are united with one another in a special way within a diocese. [1568]

Deacons are ordained to help and serve bishops, priests and the faithful. They are ordained to service, not to the priesthood. [1554, 1569, 1596]

- Deacons, like Christ, make themselves servants of all. [1570]
- Deacons are ministers ordained for tasks of service of the Church; they do not receive the ministerial priesthood, but ordination confers on them important functions in the ministry of the word, divine worship, pastoral governance, and the service of charity, tasks which they must carry out under the pastoral authority of their bishop. [1570, 1596]
- There are two ways of being a deacon: as a transitional deacon, during a period of service before being ordained a priest, or as a permanent deacon. Both single and married men may be ordained as permanent deacons. [1571]

## ***B. History***

During his life on earth, Jesus called the apostles to follow him and share in his ministry (Mark 3:13-14). After his death and resurrection, the apostles continued Jesus' ministry. [858]

The young Church community grew, and it became necessary to empower others to help minister to the People of God (1 Timothy 4:14). As time passed, in order to shepherd the growing church community and to ensure the integrity of its teachings, the roles of bishop, priest and deacon became clearer. [861-62]

St. Peter was chosen by Christ, from among the apostles, to guide the universal Church (Matthew 16:15-18). The pope, the bishop of Rome, is the successor of St. Peter and, therefore, the leader of the entire Catholic Church. [880-82]

In carrying on the Church's tradition, the bishops shared their ministry with others in a rite which became known as "Ordination." This rite included prayers, anointing, and the laying on of hands. [1538]

### ***C. Celebration of Holy Orders***

A bishop is the minister of the sacrament of Holy Orders. [1576]

Ordination should take place, preferably, on a Sunday, in the cathedral, during the celebration of the Eucharist, with as many of the faithful as possible taking part in the celebration. [1572]

The essential signs of the sacrament are:

- The laying on of hands
- The prayer of consecration [1573-74]

There is a special prayer of consecration for each of the orders: diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate. [1537-38, 1541-43]

### ***D. Effects of Holy Orders***

The person who is ordained enters into a new relationship with Christ and with the Church, and deepens his baptismal commitment. Because of Holy Orders, he participates in the priestly, prophetic, and pastoral mission of Christ in a distinctive way. [1586-89]

Like Baptism and Confirmation, the sacrament of Holy Orders imprints a permanent character, or mark, on the soul of the person receiving it. That person makes a lifetime commitment to serve the community according to the particular responsibilities of his order as bishop, priest or deacon. [1581-84]

### ***E. Living the Sacrament of Holy Orders***

Those who are ordained to the priesthood in the Latin Rite live a life of celibacy for the sake of the kingdom. [1579-80]

All deacons and priests make a solemn promise of obedience to the bishop of the diocese (the Ordinary) and his successors. [1567]

Those who receive Holy Orders are committed to a life of service to the Church. [1547]

They are also committed to a life of prayer, which includes the daily praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, in union with the entire Church. [1174-76]



## PRAYER EXPERIENCES

Lead the young people in prayer for vocations to the priesthood and diaconate, reflecting upon the Solemn Blessing at the End of Mass for the Ordination of Priests:

*May God, who founded the Church and guides her still, protect you constantly with his grace, that you may faithfully discharge the duties of the Priesthood.*

*May he make you servants and witnesses in the world to divine charity and truth and faithful ministers of reconciliation.*

*And may he make you true shepherds to provide the living Bread and word of life to the faithful, that they may continue to grow in the unity of the Body of Christ.*

*Amen.*

Encourage the young people to pray by name for the bishops, priests, and deacons serving in their parishes.

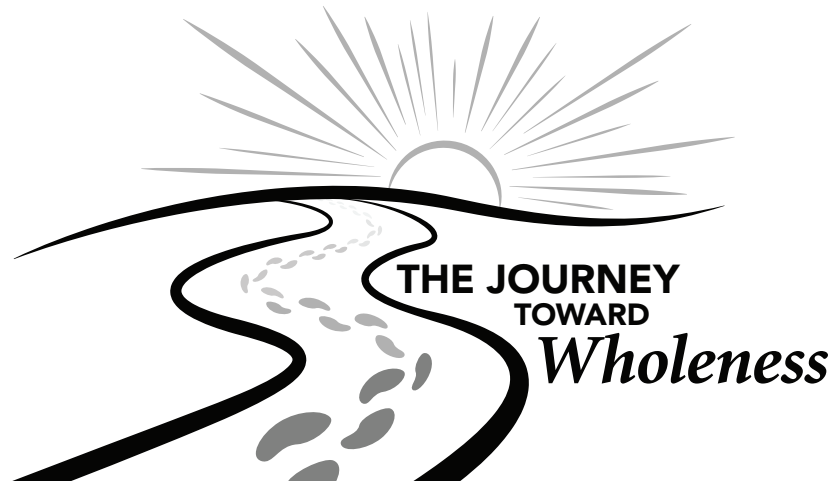
Invite your pastor or other parish priest or deacon to visit the group. Ask him to share his vocation story.



## GRADE SEVEN

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# HUMAN SEXUALITY



*Sexuality is a gift from God. It embraces psychological, spiritual and physical characteristics of men and women. We human beings need to integrate our sexuality into our total personality in order to develop into the persons God has called us to be.*

### OBJECTIVES

- To help the young adolescent appreciate the gift of sexuality.
- To assist the young adolescent in developing correct and positive attitudes concerning sexuality.
- To clarify for the young adolescent how the gift of sexuality can be misused.

## **I. SEXUALITY IN THE PLAN OF GOD**

### ***A. Gift from God***

Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. This means they are able to think and make choices. “Male and female, God created them.” (Genesis 1:27). God blessed them with equal dignity and enabled them to cooperate, in their sexual union, with his own creative power. [356-357, 369-70, 2331, 2334, 2393]

Human beings are the only creatures created to know and love the creator. They are willed into being by God for their own sake and called to share this knowledge and love with others.

Being male or female is a gift from God and is therefore good. Sexuality includes all that makes a person either male or female:

- Physical characteristics and responses
- Psychological characteristics
- Emotional responses
- Attitudes
- The need and capacity for intimacy
- The ability to participate in procreation

All of these things shape who we are in our relationships with God and influence our spiritual life. [369, 2332-33, 2335]

### ***B. Adolescence and the Lifelong Process of Becoming Mature Sexual Persons***

Becoming a mature sexual person is a lifelong process. Adolescence is a crucially important time in this process. [2342, 2344]

Learning to appreciate ourselves and others as whole persons (body, mind, and spirit) is essential to becoming a mature human being. [362-66, 2393]

The successful integration of sexuality within the human person – maintaining the integrity of the life and love within that person – is called chastity. The chaste person abstains from unlawful sexual activity (for example, sexual activity outside of marriage). All people are called to chastity. [2337-38, 2345, 2348]

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Read Genesis 1:27,31. Read paragraph 357 from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

- Ask the young people, “What does it mean to be made in God’s image?”
- Lead them in a prayer of gratitude for being created in God’s image.
- Conclude with the doxology:

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.*

## II. SEXUALITY AND THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Sexuality may be understood or misunderstood, esteemed or degraded, treated respectfully or abused. It is essential to develop correct attitudes toward sexuality. [386, 2331]

Knowing that we are made in the image and likeness of God is the basis of our respect for ourselves and others. Understanding this and esteeming our God-given dignity lead us to a proper attitude toward our sexuality. [355-57, 369-70, 2331]

A positive attitude toward sexuality includes respect for ourselves and others. It is:

- The realization that my body and the bodies of others are sacred; [364, 2258]
- The acceptance of my body and the bodies of others as good; [362]
- Care for and development of my whole self – body, mind and spirit – and the appreciation of others as whole persons; [362, 364]
- Recognition of my gifts and talents and those of others; [357-58]
- The ability to remain obedient to my conscience, even when this means withstanding the pressure of the crowd; and the refusal to tempt or pressure others to act against their conscience; [1777-78, 1784]
- Awareness of the immediate and long-range consequences of my actions in my own life and the lives of others; [1789]
- The understanding that no one has the right to use or abuse me, or use or abuse another. [377]<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> N.B. Sexual abuse is a grave moral evil. The young adolescent should know that he/she has the right to resist and refuse sexual advances from any source whatsoever. Any catechist/teacher who becomes aware of sexual abuse involving a young adolescent should follow Archdiocesan policy pertaining to the notification of the proper authorities.

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Show a photo, picture, or image of a baby developing in the womb.
- Pray Psalm 139:1-6, 13-16.
- Conclude with the following:

*Before I was born, your love surrounded me. (young people repeat)*

*You turned my nothingness into something. (young people repeat)*

*And you created me. (young people repeat)*

### III. PROPER USES OF THE GIFT OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

#### ***A. Sexual Feelings***

Sexual feelings remind us of the God-given potential of our sexuality. It is normal to have sexual feelings. [1768, 1770, 2333]

When we have sexual feelings, we may sometimes feel confused and ashamed. However, feelings in themselves are neither right nor wrong. [1767-68]

Our responsibility is to exercise self-control (temperance) in relation to our feelings, thoughts and desires, out of respect for God's gift and plan for us and others. [377, 2339, 2342]

A sense of modesty in dress and behavior shows respect for ourselves and others. [2522-24]

#### ***B. Relationships***

We read in Genesis that, "God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27) and, "The Lord God said: 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him.'" (Genesis 2:18) As we come to know people of the opposite sex, we also come to better understand the variety and diversity of human experience. [271-72, 369, 383]

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. All of our human relationships, whether with people of the same sex or with people of the opposite sex, are marked by our masculine and feminine characteristics. [369, 2332]

To be life-enriching, our relationships with others must be based on respect and trust. [1702, 1879]

#### ***C. Sexual Union in Marriage***

Sexual union within marriage is a sign of mutual self-surrender and total self-giving. [371, 1643, 2361]

Since self-surrender and self-giving form the very basis of love, sexual intercourse is often described as making love. Sexual union in marriage is noble and honorable, bringing joy and pleasure to the spouses. [2362]

Sexual intercourse, by its very nature, is intended to enable the man and woman to cooperate with God the Creator in bearing children. [372, 2366-67]

The total self-surrender and self-gift to another (of which sexual intercourse is the sign and expression), as well as the potential to create new life, require the public unconditional commitment of a man and woman to each other which only marriage can provide. Sacred Scripture, the teaching of the Church, and the experience of the faithful over the centuries have confirmed this to be true. [1643, 2337, 2361]

Today, the need for the public commitment of marriage is challenged by many. However, only the public and lifelong commitment of the man and woman can provide the context of security and trust which is necessary for such a total gift of self. This public commitment is intended to provide the stable community of love in which children can be raised in a family and educated in accord with their God-given human dignity. [1644, 1648, 1653, 2390-91]

The sexual union of husband and wife in marriage has a two-fold purpose: the unity and good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. [2361, 2369]

Sexual intercourse in marriage deepens and uniquely expresses the love between husband and wife by: [2360-62]

- Signifying and communicating their interdependence and their mutual trust, fidelity, and acceptance; [1646, 2365]
- Establishing their relationship as unique and permanent, the primary one among all the other human relationships in their lives; [1647, 2364]
- Assisting both of them to grow in holiness and in their ability to place the needs and desires of the other above their own. [1641]

In God's plan, it is through the act of sexual intercourse that human beings are created. The husband and wife, through their sexual union, cooperate with God in the act of creation. From the moment of conception, the child thus created is to be cherished and protected. Children are a public sign of the community of life and love which a man and woman establish in their marriage. [372, 1652, 2367]

In keeping with their responsibility to provide for the well-being of the children they bring into the world, parents may at times find it necessary to use natural methods of family planning which do not abuse the life-giving dimension of sexual intercourse. [2368, 2370]

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Have the young people read and prayerfully reflect upon the following Scripture passages:

And live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God. (Ephesians 5:2)

Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?” (Matthew 19:4-5)

The Nuptial Blessing from The Order of Celebrating Matrimony (see Prayer Experience, Grade 7, Sacrament of Matrimony).

## IV. ABUSES OF THE GIFT OF SEXUALITY

### *A. Lack of Respect for Ourselves and Others*

We human beings do not always use the gift of sexuality as God intended. Lack of respect for the dignity of the human person leads to wrong attitudes toward sexuality, which in turn lead to abuses of sexuality. Some abuses are:

- Using our sexuality to manipulate other people for our own purposes or pleasure
- Failing to treat others as persons, and, instead, treating them as objects
- Trying to pressure others into doing things that are against their conscience
- Disregarding the consequences of our actions
- Failing to respect ourselves as persons, and so allowing others to treat us as objects [357, 1849-50, 1865]

The most obvious examples of this lack of respect for the dignity of the human person are pornography, prostitution, human trafficking, and rape.

- Pornography, prostitution and human trafficking treat human beings as things and exploit their sexuality for pleasure, profit or power. Through these actions God’s gift of sexuality is completely debased. [2354-55]
- Rape is an act of violence that gravely injures the respect, the freedom and the physical and moral integrity to which every person has a right. It is always intrinsically evil. [2356]

Christians must do all they can to foster respect for the human person. This includes rejecting and combating:

- Everything that mocks or degrades women, [2334, 2336, 2352]
- Everything that mocks or degrades men, [2334, 2336, 2352]
- The abuse of children and youth, including sexual abuse, [2356, 2389]
- Any exploitation of sex for pleasure, profit or power. [2351-55]



## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Discuss what it means to manipulate and use other people.
- Have the young people give examples of ways in which someone “uses” another sexually and calls it “love.”
- Reflect on how we can treat one another with respect and dignity.
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.
- Pray with the group, asking the Holy Spirit to give them strength and courage when tempted to misuse the gift of their sexuality.

### ***B. Misuses of Sexual Activity***

God has given the human person a basic need and capacity to give and receive love. Our experience of love helps us develop a sense of self-esteem and reduces our sense of loneliness. [1609, 2331]

Sometimes people use sexual activity as a substitute for a basic communication of love or to make themselves feel important, powerful or needed. Sexual activity does not, however, solve underlying problems of loneliness and self-esteem. [1606-07, 2351]

When sexual activity is experienced outside of marriage, it is fundamentally dishonest, because we are implying by our actions that we have made a life commitment when, in fact, we have not. We find ourselves feeling manipulative or used, as lonely and as empty as ever. [2337, 2348, 2390]

Sexual activity outside of marriage is morally wrong, [2337-38, 2350, 2353]

- Premarital intercourse (fornication) denies the public commitment of total self-giving which is the purpose intended by God for sexual intercourse. It thus devalues the gift of one person to another and degrades them both. [2353, 2390-91]
- Extramarital intercourse (adultery) betrays the trust and fidelity which are necessary foundations for marriage. By disrupting the community of life and love which a marriage is, adultery also threatens the well-being of the children. [2364-65, 2380-81]
- The deliberate act of masturbation is morally wrong because it is not at the service of love and life according to the design of God. [2352, 2396]

*NB: At this age, masturbation can be a problem for some adolescents. The catechist/teacher should discuss it sensitively and cautiously. Although masturbation is objectively morally wrong, there are many factors which enter into the moral responsibility of adolescents in this regard. The Church recognizes that it is usually a symptom of more profound problems which cause sexual tension in the adolescent. Accordingly, the catechist/teacher should try to help the adolescents to move “toward integration, to be open and interested in others ... advancing toward self-giving love.” (CF: Educational Guidance in Human Love, #98-100).*

- Homosexual activity is another misuse of God’s gift. Human sexuality is designed by the Creator to enable a man and a woman to reproduce. Homosexual activity, that is, sexual activity between a man and another man, or between a woman and another woman, contradicts this reality. [2357-59, 2360]

When people are consistently attracted sexually to others of the same sex, we speak of them as having a same sex attraction. This same sex attraction, in itself, is not sinful, and the person having this attraction is to be respected and loved as a child of God. However, such an attraction can sometimes lead to homosexual activity. It is this activity which is a misuse of God's gift. [2357-59]

Although each of us has a particular masculine or feminine identity, individuals often have traits or interests that some in society attribute to the opposite sex. This does not mean that the person is homosexual.

- The use of artificial means of birth control is a misuse of the life-giving dimension of sexual intercourse. [2370-71]
- Abortion, the destruction of human life before birth, is the ultimate abuse of the life-giving dimension of sexuality. It is the ultimate societal evil. Contrary to cherishing and protecting the life which God has created through the sexual union of the couple, the father, the mother, or other parties decide to destroy that life. [2270-72]

### PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Tell briefly or read the story of David and Bathsheba (using 2 Samuel 11-12), noting David's temptation, his adultery, his attempt to cover up his sin by the murder of Bathsheba's husband, and the accusation by the prophet Nathan. Stress David's true sorrow for his sins and his obedience to his conscience once he recognized the wrong he had done.
- King David of the Old Testament loved God greatly, yet he sinned seriously. Invite the young people to reflect briefly on how they can love God, and yet may sin.
- Have them read together the following psalm, written by David to express his sorrow for his sin: Psalm 51:1-8, 12-14.

## V. WAYS TO FOSTER SEXUAL MATURITY

Recognizing and accepting our sexuality with its strengths and weaknesses are essential to our becoming mature people. [2332-33]

Accepting our sexuality means learning to control our sexual urges. Indeed, the process of maturing includes appropriately responding to our sexual urges according to human dignity and God's plan. [1954, 2339-40, 2342, 2344, 2520]

### *A. Resisting Temptations*

Learning to resist temptation is a necessary part of Christian living. Setting limits – that is, determining what we will do and what we will avoid doing – can help us to resist the temptations of inappropriate relationships and activities, drug and alcohol abuse and the pressure of media, music and those peers who encourage irresponsible behavior. [1809, 2339, 2342]

There are healthy ways to use our energy that will help us to avoid temptations. Some of these are to:

- Participate in sports and games,
- Develop one’s talents, hobbies and interests,
- Volunteer to help others in the community. [1803, 2848]

It is always prudent to avoid those situations which may lead us to sin. Yet, even with the best intentions, we will sometimes experience temptations to use the gift of our sexuality inappropriately. Such temptations are moments of opportunity for us to be faithful to what God has called us to be. [1806, 2343, 2863]

Jesus our Savior, who has compassion for us in our weakness, will always respond to those who turn to him in prayer. The regular practice of prayer, frequent recourse to the sacraments and Sacred Scripture, and cultivating moral and religious virtues [see Grade Seven: Personal Growth, Part I: The Human Person, section II] will strengthen us to choose what is right and to resist temptation when it occurs. [1784, 1802, 1811, 2340, 2849]

Sacred Scripture and the lives of the saints provide us with excellent examples of victory in the struggle against all temptation. The Virgin Mary, our Blessed Mother, is a shining example of purity and intercedes for us in time of need. [2030, 2520]

### ***B. Developing Friendships***

Fully integrated human beings need to develop a variety of relationships with family, friends and acquaintances. We need to form friendships with persons of both genders. [2347]

Some of these relationships will be closer and more enduring than others. During young adolescence, exclusive dating should be avoided. This limits one’s growth and opportunity for friendship with others. It can also lead to inappropriate relationships, greater intimacy, and temptations which young adolescents are not prepared to handle.

### ***C. Seeking Advice***

Adults can be positive role models for adolescents learning to form interpersonal relationships. Parents, catechists, teachers, priests, and religious, among others, can be of great assistance during this process of becoming sexually mature. From their own experience they are aware of the questions, fears, and struggles which young adolescents have and they can be of help by listening and offering advice and guidance. [2207, 2221-24]

### ***D. Responding to God’s Gift***

In God’s plan, our sexuality is intended to add to our joy and our fullness of life. [369, 384, 2331, 2333]

The Holy Spirit is present in each of us to guide, strengthen, comfort, and challenge us. [1265-66, 1742]

Through prayer we are empowered to become the fully mature person God has called us to be. [2013, 2340, 2345]

### ***E. Sexual Activity and Love***

Part of coming to maturity is the understanding of the relationship between sexual activity and love. [2332, 2346, 2360]

- Sexual activity is inappropriate for the young adolescent. True love requires us to respect this fact. [2348-2350]
- To say “no” to sexual intercourse before marriage will not lessen genuine love, but will help that love to eventually blossom into the commitment of marriage. [2350, 2391]
- The love expressed in friendship is appropriate for the young adolescent and is a good preparation for the intimate sharing of life and love in marriage. [2347, 2350]

### **PRAYER EXPERIENCE**

- Ask the young people what a “temple” is. (A place that is holy because God dwells there.)
- Ask them the question that St. Paul asks in his first letter to the Corinthians 3:16: “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”
- Give them some minutes of quiet to reflect on the truth that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, are dwelling within their very body and this makes them a holy temple.
- Explain that the Sign of the Cross is an expression of our belief that the Trinity dwells within us. Then lead them in slowly making and saying the Sign of the Cross.