Reverend and Dear Fathers, Parish Life Collaborator, and Esteemed Catechetical Leaders,

It has been nearly twenty years since the Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety program was promulgated for use in our Catholic schools and parish religious education programs. This program is a tremendous help to catechists and parents in presenting the Church’s teaching about love, marriage and human sexuality and enables young people to make intelligent choices and decisions regarding their sexuality.

In the Diocese of Pittsburgh the Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety program has been the approved program for safe environment education for children, youth and their parents. It has been mandated for use in every parish program of religious education, Catholic school and youth ministry program. This program is fully integrated into the religious education curriculum of our schools and religious education programs in addition to providing specific lesson plans for students in grades 5 to 8, and a required parent meeting. Recently at the suggestion of the safe environment program auditors from the USCCB, we have made several additions to the Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety program, namely, a lesson plan on child safety to each of grades 5 through 8, and several specific lessons on child safety for grades Kindergarten through 4.

Additionally, after evaluating the program and receiving input from our catechetical leaders, we have put together information for conducting CVOL Parent Meetings. As you know, a meeting with parents must be held each year before the Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety program can be taught. Our hope is that this document will aid catechetical leaders in bringing parents on board with Catholic Church teaching regarding sexuality, so as to enable them to be more fully engaged in the education of their children, especially in this area. The revised program provides a wealth of resources that can be made available to all parents, including those who might not choose to come to the parent meeting. We need to continue our efforts to assist our parents in their responsibility as the primary educator of their children in the ways of faith.

Finally, we have updated the CVOL catechist section and student lessons for grades 5 through 8 in the area of technology use and language, and recent Church documents. We will be conducting in-services for all catechetical and pastoral leaders in the coming months as well as for our teachers and catechists. We need your diligence and leadership in making every effort possible to in-service your teachers and catechists on these revisions so that we can move forward implementing this program fully.

I want to thank Mrs. Judy Kirk, Mrs. Joyce Gillooly, Dr. Robert Paserba, Mr. Jeffrey Hirst and many other staff members of the Secretariat for Catholic Education for their diligent work in completing the revision and updating of this important program.

Your leadership and support in this important matter is appreciated. Together let us work with God’s grace to ensure that our young people will have a knowledge of God’s Truth and the ability to live a life in keeping with God’s plan for human love and chastity.

With every best wish and prayer, I remain,

Sincerely in Christ,

Reverend Kris D. Stubna, S.T.D.
Secretary for Catholic Education
# PARENT MEETING INFORMATION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes for Catechetical Leaders</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating Parents</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayers and Prayer Services</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icebreaker and Group Discussion</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Meeting Agenda</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of CVOL</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Materials</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuation of CVOL Themes (grades K-4)</td>
<td>VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Handouts</td>
<td>IX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Information for Parents</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for Catechetical Leaders</td>
<td>XI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES FOR CATECHETICAL LEADERS
IMPLEMENTATION MATERIALS FOR CATECHETICAL LEADERS

CVOL – THE PARENT MEETING

The Catholic Church has always taught, and our bishops have emphasized that parents hold the prime responsibility for faith formation of their children. Sometimes when parents hear these words a look of panic surfaces—they might not feel confident in their ability to teach the faith or they might think they themselves don’t know enough about the Catholic faith. And sadly, many parents don't know what the Church teaches especially regarding love and sexuality. The good news is we are here to help!

Your role as catechetical leader is to ensure parents that they are not alone in this endeavor and the Church is there to help them fulfill their responsibility. Whether they realize it or not they are constantly teaching their children every day the many things the Catholic Church stands for: love, kindness, moral values, respect for ourselves and others.

Parents want what is best for their children. The best way to teach a child anything is to live it yourself. All children learn from example--and parents are the best example. So, when it comes to matters of the faith, especially moral matters, parents must be the best example for their children. Sometimes that means taking a good look at themselves, their values, how they act and react to certain moral issues. And to remember that their children are constantly looking to them for love, direction and answers.

When it comes to the Church and sexuality, some parents will say, it is not the Church’s business to tell us what we should or shouldn't be doing. Today’s society goes against church teaching in many respects, but most certainly in matters of morality. Our children know this—they see it on television and in movies, hear it in the music they listen to, witness the lack of morality of Hollywood actors, and those in the music and sports industry—many of whom are their idols; they experience it on the internet, in the video games they play, on the school bus, in our schools, and at the mall. It is up to us, (catechetical leaders and parents), people who care enough, to guide and direct them in matters of the faith and morality.

With every action there are consequences—good and bad. Thank God, the Church is there to guide us and help us realize how important these moral issues are, especially where our children are concerned!
One of the goals of *Catholic Vision of Love* is to work as partners with parents to encourage students to live their lives in line with Gospel teaching. The circumstances of the times, the pervasiveness of the media, contradictions of the surrounding culture and the awkwardness of talking with young people often dominated by their peers, all serve to make the task of speaking about sexuality with one’s children very difficult at times. Parents have the **right to expect from the Church** the kind of help that will make this task possible. This help in no way attempts to replace the role of the parents, but rather is offered to support and enable parents to do this important task well. In view of this, it is **extremely important** that parents attend the CVOL Parent Meeting.

Parents should be informed about why it is important that they attend the CVOL Parent Meeting. Here are some points you can use to help them understand:

- The Church has good news to share about family, love and human sexuality. This teaching is firmly rooted in sacred scripture and has been constantly taught by the Church through the centuries.

- Clearly communicate that the CVOL program will be supportive in their parental role of helping their children understand that human sexuality is part of Gospel values.

- The goal of CVOL is to present Christ’s vision of love and sexuality, and to encourage all to live according to his teaching on love, marriage, the family, sexuality, and self-control.

- **The CVOL program offers their child a faith-filled and morally right context** out of which to make sense of all the issues connected with human sexuality, by helping them to understand the spiritual and moral dimensions of human life, to respect the beauty and dignity of sex, and to learn the way of self-discipline and purity.

- The CVOL program teaches their child that living as Christ taught is not just an ideal but can, with God’s grace, be a **reality** in their lives.

- Parents will receive important materials and information to help them with this delicate task. It is very important that you provide parents with the **Parent Handbook, Talking to Youth about Sexuality: A Parents’ Guide**. This booklet is part of the CVOL program and is for parents to use at their discretion with their child. It can be purchased through Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Company. (Note: This document is **not** to be used by the catechist to instruct children).
THE CATHOLIC

Vision of Love

Diocese of Pittsburgh

MOTIVATING PARENTS
CVOL – Parent Meeting

MOTIVATING PARENTS TO ATTEND

Parent meetings for the Catholic Vision of Love program are mandatory. The program cannot take place each year unless parents are made aware of its importance and understand their role in the faith formation of their children, especially regarding this sensitive topic. Getting parents to attend meetings is sometimes frustrating for catechetical leaders who are responsible for implementing the CVOL program. Catechetical leaders must make every effort to “make it happen” through careful planning. The best time for a CVOL meeting is early September before public schools and fall sports programs begin.

THE MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The announcement of the meeting should be positive, welcoming, informative, and written so that parents understand the purpose of the program and why it is important for them to attend. Add these facts to your letter:

- You have important information for them that will help them in parenting.
- You want parents to know that the information they will receive at the meeting is sure to help them in guiding their child in Catholic attitudes related to human sexuality.
- This is THE program for protection of children as required by the U.S. bishops’ committee on child safety.
- The program is designed for students in grades 5-8; all catechists involved in teaching CVOL must be certified to teach it.
- An overview of the lessons (curriculum outline - found in the Catechetical Leadership Manual) is enclosed and will be explained in detail at the parent meeting.
- This meeting is so important that it is not optional.
- They are expected to attend the meeting if they haven’t attended a previous CVOL meeting before.

It is always helpful if the “letter” comes with the pastor’s signature as well as your signature. This helps parents realize the importance of the meeting.

Be creative! Parent attendance should be promoted just as a person would market a fantastic, worthwhile product. In the world of advertising and marketing, products are marketed to show the benefits that would be gained if they purchased the product. We are told, and in some instances shown, what a difference a product would make in our life if we tried it. This same positive attitude should be conveyed when you announce a parent meeting for CVOL.
The announcement might be in letter or invitation form, a creative e-mail or post-card, and/or a poster displayed at your parish site. You might want to choose a symbol or icon for your invitation/poster that will be part of the CVOL materials so that each time you send information regarding CVOL, parents will recognize the symbol and associate it with the program. (See samples)

Include an agenda of the meeting along with your communication. Parents should have an idea of the order of the meeting—what handouts will be given—what resources they will receive.

The announcement should be timely—and mailed to parents either before registration of the regular program or included with registration information. Parent meetings should always be on the annual religious education calendar so parents can plan ahead. Meet with your pastor early enough to plan these and other important dates.

The content for this communication should come from the material in the Catholic Vision of Love Leadership Manual. Integrate this information with your message to explain what CVOL is and why it is important.

Remember to follow-up your initial announcement/communication with extra reminders. (See samples) Be sure to include the symbol on all correspondence. You might also want to:

- Make good use of the church bulletin to remind parents that the meeting is near—the message should be in the bulletin for at least two consecutive Sundays.
- Ask your pastor to add it to the Sunday Mass announcements.
- Include as much information as possible on the parish web site.
- Ask for space on the church bulletin board and post a large poster.
- Have office volunteers call parents and remind them of the meeting.
- Send a reminder postcard a few days before the meeting. A 2” x 4” shipping label is an ideal size for use on the postcard. Print the icon on the label and include short important information: When...Where...Time...
- Plan to hold a follow-up meeting for parents who absolutely cannot attend. This might take place during the regular hours of your parish religious education or Catholic school program. (See sample letter)
Dear Parents,

Education in the Catholic Vision of Love and human sexuality is education that is an integral part of Catholic faith and love. This is one of the foundational statements of the Diocese of Pittsburgh found in the guidelines and curriculum for teaching the content on the CATHOLIC vision of love, family, and human sexuality.

This program begins in grade five and continues through grade eight. The concepts of CVOL are not taught in isolation, but are correlated with topics from the grade level textbook. This is NOT a program in sex education—biological or anatomical issues are not discussed. CVOL IS a program that puts forth the Church’s teaching on chastity. In compliance with national and diocesan policies, lessons on child personal safety are also included.

Those teaching CVOL are catechists who have been properly certified by taking the special diocesan course in Catholic Christian Morality. No one can teach this program without the certification.

Parents who have a child in grade five are expected to attend this introductory session. Parents who have children in grades 6 through 8 and who have not attended this initial presentation are also required to attend. Parents who are unable to attend this particular session will be expected to attend a make-up session on a date arranged with the Catechetical Administrator and Pastor.

If you have any questions, feel free to call (add phone number) or e-mail (add email address)

Thank you for your cooperation regarding this very important meeting. Please keep all of our students in prayer as they continue to grow in their faith life, especially in these crucial and challenging years of their faith formation as Catholic Christians.

In Christ,

Pastor                                      Catechetical Administrator
The Catholic Vision of Love is a program that teaches the Church’s view on family, love, and human sexuality. The Parent Meeting you will attend will help you teach your child about chastity, modesty, and personal safety giving them a solid foundation and positive attitude toward their own sexuality.

This program will help you understand and explain to your child that human sexuality is a valued good and a gift from God. It will help you give your child the Gospel values that reflect Jesus’ teaching on love and sexuality.
Dear Parents,

We missed you at our Parent introduction meeting of the diocesan chastity education and child personal safety program, Catholic Vision of Love. Since we have not heard from you, we felt that this letter would be the best avenue of communication for setting a day and time when we could meet for a make-up session.

As was stated in the previous announcements about the meeting, this program is directed at families. It is the Church’s way of helping you fulfill your responsibilities in teaching your child about the Catholic teaching on love, family and human sexuality.

The materials that will be of help to you are here in the religious education office including the very informative booklet, Talking to Youth About Sexuality—A Parent’s Guide. Although this make-up session may not be as long as the initial meeting, you will have an opportunity to review what was covered and also to ask questions.

Please phone as soon as possible for your day and time. Thank you for all that you do in guiding and building a strong faith commitment in your child.

In Christ,

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Pastor                                    Catechetical Administrator
FOLLOW-UP REMINDERS

PARISH BULLETIN (for at least 3 weeks)

CVOL PARENT MEETING—for parents of children in Grade 5 and parents of children in grades 6, 7, 8 who have never attended before. The CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE Meeting will be held on (date) at (time) in (place). At least one parent or responsible adult representing the child must attend.

MASS ANNOUNCEMENTS (one or two Sundays before the meeting)

1. This is a reminder for all parents of students in the 5th grade that the Catholic Vision of Love parent meeting will take place next (day of week) in (place) from (time).

2. The Catholic Vision of Love Parent Meeting will be held (day of week) in (place) from (time). All parents of children in 5th grade are expected to attend. Parents of children in grades 6-8 who have not attended a CVOL introductory meeting in the past are also expected to attend.

POSTCARD REMINDER with Shipping Label— (send the week of the meeting)

DON’T FORGET!!! Grade 5 Parent Meeting

(Day), (Date):

Time: Place:

REMINDER:
The introductory parent session about the diocesan program: Catholic Vision of Love (CVOL), which is part of the curriculum for grades 5-6-7-8, is next week. At least one parent or responsible adult must attend this session. Materials explaining the program will be given to you to use with your child.
HOSPITALITY

It is amazing what can happen over a cup of coffee. Your CVOL meeting should have a pleasant atmosphere—a spacious, bright and cheerful room with chairs and tables. You might offer babysitting service for parents of young children—ask for volunteer helpers from your high school or youth ministry program. Make sure the children’s room is clean and safe and stocked with books and a few toys and games. Bring out the coffee, tea, hot chocolate, cold drinks. For morning meetings offer pastries and doughnuts—for evening meetings offer various snacks. This kind of hospitality says “Be comfortable, stay awhile.” Don’t let the opportunity for socialization escape. This could be a high point for bringing parents together who don’t know each other or for parents who have no involvement or experience with the Catholic Church. Use the meeting as a way to evangelize parents. Be sure to have certificates of attendance ready to hand out at the end of your meeting.

SAMPLE

CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE

THE CATHOLIC Vision of Love
Diocese of Pittsburgh

DIOCESAN PROGRAM ON THE CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE, FAMILY, AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

(Church name here)

(date)

_______________________________  __________________ ________________
Pastor       Catechetical Administrator
CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE

THE CATHOLIC Vision of Love
Diocese of Pittsburgh

DIOCESAN PROGRAM
ON THE CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE,
FAMILY, AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

_________________________________  _______________________  
Pastor       Catechetical Administrator

_____________________________  ______________________
Pastor                             Catechetical Administrator
FEEDBACK ABOUT THE MEETING

What worked?  What didn’t?  These are two questions you should ask yourself after the CVOL meeting.  Then focus on what you might do differently.  What could have been added based on the parent responses to the materials?  What could have been added based on the questions the parents asked?

Another type of feedback would be a short questionnaire for parents (see sample below).  Perhaps ask a few questions that might help improve the content of the meeting.  Decide the kind of feedback you need in order to help improve the meeting.  What questions would you ask that will tell you to repeat something?  There are resources that will help you with this part of the meeting.  Check with the Diocesan Learning Media Center for additional resources (412)456-3120).

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

1.  Did you find the information helpful?   Yes____   No____
   Explain your response:

2.  Was the explanation of the CVOL material clear?   Yes____   No____

3.  Would you be interested in a follow-up parent session once the program has begun?   Yes____   No____

4.  What questions do you have that were not answered in the session:

5.  What concerns do you have that you did not have a chance to express at the meeting:

Volunteers are always welcome!  Your input is important!
BEGINNING THE MEETING

PRAYER

Prayer is essential for any meeting, but especially for the CVOL Parent Meeting. If you set the stage for this meeting—parents will follow, so begin with a prayer or prayer service that is meaningful and well planned. Planning prayer in this way requires thought to the theme, perhaps use of a prayer table with a crucifix, Bible, candles, flowers or greens, music, and parent involvement. The prayer can be simple such as the one below. Additional prayers are found in the prayer section of this document.

**PRAYER FOR ONE'S CHILDREN**

*My God, source of all life,*
*thank you, for the blessing you gave me*
*when you entrusted me with children.*
*I have tried faithfully*
*to live up to your expectations.*

*It is not for me but for them that I pray.*
*Care for them in your great kindness.*
*Wherever I am lacking,*
*supply the blessing of your protection.*

*You see the sincere love of my caring,*
*small as it is, compared with what they need and deserve.*

*In the name of this love,*
*keep them, along the path of life, free from evil*
*and make them always strong, happy and loving.*

*My children, without distinction,*
*are a living part of my being.*
*My God, I want them to be better than I am.*

*In the midst of the rich opportunities of life,*
*may they count on your powerful help.*

*Every day, as I pray for my needs, my God,*
*I am actually praying for them.*

*In total confidence I place them*
*under your divine parental care.*

*Amen.*
A sample prayer service with music might be as follows:

CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE PARENT MEETING
PRAYER SERVICE

Opening Song: We Have Been Told (vs. 1-2)

Leader: In the name of the Father, the creator of all that is and will be. In the name of
the Son who saved us and gave us everlasting life. In the name of the Holy
Spirit who guides and sustains us.

All: Amen.

Leader: Lord God, you are here in our midst—let us recall that we are always in your
presence.

All: Give us an awareness of your presence and the depth of your love. In times of
trouble and challenges, especially as a parent, keep us strong, able to feel your
love and care as you guide us through any difficulty.

Reader: A reading from the Letter to the Ephesians (5:1-4, 8-11, 15-16)

So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love; as Christ loved us and handed
himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma. Live as children of light,
for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is
pleasing to the Lord. Watch carefully then how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise,
making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil. The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection/Comments on the Reading

Petitions:
Reader 1: Father, you teach us the meaning of love so that we may imitate you in
loving others.
All: Guide families that they may learn from you the demands of parenting with
unconditional love.

Reader 2: Lord Jesus, your death and resurrection have given us the gift of life
everlasting.
All: Guide us in our commitment to live our faith life so that one day we will share this
everlasting life with you.

Reader 3: Holy Spirit, as you guide and sanctify our Church, guide and sanctify us who became
Church through our Baptism.
All: Guide us as we fulfill Christ’s Mission to make our Church visible to all.

Leader: Let us pray in the words our Savior gave us: Our Father…..

Closing Song: We Have Been Told (vs. 3)
SIGN OF THE CROSS

Leader: Father, you call us together to become prayerfully aware of our task. You invite us to work with you in helping our children grow in joy to Christian maturity. We come together to ask your blessing on this most important task, for we are convinced that only with your help can we fulfill our mission.

All: Father, teach us to be parents of compassion, of gentleness, and of sensitivity. We come to you as open, empty, receptive vessels asking that you speak in us your Word, so that, through us, Christ may be given life in others. Quiet in us all longings that would hinder such openness, and as you draw us to yourself, draw from us nourishment for the children under our care. This we ask in your name. Amen.

READING: Ephesians 1:3-17

Leader: A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians

Left: Praised be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavens!

Right: God chose us in him before the work began, to be holy and blameless in his sight, to be full of love.

Left: He likewise predestined us through Christ Jesus to be his adopted son—such was his will and pleasure—that all might praise the divine favor he has bestowed on us in his beloved.

Right: It is in Christ and through his blood that we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven, so immeasurable generous is God’s favor to us.

Left: God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ, to be carried out in the fullness of time.

Right: To bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ’s headship.

Over →
Left: In him we were chosen. For in the decree of God, who administers everything according to his will and counsel, we were predestined to praise his glory by being first to hope in Christ.

Right: In him you too were chosen. When you heard the glad tidings of salvation, the word of truth and believed in it, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit who had been promised.

Left: He is the pledge of our inheritance, the first payment against the full redemption of a people God has his own to praise his glory.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Lord God, we begin this meeting—knowing in truth that first it is you who calls. We ask that you be here with us, to speak your Word in ways we might understand. Give us the blessings of gentleness and sensitivity as we approach this most important task. We seek your grace in hope and trust. Amen.
All glory and praise to you, O God.
Your abundant love is revealed to us
in the love of man and woman
through which you establish the human family.
Your only Son was born of Mary
and was raised by her and Joseph the carpenter.
Grant that every household may be a place
where your children grow in wisdom and grace.
Make of all humanity one family to praise you
in Christ Jesus, our Lord and brother.    Amen.

From the lips of children and babes,
the praise of all creation rises to you,
O God of compassion and mercy.
Give us the mind of Jesus
that we too may bless all children
in our strong yet gentle care for them.
Set before us day after day
the gracious love of the Mother of God
that we may nurture and protect these little ones.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.    Amen.

God calls us to be his children. We are family.
For one another, we are love and trial, strength and trouble.
Even when far apart, we belong to one another and,
in various ways, we remember and pray for one another.
We give thanks to God
and ask his blessing on us, his family.
O God, you have created us in love and saved us in mercy,
You have established the family
and willed that it should become
a sign of Christ's love for his Church.
Enable us who are joined by love
to support one another by our fervor of spirit
and devotion to prayer.
Make us responsive to the needs of others
and witnesses to the faith in all we say and do.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.    Amen.
FOR ALL GOD’S CHILDREN

We pray for children who sneak popsicles before supper,
who erase holes in math workbooks,
who can never find their shoes.

And we pray for those who stare at photographers behind barbed wire,
who can’t bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers,
who never “counted potatoes,”
who are born in places we wouldn’t be caught dead,
who never go to the circus,
who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,
who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.

And we pray for those who never get dessert,
who have no safety blanket to drag behind them,
who watch their parents watch them die,
who can’t find any bread to steal,
who don’t have any rooms to clean up,
whose pictures aren’t on anybody’s dresser,
whose monsters are real.

We pray for children who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
who throw tantrums in the grocery store & pick at their food
who like ghost stories,
who shove dirty clothes under the bed and never rinse out the tub,
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don’t like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
who squirm in church or temple & scream in the phone,
who tears we sometimes laugh at and
whose smiles can make us cry.

And we pray for those whose nightmares come in the daytime,
who will eat anything,
who have never seen a dentist,
who aren’t spoiled by anybody,
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
who live and move, but have no being.
We pray for children who want to be carried and for those who must,
for those we never give up on and for those who don’t get a second chance.
For those we smother…and for those who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.
A PARENT’S PRAYER

I am not perfect, Father, but I am yours.

Sometimes I am not what I should be,

but I do claim your salvation and your grace.

Help me to become the parent I am meant to be:

loving, understanding, patient,

always leading my child to you!

I ask you to make me this day, and everyday,

more and more into the image

of your Son, Jesus Christ.

I stand amazed

that you would have such mercy on me

to forgive me time and time again!

Thank you for the immeasurable depth of your love.

May I tirelessly serve you

through the refreshing strength of your Holy Spirit

and proclaim your promise with conviction and love.
A BLESSING PRAYER

May God, the Creator of heaven and earth
fill your mind with the light of eternal wisdom.

May his Son, Jesus anoint your lips with the truth of his word.

May the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Gifts,
bless your heart with love and peace.

May the God of simplicity be with you,
opening you to a clear vision
of what is real and true,
may your dealings with others
be marked by the honesty of simplicity.

May the God of patience be with you,
waiting for you with outstretched arms,
letting you find out for yourself,
and may his patience with others be your patience.

May the God of peace be with you,
stilling the heart that hammers with fear
or doubt or confusion;
and may your peace, the warm mantle of your peace,
cover those who are troubled or anxious.

And may the God of joy be with you,
thrilling you with divine nearness,
filling your throat to ringing, singing exultation!
A SIMPLE MORNING PRAYER 
FOR PARENTS

Be with me Lord and hold me.
Let me see your presence in all that I encounter this day.

Be with me Lord and protect me.
Let me feel the safety of your love.

Be with me Lord and guide me.
Let me understand the wisdom that you have placed in every item of creation.

Be with me Lord and challenge me.
Let me struggle with the difficulties of life.

Be with me Lord and comfort me.
Let me know your peace and mercy in every breath I take.

Be with me Lord and hold me.
Let me see your presence in all that I encounter this day.

Amen.
ICEBREAKER
AND
GROUP DISCUSSIONS
CVOL PARENT MEETING

ICEBREAKER

An important aspect of hosting a meeting is making those who attend feel comfortable with others in the group. One way to accomplish this is to open the meeting with an icebreaker. Below is a sample icebreaker you might want to consider.

Getting to Know You

Have the people form two circles—one inside the other. You need the same number of people in the outer circle as in the inner circle. Have them face the person (like a partner). If there is an uneven number of persons, they can double up (2 to 1).

Tell the participants they are to introduce themselves and tell something about themselves to the person they are facing. Then the person they are facing will do the same. Let the group know they have 30 seconds or 15 seconds each to get acquainted.

A bell will ring and the people in the inner circle are to step to the right, the outer circle stands still. Repeat the process—spend 15 seconds each getting acquainted.

Examples: Say your name, what you did for fun during the summer, what your favorite food is etc…

When the inner circle has gone around and met everyone, each person should be with his/her starting partner.

Items needed for this exercise:
- A Bell loud enough to be heard above the chatter
- A watch or clock with a second hand
- A time keeper

Time: Give at least 30 seconds then ring the bell. (time will depend on the group size).

To get participants situated in the circles quickly—have them count off 1,2,1,2… (1’s form the inner circle first, then have 2’s form the outer circle).
Involve parents in your CVOL meeting using discussion questions for either a small or large group. Group discussion exercises are a good way to lead into your introduction of CVOL. If you choose one of these exercises be sure to take into consideration the particular circumstances of the participants (single parent, divorced parent, guardian etc.) attending your meeting.

SMALL GROUP SHARING

- Ask parents to turn to another couple or parent and discuss the following questions or if seated at tables, make this a group exercise.
- If done in a group, assign one person to take notes and be prepared to share comments with the larger group.
- Have a notebook and pen at each table.
- Have printed copies of the questions so they can discuss them in order (see parent handout section).
- Allow about 15 minutes for the discussion. Remind them of the time.
- Ask for shared comments from each group – about 10 minutes.

CVOL PARENT MEETING
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Discuss some ways in which your child is learning about sexuality in today’s society.
- Name one positive thing you would tell your child about living a chaste life (why your child should refrain from sexual activity outside of marriage).
- What are some ways in which the church can help you with this task?
CVOL PARENT MEETING
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

❖ Discuss some ways in which your child is learning about sexuality in today’s society.

❖ Name one positive thing you would tell your child about living a chaste life (why your child should refrain from sexual activity outside of marriage).

❖ What are some ways in which the church can help you with this task?
CVOL PARENT MEETING

GROUP DISCUSSION

LARGE GROUP SHARING

Catechetical Leader Page (Note: this exercise might also be done with the presenter asking some of the questions of the larger group)

Step 1: Have the participants turn to the person or persons next to them (small groups of 3 or 4) to discuss the first question.

Step 2: Share their answers to question 2 with the larger group.

Step 3: Complete question 3 and share with the larger group. Be sure to have pens/pencils available.

1. Think about how your parents (or parent figure) first informed you about sexuality. Share what you remember with the person(s) next to you. (groups of 3 or 4).

2. Given today’s society, would you take the same approach with your child? Why or why not? Share your answers with the larger group.

3. Answer the question in each column below. Share with the larger group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CVOL PARENT MEETING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. List some things you think your child might be learning from society about sexuality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CVOL PARENT MEETING—LARGE GROUP
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about how your parents (or parent figure) first informed you about sexuality. Share what you remember with the person(s) next to you – (groups of 3 or 4).

2. Given today’s society, would you take the same approach with your child? Why or why not? Share your answers with the larger group.

3. Answer the question in each column below. Share with the larger group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CVOL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. List some things you think your child might be learning from society about sexuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What positive messages do you want your child to know about sexuality?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. As your child’s first and most important teacher regarding sexuality, how can your faith help you with this parenting task?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE
PARENT MEETING
AGENDA

1. OPENING: Prayer…..Welcome

2. GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE

3. EXPLANATION OF CVOL
   ♦ History of the Program – CVOL Explained
   ♦ Goals of CVOL
   ♦ Foundational Principles – Relation to Safe Environment
   ♦ Parent’s Role (what parent’s can do – Grades 5-8) (see handout)

4. OVERVIEW OF MATERIALS
   ♦ Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parent’s Guide
   ♦ Curriculum Outline Grades 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
   ♦ Parent Information on Child Safety
   ♦ Safe Environment Lesson Plans Grades 5 – 8

5. CONTINUATION OF CVOL THEMES FOR PARENTS (Gr. K – 4)
   ♦ Diocesan Safe Environment Policy
   ♦ CVOL – the program for safe environment
   ♦ Foundational Principles Content for Grades K – 4
   ♦ What Can Parents Do – Grades K - 4
   ♦ Overview of CVOL materials for children (K – 4)

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS
   ♦ Silver Ring Thing
   ♦ Wonder of Wonders (WOW) Program
   ♦ Recommended Internet Sites, Print Materials, Videos
   ♦ Resources on Child Abuse
EXPLANATION OF CVOL
INTRODUCTION – Necessity of Catholic Vision of Love

We know that in our society there are many mixed messages about love and sexuality. Our children are getting all kinds of messages that don’t speak positively about love. TV producers no longer wait until “prime time” to air what we know is controversial, sometimes erotic behavior and insinuations on their programs (especially reality shows), as well as suggestive commercials. Parents are not even aware of the messages out there—sometimes they are very subtle and are part of today’s life styles.

Young people experience these subtle messages in the music they listen to, the videos (MTV, You Tube, Internet) they watch, the video games they play, the movies (with inappropriate age ratings) they attend and of course, the television shows and commercials they view or are exposed to.

In all of these things, the truths about sexuality are never mentioned. Young people are entitled to learn the real truth about sexuality from a positive Catholic perspective. In some cases, this may be the only time they hear the truth about God’s plan for them. Catholic Vision of Love (CVOL) offers a positive approach to sexuality.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO COMMUNICATE

♦ Catholic Vision of Love (CVOL) is a specific faith-based program directed at families that reflects the Catholic view of morality and human sexuality.

♦ The program assists parents in how to discuss, teach, and model Catholic Christian morality and how to develop and practice the virtues for a healthy understanding of human sexuality.

♦ The program is NOT a sex education program—it is NOT an exhaustive education in sexuality. Intimate and personal learning of sexuality is expected to be given by parents.

♦ The curriculum for CVOL presents human sexuality as a good gift from God to human beings as part of creation. CVOL is integrated into the regular school and parish religious education curriculum for Kindergarten through Grade 8.

♦ CVOL is integrated into the diocesan Safe Environment program by nature of its principles, goals and objectives and has been approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Safe Environment. Specific lessons for grades K-8 have been added. CVOL is THE program for child safety (mandated by the USCCB) that our diocese has in place and is approved by the Catholic bishops’ committee.

♦ Catechists must be certified by the diocese in order to teach CVOL. They receive this certification through the catechetical courses and training they are required to take in order to teach in our programs.
HISTORY OF CVOL

♦ The concept of Catholic Vision of Love began in the mid 1980’s under the direction of Cardinal Bevilacqua (then bishop of Pittsburgh).

♦ AIDS was becoming more prevalent and many in the Church were asking questions:

1. Are we as Church doing enough to instill in our children the importance of a positive approach to sexuality?

2. Are we doing what is necessary to ensure that they are receiving proper instruction about sexuality according to Church teaching?

3. How is catechesis of sexuality occurring and should we be doing more?

♦ Young people in public schools were receiving some detailed anatomical classes—the why’s and how’s of sexuality. They were hearing such statements as “How does this make you feel?” “What is your opinion regarding sex?”

♦ Young people were not getting accurate information—values oriented education was on its way out of our public schools. Health clinics were appearing within our high schools.

♦ Young people certainly were not getting anything from a moral perspective or a values clarification point of view.

♦ The conclusion in the mid 80’s was that our young people were not hearing the truths from a Catholic perspective and many were misinformed (as were their parents) about major issues such as:

1. abortion  
2. birth control  
3. pre-marital sex  
4. safe-sex  
5. chastity & modesty  
6. homosexuality  
7. sexually transmitted diseases  
8. self-control

♦ A CVOL Committee comprised of parents, priests, directors of religious education, principals, youth ministers, catechists, teachers diocesan personnel, medical doctors, and marriage experts was formed.

♦ Under the direction of then Bishop Wuerl, this committee was charged with a two-fold task:
1. To devise ways in which we can help parents with their responsibility as first and best educators of the faith especially on this important subject.
2. To design a classroom curriculum for grades 5-8 in order to teach young people about the TRUTHS of the faith regarding love and sexuality.

♦ Keeping in mind the request from parents who served on the committee, and our promise to them regarding their role as primary educators of the faith, Catholic Vision is NOT anatomical or biological. It is catechetical, teaching exactly what the Catholic Church teaches regarding sexuality. Our role is to support parents in the task of educating their children—not to conduct sex-education classes.

♦ The committee then designed a series of General Guidelines containing 8 basic principles, and developed a curriculum for grades 5-8.

♦ The program was piloted in 8 parishes the first year, with great success. It has been in effect in all of our schools and parish programs since 1995, and is part of the regular religion curriculum.

♦ Once the program reached a satisfactory degree of development, Cardinal Wuerl (then bishop of Pittsburgh) took it to Rome where two separate audiences of the Vatican reviewed the program. CVOL received a very positive review.

♦ The program was submitted to the USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) Ad Hoc Committee to oversee the use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

♦ The Ad Hoc Committee found CVOL to be in conformity with the teachings of the Catholic Church and a great help to parents so they can better address this sensitive issue with their children.

♦ In conclusion, the program answered the questions and addressed the concerns of parents.

♦ So, it was out of necessity that we approached the topic of sexuality and developed the program. Our young people have a right to the truth—this program offers a positive approach to sexuality.

♦ In light of recent diocesan and national policies on child safety, the Catholic Vision of Love program received acknowledgment from the USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) as the program in place in the Diocese of Pittsburgh for the safety of children.

♦ At the suggestion of the auditors from the USCCB, we have added lessons to grades 5 through 8, as well as, lessons on child safety for grades Kindergarten through 4.
GOALS OF CVOL – Catechetical Leader Notes
(Distribute handout from the parent section of these materials for parents)

Christ is the Teacher of life. He came that we might “have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10)

This program aims at assisting all to lead richer and happier lives by following Christ’s guidance in walking in the ways of love. He is the best teacher about such basic realities. We learn from Him about the kind of love that can endure in this world, about the home and family, about the preciousness of life and of chaste and human love.

The principle goal of CVOL is to present Christ’s vision of love and sexuality, and to encourage all to live according to the Good News of His teaching on love, marriage, the family, sexuality, and the freedom of self-possession.

More specific goals are:

♦ To show that God is the Creator of all our being—our sexuality is God’s gift—which affects everything about us and serves a good and wonderful purpose of God’s plan for us.

♦ To stress the importance of every person and the equality of all persons. We inherit from God, a profound dignity and are called to friendship with Christ. We should never compromise or live beneath that dignity.

♦ To help build self-esteem by teaching that every person is precious to God and through God’s graces is capable of living a good moral life. Our children are not mere animals incapable of thinking and determining right from wrong! Humans do not act on instinct alone.

♦ To guide young people toward a fuller understanding of what Christ teaches in his Church about sexual morality and self-possession and to help them shape their consciences to live in His ways.

♦ To lead young people to understand all of the dimensions of our human lives, spiritual, moral, psychological, physical, emotional, sexual, intellectual, and social.

♦ To help guard young people from exploitation by providing a clear understanding of what they need to know regarding sexuality, in order to safely live in today’s society.

♦ To support, motivate and help young people to follow Christ’s vision of love.
Catholic Vision of Love

CVOL Goals

Christ is the Teacher of life. He came that we might “have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10)

This program aims at assisting all to lead richer and happier lives by following Christ’s guidance in walking in the ways of love. He is the best teacher about such basic realities. We learn from Him about the kind of love that can endure in this world, about the home and family, about the preciousness of life and of chaste and human love.

The principal goal of The Catholic Vision of Love is:

To present Christ’s vision of love and sexuality, and to encourage all to live according to the Good News of His teaching on love, Marriage, the family, sexuality, and the freedom of self-possession.

All the other goals and objectives follow from this principal goal. These more specific goals are:

- To show that God is the Creator of all our being: that our sexuality is God’s rich gift, which affects all that we are and serves precious human goods, when it is understood in the light of Christ’s gracious teaching.

- To stress the sublime importance of every person and the essential equality of all persons; and to show that each one is called to greatness of heart and to friendship with the Lord.

- To teach the profound Christian motives for reverence for every person, and for a healthy self-esteem; to make clear how precious every person is to God, and how by God’s grace each is capable of living the excellent ways Christ makes known.

- To guide all toward a fuller understanding of what Christ teaches in His Church about sexual morality and self-possession, and to assist them in seeing how good Christ’s teaching is, and how important it is to shape our consciences to live in His way.

- To lead all toward understanding and acceptance of all the dimensions of our human lives: spiritual, moral, psychological, physical, emotional, sexual, intellectual, and social.

- To seek to guard all from exploitation by providing a clear understanding of everything one needs to know about sexuality to be secure and fortified to live in this contemporary world.

- To support all persons in their efforts to acquire the skill, insights, and virtues they need to have confidence and peace in leading chaste lives.

- To motivate and assist all to follow Christ’s vision of love, guarding all the good things God intended sexuality to serve, in lives enriched by heeding the commandments and beatitudes, and by doing the works of mercy.
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

EIGHT FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES – Catechetical Leader Notes

The Catholic Vision of Love Program is based on 8 Foundational Principles (use handout from parent section of these materials for parents). These foundational principles, along with the goals and objectives of CVOL are in line with the requirements issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Safe Environment.

(Walk parents through each principle)

1. Addresses the fact that we are not teaching anything new or unusual here. Sexuality is part of our Catholic faith and INSEPARABLE from gospel teachings and truths. Issues of sexuality are addressed in both the 6th and 9th Commandments—to ignore or downplay these important teachings would be the same as omitting these Commandments. Addressing the topic of sexuality appropriately is what is important.

2. The Church’s vision of love is very positive. Much like what society does, we don’t use scare tactics (statistics regarding STDs, pregnancy, etc.)—we don’t have to. Sexuality is seen in a positive light—as something good and sacred. God is part of our sexuality, sexuality is a gift from God. We are created good (in God’s image and likeness)—our sexuality is good.

3. CVOL meets negative issues such as diseases related to sexuality, head on. They are approached and presented from a positive, realistic and beautiful perspective.

4. Parents are the primary educators especially in this area. They have the unique role of broaching this subject with their child. We don’t infringe upon the rights of the parent/child relationship. We will do all we can to help and support parents in this role.

5. CVOL is part of the regular religion curriculum in our schools and parish religious education programs. It is part of the teaching of the 6th & 9th Commandments. No one can opt out of this program. Parents, keep in mind that we are here to help you, with your task of teaching this subject, NOT to take your place. Again, no anatomical or biological issues are discussed in this program.

We encourage catechists to work the CVOL program into the regular curriculum. There are other models (retreat, team teaching) that are very effective, especially with older children. Catechists must be trained in CVOL (which is now part of basic catechist certification) in order to teach our children. It is important that catechists teaching CVOL feel comfortable doing so.
6. Only those who agree with Church teachings can teach CVOL—a tough statement. But it is actually more compassionate than it is tough. We’ve made a strong commitment that anyone teaching young people needs to be on board with Church teachings. Kids can spot a phony—teachers must embrace the vision in this area. It is as much for the sake of the catechist as for the kids. How damaging is it for the catechist to be put in front of young people to teach this sensitive subject when they themselves doubt or don’t agree with what the Church teaches.

We’ve made a promise to parents that CVOL will be taught properly, with qualified teachers. Properly means no anatomical or biological issues are to be discussed. Catechists are to refer those particular questions or concern back to the parent or guardian.

7. The media has had an enormous influence on society. There’s almost an “anything goes” attitude among kids as well as some parents today. Many of these attitudes and practices are against Church teachings. Parents and other adults need to be educated and materials should be provided to them. In fact, the entire faith community should be informed and helped to understand basic Catholic moral principles so that they too can responsibly educate our young people. The parent handbook “Talking to Youth About Sexuality,” is an excellent source of information regarding what the Catholic Church teaches about moral issues.

8. The use/abuse of all forms of media is very much related to the topic of human love and sexuality. We need to use media wisely and with discretion. Our role is to sensitize young people and adults to the messages that are out there. And to help young and old alike to filter the good messages from the harmful messages they are receiving.

*Catholic Vision of Love* is an important part of Catholic teaching and is necessary in order for our young people (and all of us) to grow in their faith.
Catechetical Leader Notes

CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE
FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

1. Education in love and human sexuality is education in an integral part of Catholic faith and life. It is formation in ways of living that are inseparable from the Gospel. Education in human sexuality is inseparable from our overall faith education. This education is not only instructional but it is affectively and holistically oriented. Its purpose is to move a person to exercise a personal freedom that chooses ways of living that are consistent with the Gospel call. Thus its concern is to prepare students to have the ability to make intelligent choices regarding their sexuality, to help them integrate their attitudes toward sexuality with their philosophy of life, to enable them to acquire self-possession, and to exercise authentic freedom.

2. There are certain doctrinal and moral teachings of faith that underlie the Catholic Vision of Love program. These basic tenets illumine ways of living our personal lives and of shaping our love and affection in Christian ways. That is, the program emphasizes a positive vision of what human love and sexuality mean—a vision that flows from the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. These basic principles would include:

   a. Viewing the human person as made in the image of God. It is our masculinity and femininity that God has given us ways to imitate the personal goodness that is at the heart of the life of God.

   b. Seeing sexuality as God’s work. It is a tremendous God-given gift to be seen as something very good. Much of the joy and energy of human life flows from a recognition of the goodness of all dimensions of the being God has give us. This includes our sexuality.

   c. Understanding sexuality in the context of human fulfillment. By our very nature, we long for the good things we need to ensure happy and fully human lives. By our very nature, we seek to escape the loneliness of the human condition and find “enduring love”—a love that gives all of itself to another.

This sexuality becomes a “natural sacrament” or a visible sign of what lasting (enduring) love means and needs to be among human persons. All of our longing is indeed toward a richness we know that we cannot quite express. Thus it is God that we must first learn to love with all our heart. In learning to love God we learn to love one another.
3. There are indeed certain major problems that our program must face and treat effectively. These include AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the rise in teenage pregnancies, abortion, and a variety of promiscuous attitudes. Young people’s understanding of love and sexuality is dramatically shaped by a culture caught up in materialism, hedonism, unbelief, and even despair. However, while the Catholic Vision of Love program faces these contemporary issues, its primary focus is not one of avoiding certain grave moral evils, but one of positively guiding people toward living excellent lives in all that touches love, affectivity and personal relationships.

4. Sexual education is primarily the responsibility of the parents. Thus an education in love and sexuality will be effective only to the extent that parents cooperate. The aim of teachers is to assist parents—to help them communicate with their children in these matters. The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that such tasks are only effectively accomplished if the essential small units, in this case, families, are doing their tasks. The Catholic Vision of Love program is meant to cooperate with parents and not substitute for them. On the other hand, teaching is very critical in this area, it simply cannot be taken for granted that parents are capable of doing it on their own with no assistance from the Church. The program focuses a great deal on parental education and involvement.

5. The Catholic Vision of Love program is to be integrated with education in Catholic faith and life generally. Therefore it is designed to be integrated into the religion curriculum itself. Catholic Vision of Love is a total parish program, thus it will involve both Catholic school and parish programs of religious education.

6. Only those who can and do agree with Catholic teaching on love and sexuality can be permitted to teach in this program. There is a need for adequate catechist formation and training prior to beginning the actual teaching.

7. Education and materials should be provided for parents and other adults. This includes education for clergy who will be instrumental in the implementation of the Catholic Vision of Love program.

The media and contemporary pressures tend to press all toward attitudes and practices that are very much in contradiction to Christian principles and practice. The whole community should get a firmer grasp of basic Catholic moral principles if it is to communicate these effectively to its young members.

8. Education in the proper use of media is of primary importance.
IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS

The Catholic Church recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children. While others in the Church may assist them in providing a suitable sexual education for their children, the rights and duties of parents remain primary. The general principles to be heeded in this matter are spelled out in the Guidelines for education in human sexuality for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The instructions offered in the Catholic vision of Love by our school and parish catechetical programs are by no means intended to replace the work of parents. They are intended to assist the efforts of parents, and to support them, providing a certain social support to the words of parents.

Parental acceptance and cooperation is indispensable. What parents say to their children has a special force. Nothing can replace parents for many reasons. They have a privileged knowledge of each of their children; their words and their support can in no way be substituted for. Hence parents are to be fully aware of all that goes on in our classes. Much of our effort is aimed at helping parents grasp ways of sharing their own faith and their own responsible love with their children. In many matters, especially the more intimate and sensitive ones, parents should be the ones to speak to their children.
**CVOL – Grades 5-8**

**PARENT’S ROLE – WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?**

There are many things that you as parents can do to help your child understand the Catholic vision of human sexuality:

- Discuss sexuality at home when you know/sense they are ready. Does your child know:
  - That sexuality is a gift from God?
  - What sex is for in the divine plan of human life? (total/complete everlasting commitment & love and out of that love we become co-creators of human life with God)
  - That sexual love is both very good and wonderful but comes with great responsibility, and self-possession and self-discipline?
  - That they can control their emotions and any situation, though society tells them differently? WHY would you tell them anything other than that? DO you give them ways in which they can?

- Monitor the media they use (TV, movies, magazines, music, video games, the internet, texting, cell phone use).
  - Discuss your values and why it’s important that they follow your rules—you love and protect and care for them.
  - Tell them when you disapprove of what they are listening to, watching etc. That might not stop them, but they’ll hear your voice every time they listen to that song etc. That’s good parenting!
  - Remember, they are learning and being formed by the media in ways that are quite contrary to the teachings of Christ and the values that lead to a happy and satisfied life.
  - Remind them constantly, how important they are to you.

- Help your child to experience the goodness of modesty in dress, in speech, in attitude and action, in respecting their own bodies and in respecting themselves and others.
  - If they respect themselves, others will respect them.
  - Respecting ourselves and how we dress, the words we use, how we act and how we present ourselves to others demands respect from them! It works every time!

- Grow in your understanding of what the faith teaches and put into practice those convictions in your own lives.
  - The CVOL booklet for parents, “Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parents’ Guide,” will help. Use the booklet to learn what the Church teaches about sexuality and why. Then when you know your child is ready, teach them.
  - Children need to see that good people think and feel in ways that the faith teaches.
  - Your example is critical in helping your child know not only WHAT the Church teaches, but WHY it is taught.

---

*OVER ➔*
Help your child realize the foolishness and dangers of casual sex and trivializing the importance of sexuality.

→ Expose the dangers and lack in realism in what society tells us is “safe sex.”
→ Explain that this casual attitude to sex can only lead to problems and carries with it many dangers.
→ You can help your child realize and believe that chastity and abstinence make sense, and that it is possible for them to live the way Christ wants us to live.

Pray with your child at home, attend Mass together as a family, and encourage regular reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. If young people are to find insight and the courage to care about what Christ and His Church teaches concerning sexuality, they must witness it and be convinced that you believe.

REMEMBER!

⇒ Faith must be lived in your home.
⇒ Take seriously, your role in handing on to your child, what our faith teaches especially about human sexuality.
⇒ It is vital that your child is given a faith-filled and morally correct context out of which to make sense of all the issues connected with human sexuality.
⇒ No one needs to live beneath their dignity.
⇒ Don’t send your child out in the world accepting the casual attitude society allows.
⇒ Arm your child with the necessary moral values he/she will need to stand up to what we know is morally, emotionally, and physically harmful for them.

Working together, we can make great progress educating your child in the essential values of human life. In so doing, we are EMPOWERING him/her to make the right moral decisions and to embrace positive moral living.
OVERVIEW
OF MATERIALS
OVERVIEW OF MATERIALS

1. PARENT HANDBOOK

- The parent handbook, “Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parents’ Guide” is a necessary and vital part of the CVOL program and should be included in the parents packet of information. A great majority of parents do not know what the Church teaches regarding sexuality and other moral issues. In order for parents to address this sensitive subject with their children they must first be made aware of what the Church teaches and why.

- The handbook is for parents only. It is not to be used in the CVOL program. Parents will decide if and when to use the information from the handbook with their child.

- Many of today’s parents have “bought into” and some are living out, what society and Hollywood tells us about sexuality, “safe sex” contraceptive use, co-habitation, same-sex marriage, etc. They basically feel that it’s not the Church’s business to tell them what they should and shouldn’t be doing regarding sexuality. Today’s society goes against Church teaching in many respects, but most certainly in matters of morality. Sadly, so many are living beneath the dignity that God intended for them.

- Parents want what is best for their children. The best way to teach a child anything is to live it yourself. All children learn from example—and parents are the best example. So, when it comes to matters of the faith, especially moral matters, parents must be the best example for their children. Sometimes that means taking a good look at themselves, their values, how they act and react to certain moral issues. And to remember that their children are constantly looking to them for love, direction and answers.

- Parents determine the right time for their child to learn about human sexuality. But they must also be aware of what the child is learning in his/her school regarding human sexuality—it is their right to know. In most public schools, sexuality education begins around 4th grade, is usually taught within the science or health curriculum, and contains anatomical and biological information. Sex education classes are not taught from a Christian perspective and children are certainly not getting anything from a moral perspective or a values clarification point of view. All the more reason why parents need to talk to their children.

- The messages our young people receive through their music, video games, movies, television, and internet sites are not positive messages! They sanction sex and promiscuity outside of marriage; violence—especially against women; pornography—degrading women; extremely foul language—acceptable by today’s standards; immodest dress—now displayed in commercials during primetime television; and so on…
All of the above points hopefully will help parents to realize how crucial their role is! Education in human sexuality demands that our children know the “facts of life”—but even more importantly, it is vital that they are given a faith-filled and morally correct context out of which to make sense of all the issues connected with human sexuality. No one needs to live beneath their dignity.

The parent handbook, *Talking to Youth About Sexuality* will work with parents in giving their child this context, helping him or her to understand the spiritual and moral dimensions of human life; to respect the beauty and dignity of human sexuality; and to learn the way of self-discipline, purity, and chastity.

2. CURRICULUM OUTLINE

It is important to have the *Catholic Vision of Love* materials (binders of each grade level) on display at your parent meeting and to invite parents to review the lessons. Handouts for parents of the curriculum outline (grades 5 through 8) are included with these catechetical leader notes. *(See Appendix D Curriculum Outline—Grades 5 through 8).* Briefly walk parents through each grade level.

3. SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSONS – GRADES 5—8

In light of recent diocesan and national policies on child safety, the *Catholic Vision of Love* program received acknowledgment from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as the program in place in the Diocese of Pittsburgh for the safety of children. A lesson has been added for each of the grades (5—8) and are included at the end of the grade level in each binder.

*Philippians 4:8*

> Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure... if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8
Grade 5, Class 1: Self-respect –Acknowledging why you are so important

General aim

This lesson seeks to help the students realize how immensely important each one of them is, in truth and before God. It helps them see how important their lives are, and how important are the things that deeply affect their lives. In a special way, it helps them see the importance of their sexuality, and of responding to the gift of sexuality in the light of the Lord’s teaching, and in ways that respect how things really are.

Specific objectives

1. To help students realize personally—in light of faith and their experience—how very important each one of them is, and how important it is that they lead their lives wisely and well.
2. To recall the problems that arise for people who are wrongly persuaded that they are not worth much, and are not very much loved.
3. To help students realize that thinking and feeling wisely and rightly about sexuality is very important for them.
4. To help students realize that sexuality has important purposes. God created sexuality to serve the wonderful and lasting good things He wishes to bring to our lives.

Grade 5, Class 2: Understanding the changes we experience

General aim

To help the students to see that the many changes that come with adolescence should not be sources of anxiety, but are meant by God to be steps toward a richer fulfillment in life.

Specific objectives

1. To help students appreciate that the various stages of growth is a good thing, that the good things of younger years are meant to be fulfilled by better things as time advances.
2. To help students realize how many aspects there are to maturing. We are to grow not just physically (which we cannot help doing) but also emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually.
3. To share that in God’s plan everyone is special. Each one is different in a variety of ways, and that is good.
4. To make clear that it is all right to be different! We mature at different rates, and that is fine. Different people have different natural strengths and weaknesses; none of these make us unable to have great and good lives.
5. To show that sexuality is a gift from God, and that the physical growth that reveals our maleness and femaleness is a good thing.
Grade 5, Class 3: Friendship, love and life

General aim
This lesson seeks to help students understand what friendship is, and why it is so precious a gift. Friendship makes life much happier, and enables us to be better persons. The lesson seeks to explore the truest kind of friendship, and see why it lasts longer and is more rewarding than less perfect kinds of friendship. In a special way it treats romantic friendships, and what characterizes true and lasting friendships to serve life well.

Specific objectives
1. To understand the reasons why friendship is both so attractive and so important for our lives.
2. To be able to tell the difference between true friendships and less solid kinds of friendships.
3. To reflect on how Scripture praises true friendship, and why Christ wants to be a friend to each of us.
4. To think about a special kind of friendship, romantic friendships, and to understand why God wanted friendships like these to exist.
5. To understand how important it is that we have truthful, generous, and pure hearts in all our friendships.

Grade 5, Class 4: Christ in my home and in my life

General aim
This lesson speaks of the importance of the home. It talks about the ways in which Christ taught us to love the home, and encouraged us to make our homes happy places. Jesus meant homes to be schools of faith and love, places where our hearts learn about life from people who deeply love us. It recalls how Christ wants us all to have happy lives, by experiencing first the joy of being loved by generous parents, and the joy of loving those in our homes, and so learning the goodness of real love.

Specific objectives
1. To help students realize how important homes are; how glad we should be for the good things God wants us to find in our homes; how true it is that all of us must do all we can to make our homes places of generous love.
2. To recall the things Christ did to call homes to be faithful to what He wants them to be, and how much He wants each of our homes to be happy and good.
3. To show that even homes that are broken and have many trials, can be healed and helped by closeness to Christ.
4. To show that everything Jesus teaches us about sexuality is aimed at helping us learn the generous kind of love that can make homes and lives happy; impure acts are wrong because they undermine real love, and make homes suffer.
5. To urge students to thank God for their parents and their homes, and to pray that they will themselves have love generous enough to make their homes happier places.
GRADE 5, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Relationship Boundaries: Stranger danger, Respecting ourselves, Respecting our bodies
- Lesson Outline:
  1. Introduction and opening prayer
  2. Teaching on Friendship and Respect, focus on Relationship Boundaries
  3. Activity – Talking about boundaries using scenarios
  4. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic social teaching and the dignity of the human person
  5. Closing prayer
- Lesson Background: Human life is sacred.
  “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (CCC 56)

GRADE 6, CLASS 1: Vocation

General aim
This lesson seeks to strengthen in students a sense of vocation, a realization that their lives are important, that God has a great role for each of them to play in life. It seeks to show that reflection on what we are meant to be is important for the fulfillment and happiness of our lives.

Specific objectives
1. To understand again the general idea of having a vocation by reflecting on the vocation of Christ to be our Savior.
2. To help students to realize that each one of us, without exception, is important to God, and each is called to an important and special vocation by the Lord.
3. To show how it is that one comes to realize what his or her special vocation is.
4. To reflect on various kinds of vocations, and how God calls each person to a kind of vocation in an entirely distinctive way.
5. To point out how chastity is important for every kind of vocation.

GRADE 6, CLASS 2: Being responsible for our own lives

General aim
To help students understand the great gift of freedom, and to be able to tell the difference between “things happening to them” and “things they do.” It is always important for young people to realize that life is not just something that happens to them (though many things happen beyond our control). Life is most of all something we live, and the free actions that we do. Many people want to be good, but get discouraged, forgetting that Christ is strong even when they are not. Christ will help them to use their freedom well if they really want to take charge of their own lives, and not let the world dominate them.
Specific objectives

1. To help students realize that they are responsible for their own lives, and that it is a good thing for them that they are.
2. To help students see for themselves why the excuses we make for the bad things we do are often silly and irresponsible.
3. To help students realize that even though it is often very sad when bad things happen to us, doing bad things is really much worse.
4. To help students see that in the turmoil of the world, where impure thoughts and attitudes and acts can often seem impossible to escape, their lives are in their own hands. They have the freedom to live good and responsible lives. Christ will protect their freedom if they wish to guard it.
5. To help students realize, in a world that seems not to know what sin is, that doing things that are really bad not only offends God, but also makes us feel miserable and unhappy.

GRADE 6, CLASS 3: Life is worth living

General aim

This lesson had a very basic message. God made us to live! To live great lives! (See John 10:10.) He made us to live happily and well in this life we now have on earth, and so deserve to have an even better and richer life with Him and one another in eternal life. Our life now works best, and feels worth living, when we try earnestly to get things right and do things well. In special things, like sports and games, we see this clearly. Things go well when we put our whole hearts into them. And this is even more true of the big things of life. Life is dear to us when we realize what it is about, and try to live it well. Large things like love and sexuality will be blessings to us, if we understand them for what they really are, and follow the wise teaching of Christ.

Specific objectives

1. To help students see that all the things we do in life — like playing musical instruments, or taking part in sports — are much happier and dearer to us if we can do them well.
2. To help students understand that doing anything well — even cooking or using a computer — can be important and rewarding. But it is much more important to live life well — to know what it is really about, and to begin to live with style and great hearts. Of course it is true that not all of us can be great athletes, or great mathematicians. But Christ promises that anyone can live a great life, with the help of God’s grace, if they deeply want to, and come to Him for help.
3. To help students understand that some coaches and teachers — in sports and other skills — are better than others. In learning to live well, Christ is the best of all teachers. He is the Lord, and we are His disciples.
4. To help students understand the moral life as new life in the Spirit.
5. To see that love and sexuality are important parts of life. But they can be confusing, and sometimes they are badly taught. We need good teachers for such important things.
6. To understand that many people in today’s world try to teach us what sexuality is all about. But Christ the Lord is the best teacher of these things because He created them. He also knows us best, and cares about what we say and do. The teachers who teach us His ways are very important.
GRADE 6, CLASS 4: Learning how great love is

General aim

This lesson aims at helping the students understand the central message of Christ: that genuine love is the most important of all things. All our duties flow from the most important duty of loving God and of loving one another with generous love. And all our hope flows from love; only when we are willing to learn what true love is can we have happy homes, deep and lasting friendships, fairness to the weak and the poor, and greatness and joy.

Specific objectives

1. To explain why Christ is the best teacher of how great love is (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) and of how we learn to find honest love, in a world which so much wants honest love, but suffers because so many confuse real love with phony love.
2. To show that Jesus teaches us that generous love is necessary to save all the best things of the earth: homes and friendship, and every great and good thing our hearts long for.
3. To make it clear that generous love guards life in all the world. It guards the weak and helpless, the old and weary, and it guards all our hopes to be fair and good people. From people who love with true generosity, like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, we learn why abortion and euthanasia are so cruel.
4. To show how love gives people power to have pure hearts, and to be truthful and generous in their dealings with one another. All the Lord’s teachings about chaste living are teachings about loving rightly.

GRADE 6, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Practicing Boundaries – home, school, and online safety guidelines for children.
- Lesson Outline
  1. Introduction and opening prayer
  2. Teaching on human dignity and communicating boundaries
  3. Activity – talking about boundaries using scenarios
  4. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic Social Teaching and the Dignity of the human person
  5. Closing Prayer
- Lesson Background – Human Life is Sacred
  “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (CCC 56)

GRADE 7, CLASS 1: Vocation — God’s call

General aim

This class is planned to help the students realize the goodness of our vocation: our call to be Christians, and our call by God Himself to an important life. It could be a call to a religious kind of vocation, or it could be a divine vocation to enter marriage with a very special person, and to have children. We are all called to find our way to heaven by doing great things on this earth in ordinary circumstances.
The whole idea of vocation is explored here: God’s deep concern for everything in our life, how we plan our lives, and the ways we learn to put all that we are as boys and girls into becoming men and women.

Specific objectives
1. To recall the first vocation we have: to be personal friends and followers of Christ, and to shape everything in our lives in ways that are faithful to the Lord.
2. To think about our special vocations: how God cares very much about the life each one of us will live. To explore the kind of life God invites us to and the kind of life that each one of us decides to live.
3. To understand how vocations work: God calls us freely to something important, and we freely decide. There is a call, a consecration, and a commitment.
4. To survey kinds of vocations, and to invite the students to think about, and to pray about, what kind of life they wish to have before God.
5. To study the relationship between our sexuality and our vocation, and how every vocation calls on all the gifts that God has given to us.

GRADE 7, CLASS 2: Modesty — A strong and thoughtful virtue
General aim
To help students grasp the meaning of modesty and appreciate its attractiveness and goodness, and to help them understand why Christ wants us to have modesty in our hearts and in our lives.

Specific objectives
1. To help students see why modesty is an important virtue in our times too, because it is so closely related to self-respect and reverence for other people, and because it helps us to face sexuality more sensibly.
2. To make clear that the most important dimension of modesty is modesty in our minds and in our heart.
3. To explain why modesty in speech and in dress may important good fruits.
4. To show how modesty affects everyday life.

GRADE 7, CLASS 3: Reconciliation in our years of growing up
General aim
This lesson seeks to help young people to make good use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in ways that will help them most in their years of growing up. At this time of their life this sacrament is a necessary support for their life of faith and grace. It offers the help they need especially now, even though this is also a time in which they are especially tempted to neglect this sacrament. Temptations at this time of life are more disturbing, and sins are most embarrassing, and life, in general, gets more confusing. They need now certain special helps from the Lord, so that as they grow up in many ways, they may grow also in the life of faith. Regular use of this sacrament will help them to get a strong hold on their faith and on their will to live in ways Christ calls them, even in times of great confusion and stress.
Specific objectives
1. To show why, in the chaotic years of adolescence, when faith may begin to feel less important to us, and our friendship with Christ seems to fade, this special sacrament is so strong a help in renewing and deepening our friendship with Christ.
2. To show the many specific good things that an intelligent use of confession does for us as we are growing up.
3. To show how a thoughtful use of confession helps young people face problems regarding sexuality much more sensibly.
4. To help young people learn again how to go to confession with tranquility, and without embarrassment.
5. To help young people understand that we receive the grace of conversion only after the Holy Spirit asks us to seek it.

GRADE 7, CLASS 4: Christ and the courage to be pure of heart

General aim
This lesson helps the student know what the beatitude “Blessed are the pure of heart” means, and realize how true it is. It helps them see why it takes courage to have a pure and honest heart, but that life is badly hurt if we become cowards in this. For love is the most important of all things, and a pure heart is one that makes love be true to itself. The pure heart does not confuse selfish and lustful mistreatment of self and others with love, but knows that love really cares for the ones we love, and wants them to have what is truly good.

Specific objectives
1. To show that pure love (love not mixed with selfishness and dishonesty of heart) is the strongest and most burning love, just as pure gold is better than gold mixed with lead.
2. To clarify the differences between real and pure love, which shines in people who really care about us and want us to be happy and have what is surely good; and false love, seen in people who pretend to care about us, but are only pretending, or looking out for themselves.
3. To show why the world that does not know Christ, or the goodness of the generous love He teaches, also is an impure world. Love was made to be pure, to be true love, and so generous and truthful and a blessing to all. But the world mixes the love it longs for with many kinds of selfishness, and so turns its broken love into something false and the cause of much pain.
4. To show how, just as impurity and dishonesty about love hurt everything, so a pure heart helps everything, because it cares honestly about generosity in love, and about lasting love, and homes, and the care of children.

GRADE 7, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Communication Boundaries – texting, touching, and talking about ourselves and others.
- Lesson Outline
  1. Introduction and opening prayer
  2. Teaching on respect, focus on the dignity of the human person
  3. Activity – talking about texting, touching and taking responsibility for our words
4. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic Social Teaching and the Dignity of the Human Person
5. Closing Prayer and activity

- Lesson Background – Human Life is Sacred
  “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (CCC 56)

GRADE 8, CLASS 1: Your vocation: To make the world a better place

**General aim**
This class seeks to stress for students the importance of accepting our responsibility for making this world a better place, for seeking to overcome abortion and the injustices involved in poverty, and to enable them to realize how necessary chastity is for overcoming abortion and social injustice. (Note: Despite the second word in the title, this is not a class about “vocations.” Rather it is a class about responsibility to make the world a better place. The idea of “vocation” is in some way relevant, for our vocation as Christians includes the call to make this world more of a presence of the Kingdom of God. But vocations as such and their relation in our sexuality, are treated in other places in this course.)

**Specific objectives**
1. To help students understand how the Holy Spirit assists us in discerning the Father’s will for our lives.
2. To help students realize their social responsibilities in this world: “We are all really responsible for all!”
3. To show students why they should be firmly on the side of life in the abortion controversy, and to show how un-chastity leads to abortion.
4. To help students see how seriously the Gospel requires us to care about justice for the poor.
5. To help students realize why they will not become just and merciful if they do not also have self-control and chastity.

GRADE 8, CLASS 2: Living in a world that suffers from AIDS

**General aim**
This lesson seeks to help young people understand some of the bitter evils that have arisen from the misuse of sexuality. It speaks of AIDS, and of other sexually transmitted diseases, and of other serious harms. Sexuality is a gracious gift of God. But we invite tragedy when we use excellent things badly. It is never good and never safe to abuse sexuality. Still, the physical harms that come from abuses of sex are not the worst of its bad effects, and fear of these evils is not the best motive for being chaste. Treating sexuality intelligently is itself good; it makes friendship and all of life richer and happier. Chastity if not terribly difficult; we do not have to advise people to rely on the highly unreliable forms of “safe sex” foolishly taught by some today. There ways of really being safe, and of having really good lives. Something as important as sexuality deserves to be treated intelligently!
**Specific objectives**

1. To remind people that Christ calls them to good and happy lives: the ways that He teaches securely guard us from the great harms that sinful activity causes.
2. To give a truthful picture of AIDS, how tragic it is, how common it has become, and what are its causes.
3. To show how so-called “safe sex” (deciding to use sexuality casually, while making use of unreliable devices to keep sinful activity from doing us physical harm simply does not work.
4. To point out how easily one can escape AIDS if one so wills.
5. To remind students of the many other sexually transmitted diseases, how sin can have physically bad results. And these are not even the worst effects of sexual sins!
6. To show how unnecessary it is to commend insecure defenses against such terrible disease and the many harms they cause. A better way is readily possible. Chastity is not too difficult; it alone is really “normal.” Chastity is possible with God’s grace.
7. To recall the practical things we need to do to make an intelligent and chaste life easier and more attractive.

---

**GRADE 8, CLASS 3: Christ and my conscience**

**General aim**

Years of adolescence are often years of confusion. But young people do want to be good. They have high standards for others, and they want to be honest, and live by high standards themselves. Yet the world does much to confuse their ideas of right and wrong, as it does for all people. Often they let themselves be led astray, and feel that it is all right to do things that their peers do, because they don’t feel bad about doing such things. This lesson is intended to help them in something of greatest importance to their lives: in coming to realize what conscience really is, and how they can be radically honest in facing what is truly good or truly bad in the shaping of their own lives.

**Specific objectives**

1. To help students get a clear and honest understanding of what conscience is, and of the importance of a good conscience.
2. To help them appreciate that what Christ teaches us about conscience is really true, and that my life will be more honest if I allow the Holy Spirit to guide my conscience.
3. To show how a good conscience keeps one from painful confusions, and tragic decisions, touching sexuality.
4. To explain that knowing how to confess embarrassing sins can be a great help for us in keeping our lives honestly in order.
5. To show the distinctive ways in which a Christian conscience helps our lives.
6. To show how the Holy Spirit prompts us to seek repentance and conversion.
GRADE 8, CLASS 4: The Eucharist and love

General aim

This lesson seeks to show how the Eucharist is a gift of God’s most generous love, and shows us how to be generous in love in every part of life, and so wise in living. Jesus gave us the Eucharist the night before He died willingly for us, to remind us how much He would always love us, and to give through this sacrament the real power to love each other generously and strongly. The Eucharist constantly calls us to strong and true love, for Christ, and for each one of our brothers and sisters; and so the Eucharist calls us to live free from sin (which is the enemy of love) because we are so near to Christ, who is perfectly good, and calls us to be good to one another.

Specific objectives

1. To help us see why the Eucharist is a gift of pure love: love that is generous and honest, and give warmth of life.
2. To recall that Jesus gave us this sacrament, so we could love purely too: to have honest love for the Lord and for each other.
3. To remember that must be free from the selfishness of mortal sin to receive Communion well. We must be in the state of grace, seeking honestly to love God and one another, and so to make all the world a richer place.
4. To see why it is true that impure acts, which are such powerful forms of selfishness, and turning from what is really good, especially make the joy of Communion fade.
5. To help the students see why we should trust Christ, and to know that He will make it very possible for us to have generous and truthful hearts, if we come to Him with honest and truthful hearts in Communion.

GRADE 8, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Body Boundaries – what we wear and what we do.
- Lesson Outline
  1. Introduction and opening prayer
  2. Teaching on respect, focus on the dignity of the human person
  3. Teaching on modesty and chastity as safe body boundaries
  4. Activity – talking about what we wear and what we do
  5. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic Social Teaching and the Dignity of the Human Person
  6. Closing Prayer and activity
- Lesson Background – The Vocation to Chastity
  “Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man’s belonging to the bodily and biological works is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church Article 2337)
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

PARENT INFORMATION ON CHILD SAFETY

1. Recognize the warning signs – this helps you to identify potential abuse before it happens. A child predator:

- Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring.
- Always wants to be alone with children or is more excited with children than with adults.
- Gives gifts to children often without permission.
- Always wants to wrestle or tickle; always touching, side-hugging.
- Allows children to engage in activities their parents would not allow.
- Thinks the rules do not apply to them.
- Uses bad language or tells dirty jokes to children.
- Shows children pornography.

2. Send potential child predators the message that YOU are knowledgeable about child sexual abuse.

- Always check references (babysitters, daycare workers, teachers, coaches, troop leaders, youth leaders).
- Require criminal background checks.
- Get to know the parents and other relatives of your child’s friends; get to know your neighbors and others who have contact with your child (daycare workers, teachers, coaches, troop leaders, church and youth leaders).
- Become familiar with and use the Megan’s Law website.

3. Monitor your child’s environment, situations and programs – predators look for ways to spend time alone with children. If they know you are watching, it is difficult for them to find opportunities to abuse without getting caught.

- Know the areas in your neighborhood that are secluded (woods, park areas, alleys, backyards, cellars). Do not allow your child to go or play there without your supervision or the supervision of a trusted adult—one that you select.
- Never allow your child to enter a public restroom alone.
- Do not permit your child to enter staff-only areas.
- Constantly supervise your child’s play activities.

4. Be Aware of what is going on in your child’s life.

- Pay attention to subtle signs of a problem.
- Talk to your child. Listen to your child. Observe your child.
- Let your child know he/she can tell you anything.
- Teach your child about his/her private parts.
- Teach your child what to do if someone tries to touch him/her.
- Teach your child what to do if someone makes him/her uncomfortable.
Parent Information on Child Safety continued…

5. **Speak up!**

- Communicate your concerns – if you suspect abuse or if you are uncomfortable with a situation. Pay attention to your intuitions/feelings!
- Let others know when you have concerns, even if abuse is not occurring.
- Use your knowledge to protect your child and other children.

6. **Take the time to teach your child about internet sexual predators, exploitation, and groomers.** Groomers use information that they gather about the victim (your child) to make them feel safe and liked.

Below are some tactics used by internet predators that your child should watch for:

- **“Let’s go private.”** (Inviting the child to leave the public chat room and create a private chat or move to instant-messaging or phone texting)

- **“Where’s your computer in the house?”** (To see if parents might be around)

- **“What’s your favorite video game, television show, sports team?”** (Questions like these tell the groomer more about their victims so that they know what gifts to offer – e.g., concert tickets; Webcam, software, video games)

- **“I know someone who can get you a modeling job.”** (Opens a doorway for inappropriate photos)

- **“You seem sad. Tell me what’s bothering you.”** (This is sympathy leading to a false sense of trust)

- **“What’s your phone number?”** (Asking for personal info of any kind – usually happens at a later stage, after the target’s feeling comfortable with the groomer)

- **“If you don’t… [do what I ask], I’ll… [Tell your parents OR share your photos in a photo blog / Webcam directory / file-sharing network].”** (Intimidation – used as the groomer learns more and more about the target)

- **“I have never loved anyone as much as I love you.”** (Playing on the emotions of the target, this sometimes will convince kids to do things that they normally wouldn’t even think of doing)
CONTINUATION OF CVOL THEMES
(Grades K – 4)
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

DIOCESAN SAFE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY

- The commitment to provide solid Catholic faith formation as well as to keep our children and youth safe is a monumental one. Our diocese has established policies to ensure the safety of our children and youth.

- Every catechist, and all personnel working with children must acquire State criminal record and child abuse clearances, and attend a Protecting God’s Children in-service before they can teach in our parish programs and Catholic schools.

- On April 12, 2004, Bishop Wuerl (then Bishop of Pittsburgh) approved and promulgated, as particular law for the diocese, the Safe Environments Policy which became effective July 1, 2004.

- On March 14, 2008, Bishop David Zubik (Bishop of Pittsburgh) approved a Revised Safe Environments Policy and directed that it be promulgated. The revised policy became law in all parishes and institutions of the diocese effective May 1, 2008.

- Additionally, effective May 28, 2007, the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) requires mandated immediate reporting of suspected child abuse (anyone under 18) if the child is under the care or supervision of a Church entity, including, but not limited to:
  - School students
  - CCD students
  - Children enrolled in child-care programs
  - Children being “babysat” during worship services or gatherings
  - Children participating in Church-related youth ministries or sports programs
  - Catholic Charities’ clients and health care patients

Our promise to parents to do everything in our power to protect the children and youth under our care is a solid one. Bishop Zubik is adamant that these policies be followed by every parish and school program across the Diocese of Pittsburgh.
CVOL – THE PROGRAM FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENT

• Each year auditors from the U.S. Bishops’ Safe Environment Committee (USCCB – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) visit our diocese to ensure that these policies are in place and are being enforced.

• A recent requirement of the auditors (in addition to the Protecting God’s Children in-service that all adults working with or near children must take), is that every diocese must have in place a specific program for children.

• The *Catholic Vision of Love* chastity education program was approved by the Bishops’ Safe Environment Committee as the program our diocese has in place.

• The auditors also recommended that our diocese create additional specific lessons on child safety for grades 5 – 8 (which we discussed), as well as specific lessons on child safety for grades K – 4.

• We will talk about these additional specific lessons as well as the CVOL Foundational Principles Content for grades K – 4.

*Note: Catechetical Leaders – briefly walk parents through both the Foundational Principles Content and the specific lessons for grades K – 4.*

**SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.**

*Galatians 5:13*
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES
CONTENT FOR GRADES K – 4

Foundational Principles for a Catholic understanding of the human person, family, and love are emphasized in the curriculum for grades K through 4. The following overview of the content for those grades is integrated into the religious education curriculum for younger children. Through a recommendation from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Child Safety, specific lessons regarding child safety have been added to the CVOL program and will be taught in these respective grades.

1. Jesus and Our Homes
   Homes are places where people can be most happy. Homes are places where we learn to love. We can help our homes be happier places. Jesus lived in an ordinary home with his parents. He grew up with much love and guidance from his parents. Discuss: What makes a home a happy place? How do we make our home a happy place? How do we know Jesus’ home was happy? Why do we call Jesus’ family the “Holy Family?”

2. Prayer in Our Homes
   Prayer at home is very important. Morning, meal times, and night are times when it is good to pray. It is important to find a quiet place for prayer. Family prayer is a way to share love with family members and Jesus. There are some prayers that all family members should learn so they can pray together. The Sign of the Cross, Prayer to our Guardian Angel, Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Glory Be to the Father are a few prayers children in K through 4 should know. Spontaneous prayer is an opportunity to learn to pray for immediate needs and how to pray from one’s heart.

   (See attached prayers for use at home that we all should know)

3. Communication in Our Homes
   Children need to know they can trust their parents and share anything with them. Sometimes it isn’t easy to talk about things, but patience, love, and understanding help when tough issues need to be discussed. It is crucial that children learn they can turn to their parents first. Spending one-on-one time with each child is always beneficial for both child and parent. Providing time for family talk is also very important—sharing meals together is an excellent way to do this, even with busy family schedules. One evening a week, enjoy “family night” by turning off the television, computers, I-pods, etc. And always before a serious discussion—pray together.
4. Communication Outside Our Homes
   Friends are very important. Maturity in relationships includes learning to have friends outside the home. It also means that children need to trust their parents enough to tell them who their friends are and what it is they do together. It is important that time be given for talking about choosing good friends and having good friendships. Provide family time for discussing this as well as time to meet and get to know their friends.

5. Media Use
   Parents always have the right to take control of situations that might be harmful to their child. This includes controlling/guiding what your child is watching on television, at the movies, on the computer and cell phones, the music they listen to, and the video games they play. It is necessary for parents to be well informed as to the content offered via the media their child is using. Much of today’s media content is inappropriate for children—parents should not allow society to dictate what children watch, play or listen to.

   If parents use good judgment regarding media, their children will grow to make good, safe, choices in everything they do. Parents are always the role model. Sometimes the best advice for parents is “Just Say No!”

6. Proper Word Choice
   Choosing our words wisely when we speak about others and to others shows the kind of person we are. Speaking kindly of someone and using words that do not hurt others shows that we care and like that person. Sometimes words we hear are naughty or bad, or are known as “dirty or nasty words.” These kinds of words are not respectful and show disrespect for others. There are words that show disrespect for our bodies instead of showing the goodness of our bodies—God’s gift to us, for we are made in His image and likeness.

   Parents should always be aware of the words their children use and show that they care about how they are using these words. Remember, parents are the role models—we need to also watch the language we use in front of our children.

7. Modesty
   Modesty is a way of behaving, speaking and dressing that is considered proper. Being modest means we respect ourselves and want others to respect us. Current fashions, magazines, television, internet and other media do not always represent the virtue of modesty. We have allowed society to dictate how our children should dress and behave in order to “fit in” or “be popular,” and this attitude has trickled down to the smallest and youngest. How important it is to form our very young children to know the meaning of being created in God’s image and likeness. Jesus teaches us humility and the dignity of being human. We are temples of God. Therefore, our faith demands that we choose wisely the things we wear, the things we say, and the things we do.
8. **Knowing When to Say “No”**

   It is the parents’ responsibility to guide their child in matters regarding safe touching. They help their child understanding the difference between touches and hugs that are good and when they are not. Children need to learn about the kinds of touches that are uncomfortable or disturbing and what to do if someone touches them in this way. Parents regulate who children may visit, who they may talk with, who they associate with in order to teach how to be “smart” or “wise” when it comes to relationships.

   The school your child attends has a program on safe touch for young children. It is important that you know what the program involves so you can be prepared to talk with your child when the time comes. Our diocesan program on safe touch for younger children is now part of the *Catholic Vision of Love* program. All materials are available through your parish. Please contact your pastor/catechetical administrator for copies of the materials.

9. **Being Catholic is Special**

   When we are baptized in the Catholic Church we are born into a special family. This is our spiritual family, with Jesus as the head. There are many things we believe in this spiritual family that are the same beliefs of other Christian families. There are also things that Catholics believe that are different from other Christian beliefs. The degree in this difference is seen in how we act, pray, and live. It includes the way we talk, how we dress, and who we choose as our friends. We love and honor Jesus. We are responsible for becoming what it is that Jesus calls us to be. Our prayers bring us closer to Jesus and our spiritual family, the Church. We celebrate special sacraments and live according to the Ten Commandments and Gospel teachings and values.

   **Parent notes:** sometimes we get the feeling that all faiths/religions are alike. But that is not the case. Our Catholic faith defines who we are—gives us our identity, and we should be proud to be Catholic. The Catholic Church stands for many things and is the one true faith that goes all the way back to Jesus Christ. We have never waivered—other Christian faiths have separated themselves from the Catholic Church because they did not agree with some of the teachings handed down by Jesus Christ.

   The Catholic Church today is constantly and verbally “standing up” for human rights and the importance of following Gospel values and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Members of the Church are actively involved in all aspects of society especially where injustices occur. Being Catholic is not always popular, but one thing we know for sure is that our faith will never let us down. Our baptism into the Catholic Church entitles us to learn and know the truths of the faith in their entirety. We never stop learning. Teach your children as much as you can about being Catholic. Give them a solid Catholic identity. Model for them what a good Catholic is and does. There are many Catholic websites and other materials to help you. The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* is an excellent resource and can be obtained through your pastor or catechetical administrator.
10. Changing and Growing
As they grow older, children learn that their bodies slowly change and develop, their minds become better and sharper, and as persons they begin to mature. In this physical growing process there is another dimension of growing—a **spiritual** growth—as we become the persons God plans for us to become. It is very important that parents support their child through all of these changes, helping them to understand why and how they are changing and what to look for.

This may or may not have been done in your growing years. You may have grown up in a different way—in a different society than your child. You might not have experienced the negative aspects of life, love, and sexuality your child is facing today. Knowledge is important—your child must know about sexuality and must hear it **from you** in order to grow and understand what it is all about. You want what is good for your child. You love your child unconditionally—no one but God will love your child more than you do. Be open to listening and talking with him/her. Develop an attitude of trust so your child can come to you about anything. Just as children learn they need to talk to their parents, parents must learn to communicate openly with their children without embarrassment. You are your child’s mentor—teach them honestly!

**Parent note:** The parent handbook: *Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parents’ Guide* is available through the *Catholic Vision of Love* program. This booklet is for parent use only and explains in detail what the Catholic Church teaches about sexuality and why. The information can be shared with your child at your discretion when you feel the time is right. Check with your pastor or catechetical administrator for more information regarding this handbook.
PRAYERS TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

SIGN OF THE CROSS
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

OUR FATHER
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL MARY
Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

GLORY BE
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

ANGEL OF GOD
Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

PRAYER BEFORE MEALS
Bless us, O Lord, and these Your gifts, that we are about to receive, from Your bounty,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER MEALS
We give You thanks for all Your benefits, O almighty God, who lives and reigns forever;
and may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

APOSTLES’ CREED
I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and love everlasting. Amen.
Catechetical Leader Information

CVOL – Kindergarten – Grade 4
PARENT’S ROLE – WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

You are the best educator of the faith especially at this stage of your child’s life. Sometimes parents don’t realize how influential they are during these early childhood years. EVERYTHING you do with your child at this age is a learning experience for him/her. Your example is crucial! Here are a few things you can do to help your child better understand God’s love for us.

- Remind your child that he/she is always loved by God, and is created in God’s image with strengths and limitations.

- Share stories of your childhood, about the people who loved and cared for you, taught you to respect others and the world around you, and helped you stay close to God.

- Teach your child about his/her body, identifying body parts. It is important to use proper language to name them. Let him/her know that God created us good and that our bodies are good.

- Teach you child respect and care for his/her body through good hygiene, healthy eating habits and exercise.

- Let your child know the difference between appropriate (good) touch and inappropriate touch and that we respect our bodies and others’ bodies as well.

- Affirm your child’s natural curiosity, answer his/her questions honestly and simply, using language that he/she can understand.

- Help your child to identify emotions and how to express them in healthy ways.

- Monitor and supervise your child’s access to computer, television, movies and reading materials, setting standards that reflect Catholic values.

- Provide time for prayer each day (i.e. during and after mealtime, bedtime) using simple prayers and later, teaching prayers they should know (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be etc).

- Attend Sunday Mass as a family—give your child the gift of enjoying this very special relationship with God where they can share and participate in the music, prayers, and rituals. Help them to know they are part of God’s family.
Lesson 1:
The students will:
- a) Listen to the teacher’s explanation of how we are children of God and special; b) Orally tell how they are special by telling his/her own characteristics.
- Listen to the teacher’s explanation of why/how God made us special.
- Draw pictures of themselves identifying his/her own unique characteristics/specialness
- Identify/demonstrate ways to get along with others by a) playing a game following the rules; b) responding to teacher questions recognizing how rules keep us safe and why rules are fair.

Lesson 2:
The students will:
- Orally recall what they learned about using rules and why rules are fair.
- Listen to the teacher connecting the concept for obeying rules and how rules help us show respect for God’s people and other people’s things.
- Respond to question about how we respect our bodies.
- Respond to questions demonstrating the ability to connect the concept that there are good rules to follow to show we respect our body.
- Do the face activity to demonstrate the ability to recognize different feelings and to respond to teacher questions about recognizing feelings.
- Respond to closing questions by telling what they would do when recognizing different feelings in friends to demonstrate their comprehension of the concepts taught.

Lesson 3:
The students will:
- Review what they learned about rules and how to recognize feelings by responding to teacher questions and doing the Handout K-1B.
- Role play to demonstrate the ability to identify and manage proper playing by the rules and respecting others’ feelings.
- a) Listen to teacher reinforcement of proper management skills and proper reactions to stressful situations; b) Respond to teacher questions to demonstrate understanding of the concepts.
- a) Listen to the teacher expand the concept of responsibility and being in charge on one’s own body; b) Listen to how to report to someone when something doesn’t feel right or when something or someone makes one feel uncomfortable.
Lesson 4:
The students will:
- Demonstrate assertiveness with respectful responses in safe situations with older children and adults (e.g. “I HAVE TO CHECK FIRST” — check with a parent, guardian, or other trusted adult first) by orally responding to the “practicing the rules” activity.
- Demonstrate assertiveness in unsafe situations (“SAY NO,” “GET AWAY,” and “GO TELL”) by participating in the “Practicing the Rule” activity and practicing what to say.
- Describe and role-play what to do when approached by a stranger/non-stranger or on the telephone by participating in the “Practicing the Rule” activity and using the pretend phones.
- Identify who to tell if there is a touching problem by orally responding to a short story and b) responding to teacher’s questions.
Catholic Vision of Love
Safe Environment Lesson Objectives Grades 2—3

Grades 2 and 3

Lesson 1:
The students will:
- Identify the goodness of rules that keep us safe by discussing why the family, school and society have rules and laws.
- Describe positive characteristics they like about themselves and others by picking out good qualities from a list on Handout 2-3A.
- Identify that all things have a purpose by naming good things they can do with items like apple, sun, house, person, and body parts like nose, ears, feet, teeth.
- Identify what makes a good friend by naming that a friend always wants what is best for you.

Lesson 2:
The students will:
- Identify non-verbal communication skills by naming feelings acted out by the teacher and other students.
- Name how showing their emotions in a good ways helps us get along with others.
- Discuss how some things and people change by describing changes from a group of pictures.
- Describe and discuss how he/she is a unique and special person by naming choices they have made and ways they have grown from a baby till now.

Lesson 3:
The students will:
- Identify positive (good effects) and negative (bad effects) of peer pressure through the use of balloons, pictures and stories.
- Describe his/her uniqueness as a person who is continually growing and changing.
- Demonstrate appropriate ways to react in a stressful situation by responding to questions about stories.
- Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings by reacting to situations in pictures and stories.

Deeper:
- Demonstrate that he/she recognizes non-verbal communication skills by answering questions related to situations and/or pictures.
- Demonstrate respect for the rights and feelings of others by answering appropriate questions.
- Identify skills necessary to build enriching friendships by participating in the exercise on “Peer Pressure.”
CVOL Safe Environment Lesson Objectives
Grades 1 and 2 continued

Lesson 4:
The students will:
• Name rules that keep them safe.
• Explain what makes something public and what makes something private.
• Explain the bathing suit rule.
• Name the fact that no one has a right to touch their body without permission.

Lesson 5:
The students will:
• Name people who can help keep them safe.
• Practice detective skills to be able to help in emergency situations (review things & people as observed for homework for last lesson, describe the visitor to the classroom).
• Identify safe responses to situations where they may be separated from an adult family member or when someone unknown approaches them.
• List and role-play appropriate behaviors that assist the individual in maintaining his/her personal safety (e.g. "SAY ‘NO,’ ‘GET AWAY,’ ‘GO TELL’").
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE
SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON OBJECTIVES GRADE 4

GRADE 4

Lesson 1:
The students will:
- Demonstrate respect for the rights and feelings of others by listening to/reading the story about St. Therese Liseaux in the Catholic Safety Agent booklet and participating in the exercises.
- Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings by participating in the exercise about feelings and playing the game to determine someone’s feelings.
- Differentiate between behaviors that contribute to a positive attitude and those that contribute to a negative attitude by acting out what they read on the Feeling Cards exercise, and by naming the feeling and what caused them to feel a certain way.
- Identify self control skills by participating in the lesson on page 4 of the CSA Notebook regarding behaviors and feelings.

Lesson 2
The students will:
- Demonstrate self control skills by acting out situations that the teacher gives them to show self-control.
- Identify behaviors that may cause conflict or stress and ways of dealing with them through discussion about safe situations and situations that cause stress.
- Name appropriate ways to react in stressful situations by participating in the brainstorming session about a “stranger at the door” and discussing appropriate ways to deal with the stressful situation.
- Identify personal strengths and weaknesses and their impact on others by completing the exercises on page 6 and 7 of the CSA booklet – knowing our strengths and weaknesses.

Lesson 3
The students will:
- Name behaviors that show a positive attitude and those that show a negative attitude by listening to/reading the story about St. John Bosco and how he treated others.
- Show healthy ways to have fun by acting out (through the game of Charades) fun things they enjoy doing with a friend.
- Identify peer influence on his/her feelings, behavior, and decisions by participating in the exercise on “Peer Pressure.”
- Identify characteristics of a friend by participating in the exercise on “what is a good friend” and reading about good friends on page 9, “A Friend is Someone Who,” and page 10 of the CSA booklet.
- Name what Peer Pressure is by participating in the exercise and answering the teacher questions on peer pressure, and completing the exercise on Peer Pressure on page 11 of the CAS booklet.
Lesson 4
The students will:
- Name the steps to making appropriate decisions by completing the exercise on page 12 and 13 of the CSA booklet.
- Practice refusal skills by participating in the Safety Agent – Act 1 game.
- Identify behaviors that may cause conflict or stress and ways of dealing with them by looking at situations on the Act 1 cards and naming the proper way to handle each situation.

Lesson 5
The students will:
- Demonstrate the ability to accept responsibility and consequences for their actions by participating in the Act – 2 Situation Cards – “Stressful Situations.”
- List and role-play appropriate alternate behaviors that enhance personal safety: SAY “NO, GET AWAY,” and GO TELL.
- Demonstrate assertiveness with respect in response to a safe situation through the group exercise with the Act – 2 Situation Cards.
- Practice communication skills by acting out ways of communication – by phone, e-mail, hand signals, and body language.

Lesson 6
The students will:
- Describe ways of preventing abuse: emotional, physical and sexual through review of previous lessons and through group discussion about the people we can rely on to keep us safe (parents, older siblings, police, firemen etc.) and family rules and guidelines for safety.
- Demonstrate assertiveness in response to an unsafe situation by practicing with the teacher, “No, Get Away!” after each situation presented.
- Name interpersonal situations that may pose a threat to his/her personal safety (secrets, bribes, tricks) by repeating each clue after the teacher: 1. They want you to keep secrets; 2. They always want to be alone with you. 3. They try to offer you bribes; 4. They always want to hang out with kids and never seem to want to be with people their own age.
- Identify ways to help others as sources of help by participating in the exercise on things that make a place or situation safe.
Dear Parents,

Catholic Vision of Love (CVOL) is an important part of our diocesan efforts to help our young people understand Catholic teaching on chastity, human sexuality and family life. CVOL is designed to assist you in fulfilling your responsibility as the primary educator regarding this sensitive topic.

We have received many phone calls from parents asking us about the Silver Ring Thing, a well-known chastity education program, and its availability to our Catholic youth, and have partnered with personnel from Silver Ring Thing to produce a Catholic Edition of SRT that we are very excited to bring to your attention.

Silver Ring Thing’s 2-2½ hour stage performance incorporates high energy music, special effects, fast-paced videos, personal testimonies, and comedy all delivered in a concert-style approach with which teenagers can respond and relate. This fun-filled event captures the imagination and attention of the audience while reinforcing the message of Catholic Vision of Love and the importance of embracing a life of chastity.

The Catholic Edition of Silver Ring Thing includes activities and information relating to the sacraments and Catholic Church teaching regarding chastity. During the event participants may choose to receive a silver ring as a symbol of their commitment to chastity. There are priests available for anyone wishing to go to Confession afterwards.

The Catholic Edition of Silver Ring Thing usually takes place the 2nd or 3rd Friday of January and is held at Seton LaSalle High School for youth in grades 8 – 12 and their parents. The cost is minimal (usually $5 for students and adults; the ring is an additional $20). A parent meeting takes place before the start of the program.

This is a program you don’t want to miss! For more information on the Catholic version of SRT contact your pastor, youth minister or catechetical administrator or visit the website at www.silverringthing.com. We highly encourage you to attend the Catholic edition of Silver Ring Thing with your child.
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Carnegie Science Center has a dynamic Science on the Road program one of which is Wonder of Wonders (WOW).

This program is designed to support parents (and educators) as they teach their children about reproduction and heredity. The Wonder of Wonder Program has specially-trained health science educators who use audiovisual materials to give children important, accurate, and age-appropriate information about puberty, reproduction, the development of new life, and the facts about HIV (optional).

The Diocese of Pittsburgh recommends Wonder of Wonders for use in parishes for children in grades 5 – 8. Children attending the program must be accompanied by a parent.

Parish catechetical leaders can contact the Carnegie Science Center for information about the Wonder of Wonders program and hosting it in their parish.

The Carnegie Science Center also holds a one-time Family showing of Wonder of Wonders for interested parents and children.

For more information about Wonder of Wonders, visit their website or call (412) 237-3374.
CVOL PARENT MEETING
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

❖ Discuss some ways in which your child is learning about sexuality in today’s society.

❖ Name one positive thing you would tell your child about living a chaste life (why your child should refrain from sexual activity outside of marriage).

❖ What are some ways in which the church can help you with this task?
CVOL PARENT MEETING—LARGE GROUP
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about how your parents (or parent figure) first informed you about sexuality. Share what you remember with the person(s) next to you – (groups of 3 or 4).

2. Given today’s society, would you take the same approach with your child? Why or why not? Share your answers with the larger group.

3. Answer the question in each column below. Share with the larger group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CVOL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. List some things you think your child might be learning from society about sexuality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

CVOL GOALS

Christ is the Teacher of life. He came that we might “have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10)

This program aims at assisting all to lead richer and happier lives by following Christ’s guidance in walking in the ways of love. He is the best teacher about such basic realities. We learn from Him about the kind of love that can endure in this world, about the home and family, about the preciousness of life and of chaste and human love.

The principal goal of The Catholic Vision of Love is:

To present Christ’s vision of love and sexuality, and to encourage all to live according to the Good News of His teaching on love, Marriage, the family, sexuality, and the freedom of self-possession.

All the other goals and objectives follow from this principal goal. These more specific goals are:

- To show that God is the Creator of all our being: that our sexuality is God’s rich gift, which affects all that we are and serves precious human goods, when it is understood in the light of Christ’s gracious teaching.
- To stress the sublime importance of every person and the essential equality of all persons; and to show that each one is called to greatness of heart and to friendship with the Lord.
- To teach the profound Christian motives for reverence for every person, and for a healthy self-esteem; to make clear how precious every person is to God, and how by God’s grace each is capable of living the excellent ways Christ makes known.
- To guide all toward a fuller understanding of what Christ teaches in His Church about sexual morality and self-possession, and to assist them in seeing how good Christ’s teaching is, and how important it is to shape our consciences to live in His way.
- To lead all toward understanding and acceptance of all the dimensions of our human lives: spiritual, moral, psychological, physical, emotional, sexual, intellectual, and social.
- To seek to guard all from exploitation by providing a clear understanding of everything one needs to know about sexuality to be secure and fortified to live in this contemporary world.
- To support all persons in their efforts to acquire the skill, insights, and virtues they need to have confidence and peace in leading chaste lives.
- To motivate and assist all to follow Christ’s vision of love, guarding all the good things God intended sexuality to serve, in lives enriched by heeding the commandments and beatitudes, and by doing the works of mercy.
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE
FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

1. Education in love and human sexuality is education in an integral part of Catholic faith and life. It is formation in ways of living that are inseparable from the Gospel. Education in human sexuality is inseparable from our overall faith education. This education is not only instructional but it is affectively and holistically oriented. Its purpose is to move a person to exercise a personal freedom that chooses ways of living that are consistent with the Gospel call. Thus its concern is to prepare students to have the ability to make intelligent choices regarding their sexuality, to help them integrate their attitudes toward sexuality with their philosophy of life, to enable them to acquire self-possession, and to exercise authentic freedom.

2. There are certain doctrinal and moral teachings of faith that underlie the Catholic Vision of Love program. These basic tenets illumine ways of living our personal lives and of shaping our love and affection in Christian ways. That is, the program emphasizes a positive vision of what human love and sexuality mean—a vision that flows from the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. These basic principles would include:

   a. Viewing the human person as made in the image of God. It is our masculinity and femininity that God has given us ways to imitate the personal goodness that is at the heart of the life of God.

   b. Seeing sexuality as God’s work. It is a tremendous God-given gift to be seen as something very good. Much of the joy and energy of human life flows from a recognition of the goodness of all dimensions of the being God has give us. This includes our sexuality.

   c. Understanding sexuality in the context of human fulfillment. By our very nature, we long for the good things we need to ensure happy and fully human lives. By our very nature, we seek to escape the loneliness of the human condition and find “enduring love”—a love that gives all of itself to another.

This sexuality becomes a “natural sacrament” or a visible sign of what lasting (enduring) love means and needs to be among human persons. All of our longing is indeed toward a richness we know that we cannot quite express. Thus it is God that we must first learn to love with all our heart. In learning to love God we learn to love one another.
3. There are indeed certain major problems that our program must face and treat effectively. These include AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the rise in teenage pregnancies, abortion, and a variety of promiscuous attitudes. Young people’s understanding of love and sexuality is dramatically shaped by a culture caught up in materialism, hedonism, unbelief, and even despair. However, while the Catholic Vision of Love program faces these contemporary issues, its primary focus is not one of avoiding certain grave moral evils, but one of positively guiding people toward living excellent lives in all that touches love, affectivity and personal relationships.

4. Sexual education is primarily the responsibility of the parents. Thus an education in love and sexuality will be effective only to the extent that parents cooperate. The aim of teachers is to assist parents—to help them communicate with their children in these matters. The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that such tasks are only effectively accomplished if the essential small units, in this case, families, are doing their tasks. The Catholic Vision of Love program is meant to cooperate with parents and not substitute for them. On the other hand, teaching is very critical in this area, it simply cannot be taken for granted that parents are capable of doing it on their own with no assistance from the Church. The program focuses a great deal on parental education and involvement.

5. The Catholic Vision of Love program is to be integrated with education in Catholic faith and life generally. Therefore it is designed to be integrated into the religion curriculum itself. Catholic Vision of Love is a total parish program, thus it will involve both Catholic school and parish programs of religious education.

6. Only those who can and do agree with Catholic teaching on love and sexuality can be permitted to teach in this program. There is a need for adequate catechist formation and training prior to beginning the actual teaching.

7. Education and materials should be provided for parents and other adults. This includes education for clergy who will be instrumental in the implementation of the Catholic Vision of Love program.

    The media and contemporary pressures tend to press all toward attitudes and practices that are very much in contradiction to Christian principles and practice. The whole community should get a firmer grasp of basic Catholic moral principles if it is to communicate these effectively to its young members.

8. Education in the proper use of media is of primary importance.
IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS

The Catholic Church recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children. While others in the Church may assist them in providing a suitable sexual education for their children, the rights and duties of parents remain primary. The general principles to be heeded in this matter are spelled out in the Guidelines for education in human sexuality for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The instructions offered in the Catholic vision of Love by our school and parish catechetical programs are by no means intended to replace the work of parents. They are intended to assist the efforts of parents, and to support them, providing a certain social support to the words of parents.

Parental acceptance and cooperation is indispensable. What parents say to their children has a special force. Nothing can replace parents for many reasons. They have a privileged knowledge of each of their children; their words and their support can in no way be substituted for. Hence parents are to be fully aware of all that goes on in our classes. Much of our effort is aimed at helping parents grasp ways of sharing their own faith and their own responsible love with their children. In many matters, especially the more intimate and sensitive ones, parents should be the ones to speak to their children.
CVOL – Grades 5-8
PARENT’S ROLE – WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

There are many things that you as parents can do to help your child understand the Catholic vision of human sexuality:

❖ Discuss sexuality at home when you know/sense they are ready. Does your child know:
  → That sexuality is a gift from God?
  → What sex is for in the divine plan of human life? (total/complete everlasting commitment & love and out of that love we become co-creators of human life with God)
  → That sexual love is both very good and wonderful but comes with great responsibility, and self-possession and self-discipline?
  → That they can control their emotions and any situation, though society tells them differently? WHY would you tell them anything other than that? DO you give them ways in which they can?

❖ Monitor the media they use (TV, movies, magazines, music, video games, the internet, texting, cell phone use).
  → Discuss your values and why it’s important that they follow your rules—you love and protect and care for them.
  → Tell them when you disapprove of what they are listening to, watching etc. That might not stop them, but they’ll hear your voice every time they listen to that song etc. That’s good parenting!
  → Remember, they are learning and being formed by the media in ways that are quite contrary to the teachings of Christ and the values that lead to a happy and satisfied life.
  → Remind them constantly, how important they are to you.

❖ Help your child to experience the goodness of modesty in dress, in speech, in attitude and action, in respecting their own bodies and in respecting themselves and others.
  → If they respect themselves, others will respect them.
  → Respecting ourselves and how we dress, the words we use, how we act and how we present ourselves to others demands respect from them! It works every time!

❖ Grow in your understanding of what the faith teaches and put into practice those convictions in your own lives.
  → The CVOL booklet for parents, “Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parents’ Guide,” will help. Use the booklet to learn what the Church teaches about sexuality and why. Then when you know your child is ready, teach them.
  → Children need to see that good people think and feel in ways that the faith teaches.
  → Your example is critical in helping your child know not only WHAT the Church teaches, but WHY it is taught.

OVER →
Help your child realize the foolishness and dangers of casual sex and trivializing the importance of sexuality.
  → Expose the dangers and lack in realism in what society tells us is “safe sex.”
  → Explain that this casual attitude to sex can only lead to problems and carries with it many dangers.
  → You can help your child realize and believe that chastity and abstinence make sense, and that it is possible for them to live the way Christ wants us to live.

Pray with your child at home, attend Mass together as a family, and encourage regular reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. If young people are to find insight and the courage to care about what Christ and His Church teaches concerning sexuality, they must witness it and be convinced that you believe.

REMEMBER!
  ⇒ Faith must be lived in your home.
  ⇒ Take seriously, your role in handing on to your child, what our faith teaches especially about human sexuality.
  ⇒ It is vital that your child is given a faith-filled and morally correct context out of which to make sense of all the issues connected with human sexuality.
  ⇒ No one needs to live beneath their dignity.
  ⇒ Don’t send your child out in the world accepting the casual attitude society allows.
  ⇒ Arm your child with the necessary moral values he/she will need to stand up to what we know is morally, emotionally, and physically harmful for them.

Working together, we can make great progress educating your child in the essential values of human life. In so doing, we are EMPOWERING him/her to make the right moral decisions and to embrace positive moral living.
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE
CURRICULUM OUTLINE – Grades 5 through 8

Grade 5, Class 1: Self-respect – Acknowledging why you are so important

**General aim**
This lesson seeks to help the students realize how immensely important each one of them is, in truth and before god. It helps them see how important their lives are, and how important are the things that deeply affect their lives. In a special way, it helps them see the importance of their sexuality, and of responding to the gift of sexuality in the light of the Lord’s teaching, and in ways that respect how things really are.

**Specific objectives**
1. To help students realize personally—in light of faith and their experience—how very important each one of them is, and how important it is that they lead their lives wisely and well.
2. To recall the problems that arise for people who are wrongly persuaded that they are not worth much, and are not very much loved.
3. To help students realize that thinking and feeling wisely and rightly about sexuality is very important for them.
4. To help students realize that sexuality has important purposes. God created sexuality to serve the wonderful and lasting good things He wishes to bring to our lives.

Grade 5, Class 2: Understanding the changes we experience

**General aim**
To help the students to see that the many changes that come with adolescence should not be sources of anxiety, but are meant by God to be steps toward a richer fulfillment in life.

**Specific objectives**
1. To help students appreciate that the various stages of growth is a good thing, that the good things of younger years are meant to be fulfilled by better things as time advances.
2. To help students realize how many aspects there are to maturing. We are to grow not just physically (which we cannot help doing) but also emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually.
3. To share that in God’s plan everyone is special. Each one is different in a variety of ways, and that is good.
4. To make clear that it is all right to be different! We mature at different rates, and that is fine. Different people have different natural strengths and weaknesses; none of these make us unable to have great and good lives.
5. To show that sexuality is a gift from God, and that the physical growth that reveals our maleness and femaleness is a good thing.
Grade 5, Class 3: Friendship, love and life

General aim
This lesson seeks to help students understand what friendship is, and why it is so precious a gift. Friendship makes life much happier, and enables us to be better persons. The lesson seeks to explore the truest kind of friendship, and see why it lasts longer and is more rewarding than less perfect kinds of friendship. In a special way it treats romantic friendships, and what characterizes true and lasting friendships to serve life well.

Specific objectives
1. To understand the reasons why friendship is both so attractive and so important for our lives.
2. To be able to tell the difference between true friendships and less solid kinds of friendships.
3. To reflect on how Scripture praises true friendship, and why Christ wants to be a friend to each of us.
4. To think about a special kind of friendship, romantic friendships, and to understand why God wanted friendships like these to exist.
5. To understand how important it is that we have truthful, generous, and pure hearts in all our friendships.

Grade 5, Class 4: Christ in my home and in my life

General aim
This lesson speaks of the importance of the home. It talks about the ways in which Christ taught us to love the home, and encouraged us to make our homes happy places. Jesus meant homes to be schools of faith and love, places where our hearts learn about life from people who deeply love us. It recalls how Christ wants us all to have happy lives, by experiencing first the joy of being loved by generous parents, and the joy of loving those in our homes, and so learning the goodness of real love.

Specific objectives
1. To help students realize how important homes are; how glad we should be for the good things God wants us to find in our homes; how true it is that all of us must do all we can to make our homes places of generous love.
2. To recall the things Christ did to call homes to be faithful to what He wants them to be, and how much He wants each of our homes to be happy and good.
3. To show that even homes that are broken and have many trials, can be healed and helped by closeness to Christ.
4. To show that everything Jesus teaches us about sexuality is aimed at helping us learn the generous kind of love that can make homes and lives happy; impure acts are wrong because they undermine real love, and make homes suffer.
5. To urge students to thank God for their parents and their homes, and to pray that they will themselves have love generous enough to make their homes happier places.
GRADE 5, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- **Relationship Boundaries:** Stranger danger, Respecting ourselves, Respecting our bodies
- **Lesson Outline:**
  1. Introduction and opening prayer
  2. Teaching on Friendship and Respect, focus on Relationship Boundaries
  3. Activity – Talking about boundaries using scenarios
  4. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic social teaching and the dignity of the human person
  5. Closing prayer

- **Lesson Background:** Human life is sacred.
  
  "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being" (CCC 56)

GRADE 6, CLASS 1: Vocation

*General aim*

This lesson seeks to strengthen in students a sense of vocation, a realization that their lives are important, that God has a great role for each of them to play in life. It seeks to show that reflection on what we are meant to be is important for the fulfillment and happiness of our lives.

*Specific objectives*

1. To understand again the general idea of having a vocation by reflecting on the vocation of Christ to be our Savior.
2. To help students to realize that each one of us, without exception, is important to God, and each is called to an important and special vocation by the Lord.
3. To show how it is that one comes to realize what his or her special vocation is.
4. To reflect on various kinds of vocations, and how God calls each person to a kind of vocation in an entirely distinctive way.
5. To point out how chastity is important for every kind of vocation.

GRADE 6, CLASS 2: Being responsible for our own lives

*General aim*

To help students understand the great gift of freedom, and to be able to tell the difference between “things happening to them” and “things they do.” It is always important for young people to realize that life is not just something that happens to them (though many things happen beyond our control). Life is most of all something we live, and the free actions that we do. Many people want to be good, but get discouraged, forgetting that Christ is strong even when they are not. Christ will help them to use their freedom well if they really want to take charge of their own lives, and not let the world dominate them.
Specific objectives

1. To help students realize that they are responsible for their own lives, and that it is a good thing for them that they are.
2. To help students see for themselves why the excuses we make for the bad things we do are often silly and irresponsible.
3. To help students realize that even though it is often very sad when bad things happen to us, doing bad things is really much worse.
4. To help students see that in the turmoil of the world, where impure thoughts and attitudes and acts can often seem impossible to escape, their lives are in their own hands. They have the freedom to live good and responsible lives. Christ will protect their freedom if they wish to guard it.
5. To help students realize, in a world that seems not to know what sin is, that doing things that are really bad not only offends God, but also makes us feel miserable and unhappy.

GRADE 6, CLASS 3: Life is worth living

General aim

This lesson had a very basic message. God made us to live! To live great lives! (See John 10:10.) He made us to live happily and well in this life we now have on earth, and so deserve to have an even better and richer life with Him and one another in eternal life. Our life now works best, and feels worth living, when we try earnestly to get things right and do things well. In special things, like sports and games, we see this clearly. Things go well when we put our whole hearts into them. And this is even more true of the big things of life. Life is dear to us when we realize what it is about, and try to live it well. Large things like love and sexuality will be blessings to us, if we understand them for what they really are, and follow the wise teaching of Christ.

Specific objectives

1. To help students see that all the things we do in life — like playing musical instruments, or taking part in sports — are much happier and dearer to us if we can do them well.
2. To help students understand that doing anything well — even cooking or using a computer — can be important and rewarding. But it is much more important to live life well — to know what it is really about, and to begin to live with style and great hearts. Of course it is true that not all of us can be great athletes, or great mathematicians. But Christ promises that anyone can live a great life, with the help of God’s grace, if they deeply want to, and come to Him for help.
3. To help students understand that some coaches and teachers — in sports and other skills — are better than others. In learning to live well, Christ is the best of all teachers. He is the Lord, and we are His disciples.
4. To help students understand the moral life as new life in the Spirit.
5. To see that love and sexuality are important parts of life. But they can be confusing, and sometimes they are badly taught. We need good teachers for such important things.
6. To understand that many people in today’s world try to teach us what sexuality is all about. But Christ the Lord is the best teacher of these things because He created them. He also knows us best, and cares about what we say and do. The teachers who teach us His ways are very important.
GRADE 6, CLASS 4: Learning how great love is

General aim

This lesson aims at helping the students understand the central message of Christ: that genuine love is the most important of all things. All our duties flow from the most important duty of loving God and of loving one another with generous love. And all our hope flows from love; only when we are willing to learn what true love is can we have happy homes, deep and lasting friendships, fairness to the weak and the poor, and greatness and joy.

Specific objectives

1. To explain why Christ is the best teacher of how great love is (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) and of how we learn to find honest love, in a world which so much wants honest love, but suffers because so many confuse real love with phony love.
2. To show that Jesus teaches us that generous love is necessary to save all the best things of the earth: homes and friendship, and every great and good thing our hearts long for.
3. To make it clear that generous love guards life in all the world. It guards the weak and helpless, the old and weary, and it guards all our hopes to be fair and good people. From people who love with true generosity, like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, we learn why abortion and euthanasia are so cruel.
4. To show how love gives people power to have pure hearts, and to be truthful and generous in their dealings with one another. All the Lord’s teachings about chaste living are teachings about loving rightly.

GRADE 6, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Practicing Boundaries – home, school, and online safety guidelines for children.
- Lesson Outline
  1. Introduction and opening prayer
  2. Teaching on human dignity and communicating boundaries
  3. Activity – talking about boundaries using scenarios
  4. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic Social Teaching and the Dignity of the human person
  5. Closing Prayer
- Lesson Background – Human Life is Sacred
  "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being" (CCC 56)

GRADE 7, CLASS 1: Vocation — God’s call

General aim

This class is planned to help the students realize the goodness of our vocation: our call to be Christians, and our call by God Himself to an important life. It could be a call to a religious kind of vocation, or it could be a divine vocation to enter marriage with a very special person, and to have children. We are all called to find our way to heaven by doing great things on this earth in ordinary circumstances.
The whole idea of vocation is explored here: God’s deep concern for everything in our life, how we plan our lives, and the ways we learn to put all that we are as boys and girls into becoming men and women.

_Specific objectives_

1. To recall the first vocation we have: to be personal friends and followers of Christ, and to shape everything in our lives in ways that are faithful to the Lord.
2. To think about our special vocations: how God cares very much about the life each one of us will live. To explore the kind of life God invites us to and the kind of life that each one of us decides to live.
3. To understand how vocations work: God calls us freely to something important, and we freely decide. There is a call, a consecration, and a commitment.
4. To survey kinds of vocations, and to invite the students to think about, and to pray about, what kind of life they wish to have before God.
5. To study the relationship between our sexuality and our vocation, and how every vocation calls on all the gifts that God has given to us.

GRADE 7, CLASS 2: Modesty — A strong and thoughtful virtue

_General aim_

To help students grasp the meaning of modesty and appreciate its attractiveness and goodness, and to help them understand why Christ wants us to have modesty in our hearts and in our lives.

_Specific objectives_

1. To help students see why modesty is an important virtue in our times too, because it is so closely related to self-respect and reverence for other people, and because it helps us to face sexuality more sensibly.
2. To make clear that the most important dimension of modesty is modesty in our minds and in our heart.
3. To explain why modesty in speech and in dress may important good fruits.
4. To show how modesty affects everyday life.

GRADE 7, CLASS 3: Reconciliation in our years of growing up

_General aim_

This lesson seeks to help young people to make good use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in ways that will help them most in their years of growing up. At this time of their life this sacrament is a necessary support for their life of faith and grace. It offers the help they need especially now, even though this is also a time in which they are especially tempted to neglect this sacrament. Temptations at this time of life are more disturbing, and sins are most embarrassing, and life, in general, gets more confusing. They need now certain special helps from the Lord, so that as they grow up in many ways, they may grow also in the life of faith. Regular use of this sacrament will help them to get a strong hold on their faith and on their will to live in ways Christ calls them, even in times of great confusion and stress.
Specific objectives

1. To show why, in the chaotic years of adolescence, when faith may begin to feel less important to us, and our friendship with Christ seems to fade, this special sacrament is so strong a help in renewing and deepening our friendship with Christ.

2. To show the many specific good things that an intelligent use of confession does for us as we are growing up.

3. To show how a thoughtful use of confession helps young people face problems regarding sexuality much more sensibly.

4. To help young people learn again how to go to confession with tranquility, and without embarrassment.

5. To help young people understand that we receive the grace of conversion only after the Holy Spirit asks us to seek it.

GRADE 7, CLASS 4: Christ and the courage to be pure of heart

General aim

This lesson helps the student know what the beatitude “Blessed are the pure of heart” means, and realize how true it is. It helps them see why it takes courage to have a pure and honest heart, but that life is badly hurt if we become cowards in this. For love is the most important of all things, and a pure heart is one that makes love be true to itself. The pure heart does not confuse selfish and lustful mistreatment of self and others with love, but knows that love really cares for the ones we love, and wants them to have what is truly good.

Specific objectives

1. To show that pure love (love not mixed with selfishness and dishonesty of heart) is the strongest and most burning love, just as pure gold is better than gold mixed with lead.

2. To clarify the differences between real and pure love, which shines in people who really care about us and want us to be happy and have what is surely good; and false love, seen in people who pretend to care about us, but are only pretending, or looking out for themselves.

3. To show why the world that does not know Christ, or the goodness of the generous love He teaches, also is an impure world. Love was made to be pure, to be true love, and so generous and truthful and a blessing to all. But the world mixes the love it longs for with many kinds of selfishness, and so turns its broken love into something false and the cause of much pain.

4. To show how, just as impurity and dishonesty about love hurt everything, so a pure heart helps everything, because it cares honestly about generosity in love, and about lasting love, and homes, and the care of children.

GRADE 7, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Communication Boundaries – texting, touching, and talking about ourselves and others.

- Lesson Outline
  1. Introduction and opening prayer
  2. Teaching on respect, focus on the dignity of the human person
3. Activity – talking about texting, touching and taking responsibility for our words
4. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic Social Teaching and the Dignity of the Human Person
5. Closing Prayer and activity

- Lesson Background – Human Life is Sacred
  “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (CCC 56)

GRADE 8, CLASS 1: Your vocation: To make the world a better place

General aim
This class seeks to stress for students the importance of accepting our responsibility for making this world a better place, for seeking to overcome abortion and the injustices involved in poverty, and to enable them to realize how necessary chastity is for overcoming abortion and social injustice. (Note: Despite the second word in the title, this is not a class about “vocations.” Rather it is a class about responsibility to make the world a better place. The idea of “vocation” is in some way relevant, for our vocation as Christians includes the call to make this world more of a presence of the Kingdom of God. But vocations as such and their relation in our sexuality, are treated in other places in this course.)

Specific objectives
1. To help students understand how the Holy Spirit assists us in discerning the Father’s will for our lives.
2. To help students realize their social responsibilities in this world: “We are all really responsible for all!”
3. To show students why they should be firmly on the side of life in the abortion controversy, and to show how un-chastity leads to abortion.
4. To help students see how seriously the Gospel requires us to care about justice for the poor.
5. To help students realize why they will not become just and merciful if they do not also have self-control and chastity.

GRADE 8, CLASS 2: Living in a world that suffers from AIDS

General aim
This lesson seeks to help young people understand some of the bitter evils that have arisen from the misuse of sexuality. It speaks of AIDS, and of other sexually transmitted diseases, and of other serious harms. Sexuality is a gracious gift of God. But we invite tragedy when we use excellent things badly. It is never good and never safe to abuse sexuality. Still, the physical harms that come from abuses of sex are not the worst of its bad effects, and fear of these evils is not the best motive for being chaste. Treating sexuality intelligently is itself good; it makes friendship and all of life richer and happier. Chastity if not terribly difficult; we do not have to advise people to rely on the highly unreliable forms of “safe sex” foolishly taught by some today. There
ways of really being safe, and of having really good lives. Something as important as sexuality deserves to be treated intelligently!

**Specific objectives**

1. To remind people that Christ calls them to good and happy lives: the ways that He teaches securely guard us from the great harms that sinful activity causes.
2. To give a truthful picture of AIDS, how tragic it is, how common it has become, and what are its causes.
3. To show how so-called “safe sex” (deciding to use sexuality casually, while making use of unreliable devices to keep sinful activity from doing us physical harm) simply does not work.
4. To point out how easily one can escape AIDS if one so wills.
5. To remind students of the many other sexually transmitted diseases, how sin can have physically bad results. And these are not even the worst effects of sexual sins!
6. To show how unnecessary it is to commend insecure defenses against such terrible disease and the many harms they cause. A better way is readily possible. Chastity is not too difficult; it alone is really “normal.” Chastity is possible with God’s grace.
7. To recall the practical things we need to do to make an intelligent and chaste life easier and more attractive.

GRADE 8, CLASS 3: Christ and My Conscience

**General aim**

Years of adolescence are often years of confusion. But young people do want to be good. They have high standards for others, and they want to be honest, and live by high standards themselves. Yet the world does much to confuse their ideas of right and wrong, as it does for all people. Often they let themselves be led astray, and feel that it is all right to do things that their peers do, because they don’t feel bad about doing such things. This lesson is intended to help them in something of greatest importance to their lives: in coming to realize what conscience really is, and how they can be radically honest in facing what is truly good or truly bad in the shaping of their own lives.

**Specific objectives**

1. To help students get a clear and honest understanding of what conscience is, and of the importance of a good conscience.
2. To help them appreciate that what Christ teaches us about conscience is really true, and that my life will be more honest if I allow the Holy Spirit to guide my conscience.
3. To show how a good conscience keeps one from painful confusions, and tragic decisions, touching sexuality.
4. To explain that knowing how to confess embarrassing sins can be a great help for us in keeping our lives honestly in order.
5. To show the distinctive ways in which a Christian conscience helps our lives.
6. To show how the Holy Spirit prompts us to seek repentance and conversion.
GRADE 8, CLASS 4: The Eucharist and love

General aim
This lesson seeks to show how the Eucharist is a gift of God’s most generous love, and shows us how to be generous in love in every part of life, and so wise in living. Jesus gave us the Eucharist the night before He died willingly for us, to remind us how much He would always love us, and to give through this sacrament the real power to love each other generously and strongly. The Eucharist constantly calls us to strong and true love, for Christ, and for each one of our brothers and sisters; and so the Eucharist calls us to live free from sin (which is the enemy of love) because we are so near to Christ, who is perfectly good, and calls us to be good to one another.

Specific objectives
1. To help us see why the Eucharist is a gift of pure love: love that is generous and honest, and give warmth of life.
2. To recall that Jesus gave us this sacrament, so we could love purely too: to have honest love for the Lord and for each other.
3. To remember that must be free from the selfishness of mortal sin to receive Communion well. We must be in the state of grace, seeking honestly to love God and one another, and so to make all the world a richer place.
4. To see why it is true that impure acts, which are such powerful forms of selfishness, and turning from what is really good, especially make the joy of Communion fade.
5. To help the students see why we should trust Christ, and to know that He will make it very possible for us to have generous and truthful hearts, if we come to Him with honest and truthful hearts in Communion.

GRADE 8, CLASS 5: Personal Safety

- Body Boundaries – what we wear and what we do.
- Lesson Outline
  1. Introduction and opening prayer
  2. Teaching on respect, focus on the dignity of the human person
  3. Teaching on modesty and chastity as safe body boundaries
  4. Activity – talking about what we wear and what we do
  5. Wrap-up and connection to Catholic Social Teaching and the Dignity of the Human Person
  6. Closing Prayer and activity

- Lesson Background – The Vocation to Chastity
  “Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man’s belonging to the bodily and biological works is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman.”
  (Catechism of the Catholic Church Article 2337)
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

PARENT INFORMATION ON CHILD SAFETY

1. **Recognize the warning signs** – this helps you to identify potential abuse before it happens. A child predator:

   - Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring.
   - Always wants to be alone with children or is more excited with children than with adults.
   - Gives gifts to children often without permission.
   - Always wants to wrestle or tickle; always touching, side-hugging.
   - Allows children to engage in activities their parents would not allow.
   - Thinks the rules do not apply to them.
   - Uses bad language or tells dirty jokes to children.
   - Shows children pornography.

2. **Send potential child predators the message that YOU are knowledgeable about child sexual abuse.**

   - Always check references (babysitters, daycare workers, teachers, coaches, troop leaders, youth leaders).
   - Require criminal background checks.
   - Get to know the parents and other relatives of your child’s friends; get to know your neighbors and others who have contact with your child (daycare workers, teachers, coaches, troop leaders, church and youth leaders).
   - Become familiar with and **use** the Megan’s Law website.

3. **Monitor your child’s environment, situations and programs** – predators look for ways to spend time alone with children. If they know you are watching, it is difficult for them to find opportunities to abuse without getting caught.

   - Know the areas in your neighborhood that are secluded (woods, park areas, alleys, backyards, cellars). Do not allow your child to go or play there without your supervision or the supervision of a trusted adult—one that you select.
   - Never allow your child to enter a public restroom alone.
   - Do not permit your child to enter staff-only areas.
   - Constantly supervise your child’s play activities.

4. **Be Aware** of what is going on in your child’s life.

   - Pay attention to subtle signs of a problem.
   - Talk to your child. Listen to your child. Observe your child.
   - Let your child know he/she can tell you anything.
   - Teach your child about his/her private parts.
   - Teach your child what to do if someone tries to touch him/her.
   - Teach your child what to do if someone makes him/her uncomfortable.
Parent Information on Child Safety continued…

5.  Speak up!

✓ Communicate your concerns – if you suspect abuse or if you are uncomfortable with a situation. Pay attention to your intuitions/feelings!
✓ Let others know when you have concerns, even if abuse is not occurring.
✓ Use your knowledge to protect your child and other children.

6.  Take the time to teach your child about internet sexual predators, exploitation, and groomers. Groomers use information that they gather about the victim (your child) to make them feel safe and liked.

Below are some tactics used by internet predators that your child should watch for:

• “Let’s go private.” (Inviting the child to leave the public chat room and create a private chat or move to instant-messaging or phone texting)

• “Where’s your computer in the house?” (To see if parents might be around)

• “What’s your favorite video game, television show, sports team?” (Questions like these tell the groomer more about their victims so that they know what gifts to offer – e.g., concert tickets; Webcam, software, video games)

• “I know someone who can get you a modeling job.” (Opens a doorway for inappropriate photos)

• “You seem sad. Tell me what’s bothering you.” (This is sympathy leading to a false sense of trust)

• “What’s your phone number?” (Asking for personal info of any kind – usually happens at a later stage, after the target’s feeling comfortable with the groomer)

• “If you don’t… [do what I ask], I’ll… [Tell your parents OR share your photos in a photo blog / Webcam directory / file-sharing network].” (Intimidation – used as the groomer learns more and more about the target)

• “I have never loved anyone as much as I love you.” (Playing on the emotions of the target, this sometimes will convince kids to do things that they normally wouldn’t even think of doing)
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

DIOCESAN SAFE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY

- The Diocese of Pittsburgh has established specific policies to ensure the safety of our children and youth.

- Every catechist, and ALL personnel working with children **must** acquire State criminal record and child abuse clearances, and attend a Protecting God’s Children in-service before they can teach in our parish programs and Catholic schools.

- On April 12, 2004, Cardinal Wuerl (then Bishop of Pittsburgh) approved and promulgated, as particular law for the diocese, the Safe Environments Policy.

- On March 14, 2008, Bishop David Zubik (Bishop of Pittsburgh) approved a Revised Safe Environments Policy and directed that it be promulgated. The revised policy became law in all parishes and institutions of the diocese effective May 1, 2008.

- Effective May 28, 2007, the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) requires mandated immediate reporting of suspected child abuse (anyone under 18) if the child is under the care or supervision of a Church entity, including, but not limited to:
  - School students
  - Parish (CCD) students
  - Children enrolled in child-care programs
  - Children being “babysat” during worship services or gatherings
  - Children participating in Church-related youth ministries or sports programs
  - Catholic Charities’ clients and health care patients

- Our promise to parents to do everything in our power to protect the children and youth under our care is a solid one. Bishop Zubik is adamant that these policies be followed by every parish and school program across the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

CVOL – THE PROGRAM FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- Each year auditors from the U.S. Bishops’ Safe Environment Committee (USCCB – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) visit our diocese to ensure that these policies are in place and are being enforced.

- A recent requirement of the auditors (in addition to the Protecting God’s Children in-service that all adults working with or near children must take), is that every diocese must have in place a specific program for children.

- The *Catholic Vision of Love* chastity education program was approved by the Bishops’ Safe Environment Committee as the program our diocese has in place.

- The auditors also recommended that our diocese create additional specific lessons on child safety for grades 5-8 as well as specific lessons on child safety for grades K – 4 (see attached objectives).
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES
CONTENT FOR GRADES K – 4

Foundational Principles for a Catholic understanding of the human person, family, and love are emphasized in the curriculum for grades K through 4. The following overview of the content for those grades is integrated into the religious education curriculum for younger children. Through a recommendation from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Child Safety, specific lessons regarding child safety have been added to the CVOL program and will be taught in these respective grades.

1. Jesus and Our Homes
   Homes are places where people can be most happy. Homes are places where we learn to love. We can help our homes be happier places. Jesus lived in an ordinary home with his parents. He grew up with much love and guidance from his parents. Discuss: What makes a home a happy place? How do we make our home a happy place? How do we know Jesus’ home was happy? Why do we call Jesus’ family the “Holy Family?”

2. Prayer in Our Homes
   Prayer at home is very important. Morning, meal times, and night are times when it is good to pray. It is important to find a quiet place for prayer. Family prayer is a way to share love with family members and Jesus. There are some prayers that all family members should learn so they can pray together. The Sign of the Cross, Prayer to our Guardian Angel, Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Glory Be to the Father are a few prayers children in K through 4 should know. Spontaneous prayer is an opportunity to learn to pray for immediate needs and how to pray from one’s heart.

   (See attached prayers for use at home that we all should know)

3. Communication in Our Homes
   Children need to know they can trust their parents and share anything with them. Sometimes it isn’t easy to talk about things, but patience, love, and understanding help when tough issues need to be discussed. It is crucial that children learn they can turn to their parents first. Spending one-on-one time with each child is always beneficial for both child and parent. Providing time for family talk is also very important—sharing meals together is an excellent way to do this, even with busy family schedules. One evening a week, enjoy “family night” by turning off the television, computers, I-Pods, etc. And always before a serious discussion—pray together.
4. Communication Outside Our Homes
   Friends are very important. Maturity in relationships includes learning to have friends outside the home. It also means that children need to trust their parents enough to tell them who their friends are and what it is they do together. It is important that time be given for talking about choosing good friends and having good friendships. Provide family time for discussing this as well as time to meet and get to know their friends.

5. Media Use
   Parents always have the right to take control of situations that might be harmful to their child. This includes controlling/guiding what your child is watching on television, at the movies, on the computer and cell phones, the music they listen to, and the video games they play. It is necessary for parents to be well informed as to the content offered via the media their child is using. Much of today’s media content is inappropriate for children—parents should not allow society to dictate what children watch, play or listen to.
   
   If parents use good judgment regarding media, their children will grow to make good, safe, choices in everything they do. Parents are always the role model. Sometimes the best advice for parents is “Just Say No!”

6. Proper Word Choice
   Choosing our words wisely when we speak about others and to others shows the kind of person we are. Speaking kindly of someone and using words that do not hurt others shows that we care and like that person. Sometimes words we hear are naughty or bad, or are known as “dirty or nasty words.” These kinds of words are not respectful and show disrespect for others. There are words that show disrespect for our bodies instead of showing the goodness of our bodies—God’s gift to us, for we are made in His image and likeness.
   
   Parents should always be aware of the words their children use and show that they care about how they are using these words. Remember, parents are the role models—we need to also watch the language we use in front of our children.

7. Modesty
   Modesty is a way of behaving, speaking and dressing that is considered proper. Being modest means we respect ourselves and want others to respect us. Current fashions, magazines, television, internet and other media do not always represent the virtue of modesty. We have allowed society to dictate how our children should dress and behave in order to “fit in” or “be popular,” and this attitude has trickled down to the smallest and youngest. How important it is to form our very young children to know the meaning of being created in God’s image and likeness. Jesus teaches us humility and the dignity of being human. We are temples of God. Therefore, our faith demands that we choose wisely the things we wear, the things we say, and the things we do.
8. Knowing When to Say “No”
It is the parents’ responsibility to guide their child in matters regarding safe touching. They help their child understanding the difference between touches and hugs that are good and when they are not. Children need to learn about the kinds of touches that are uncomfortable or disturbing and what to do if someone touches them in this way. Parents regulate who children may visit, who they may talk with, who they associate with in order to teach how to be “smart” or “wise” when it comes to relationships.

The school your child attends has a program on safe touch for young children. It is important that you know what the program involves so you can be prepared to talk with your child when the time comes. Our diocesan program on safe touch for younger children is now part of the Catholic Vision of Love program. All materials are available through your parish. Please contact your pastor/catechetical administrator for copies of the materials.

9. Being Catholic is Special
When we are baptized in the Catholic Church we are born into a special family. This is our spiritual family, with Jesus as the head. There are many things we believe in this spiritual family that are the same beliefs of other Christian families. There are also things that Catholics believe that are different from other Christian beliefs. The degree in this difference is seen in how we act, pray, and live. It includes the way we talk, how we dress, and who we choose as our friends. We love and honor Jesus. We are responsible for becoming what it is that Jesus calls us to be. Our prayers bring us closer to Jesus and our spiritual family, the Church. We celebrate special sacraments and live according to the Ten Commandments and Gospel teachings and values.

Parent notes: sometimes we get the feeling that all faiths/religions are alike. But that is not the case. Our Catholic faith defines who we are—gives us our identity, and we should be proud to be Catholic. The Catholic Church stands for many things and is the one true faith that goes all the way back to Jesus Christ. We have never waivered—other Christian faiths have separated themselves from the Catholic Church because they did not agree with some of the teachings.

The Catholic Church today is constantly and verbally “standing up” for human rights and the importance of following Gospel values and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Members of the Church are actively involved in all aspects of society especially where injustices occur. Being Catholic is not always popular, but the one thing we know for sure is that our faith will never let us down. Our baptism into the Catholic Church entitles us to learn and know the truths of the faith in their entirety. We never stop learning. Teach your children as much as you can about being Catholic. Give them a solid Catholic identity. Model for them what a good Catholic is and does. There are many Catholic websites and other materials to help you. The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults is an excellent resource and can be obtained through your pastor or catechetical administrator.
10. Changing and Growing

As they grow older, children learn that their bodies slowly change and develop, their minds become better and sharper, and as persons they begin to mature. In this physical growing process there is another dimension of growing—a **spiritual** growth—as we become the persons God plans for us to become. It is very important that parents support their child through all of these changes, helping them to understand why and how they are changing and what to look for.

This may or may not have been done in your growing years. You may have grown up in a different way—in a different society than your child. You might not have experienced the negative aspects of life, love, and sexuality your child is facing today. Knowledge is important—your child must know about sexuality and must hear it from you in order to grow and understand what it is all about. You want what is good for your child. You love your child unconditionally—no one but God will love your child more than you do. Be open to listening and talking with him/her. Develop an attitude of trust so your child can come to you about anything. Just as children learn they need to talk to their parents, parents must learn to communicate openly with their children without embarrassment. You are your child’s mentor—teach them honestly!

**Parent note:** The parent handbook: *Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parents’ Guide* is available through the *Catholic Vision of Love* program. This booklet is for parent use only and explains in detail what the Catholic Church teaches about sexuality and why. The information can be shared with your child at your discretion when you feel the time is right. Check with your pastor or catechetical administrator for more information regarding this handbook.
PRAYERS TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

SIGN OF THE CROSS
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

OUR FATHER
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL MARY
Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

GLORY BE
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

ANGEL OF GOD
Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God’s love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

PRAYER BEFORE MEALS
Bless us, O Lord, and these Your gifts, that we are about to receive, from Your bounty,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER MEALS
We give You thanks for all Your benefits, O almighty God, who lives and reigns forever;
and may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen.

APOSTLES’ CREED
I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and love everlasting. Amen.
CVOL – Kindergarten – Grade 4
PARENT’S ROLE – WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

You are the best educator of the faith especially at this stage of your child’s life. Sometimes parents don’t realize how influential they are during these early childhood years. EVERYTHING you do with your child at this age is a learning experience for him/her. Your example is crucial! Here are a few things you can do to help your child better understand God’s love for us.

- Remind your child that he/she is always loved by God, and is created in God’s image with strengths and limitations.

- Share stories of your childhood, about the people who loved and cared for you, taught you to respect others and the world around you, and helped you stay close to God.

- Teach your child about his/her body, identifying body parts. It is important to use proper language to name them. Let him/her know that God created us good and that our bodies are good.

- Teach you child respect and care for his/her body through good hygiene, healthy eating habits and exercise.

- Let your child know the difference between appropriate (good) touch and inappropriate touch and that we respect our bodies and others’ bodies as well.

- Affirm your child’s natural curiosity, answer his/her questions honestly and simply, using language that he/she can understand.

- Help your child to identify emotions and how to express them in healthy ways.

- Monitor and supervise your child’s access to computer, television, movies and reading materials, setting standards that reflect Catholic values.

- Provide time for prayer each day (i.e. during and after mealtime, bedtime) using simple prayers and later, teaching prayers they should know (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be etc).

- Attend Sunday Mass as a family—give your child the gift of enjoying this very special relationship with God where they can share and participate in the music, prayers, and rituals. Help them to know they are part of God’s family.
Parent Handout

CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE
SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON OBJECTIVES GRDES K—1

KINDERGARTEN and 1st GRADE

Lesson 1:
The students will:
- a) Listen to the teacher’s explanation of how we are children of God and special; b) Orally tell how they are special by telling his/her own characteristics.
- Listen to the teacher’s explanation of why/how God made us special.
- Draw pictures of themselves identifying his/her own unique characteristics/specialness
- Identify/demonstrate ways to get along with others by a) playing a game following the rules; b) responding to teacher questions recognizing how rules keep us safe and why rules are fair.

Lesson 2:
The students will:
- Orally recall what they learned about using rules and why rules are fair.
- Listen to the teacher connecting the concept for obeying rules and how rules help us show respect for God’s people and other people’s things.
- Respond to question about how we respect our bodies.
- Respond to questions demonstrating the ability to connect the concept that there are good rules to follow to show we respect our body.
- Do the face activity to demonstrate the ability to recognize different feelings and to respond to teacher questions about recognizing feelings.
- Respond to closing questions by telling what they would do when recognizing different feelings in friends to demonstrate their comprehension of the concepts taught.

Lesson 3:
The students will:
- Review what they learned about rules and how to recognize feelings by responding to teacher questions and doing the Handout K-1B.
- Role play to demonstrate the ability to identify and manage proper playing by the rules and respecting others’ feelings.
- a) Listen to teacher reinforcement of proper management skills and proper reactions to stressful situations; b) Respond to teacher questions to demonstrate understanding of the concepts.
- a) Listen to the teacher expand the concept of responsibility and being in charge on one’s own body; b) Listen to how to report to someone when something doesn’t feel right or when something or someone makes one feel uncomfortable.
Lesson 4:
The students will:
- Demonstrate assertiveness with respectful responses in safe situations with older children and adults (e.g. “I HAVE TO CHECK FIRST”— check with a parent, guardian, or other trusted adult first) by orally responding to the “practicing the rules” activity.
- Demonstrate assertiveness in unsafe situations (“SAY NO,” “GET AWAY,” and “GO TELL”) by participating in the “Practicing the Rule” activity and practicing what to say.
- Describe and role-play what to do when approached by a stranger/non-stranger or on the telephone by participating in the “Practicing the Rule” activity and using the pretend phones.
- Identify who to tell if there is a touching problem by orally responding to a short story and b) responding to teacher’s questions.
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE
SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON OBJECTIVES GRADES 2—3

GRADES 2 and 3

Lesson 1:
The students will:
- Identify the goodness of rules that keep us safe by discussing why the family, school and society have rules and laws.
- Describe positive characteristics they like about themselves and others by picking out good qualities from a list on Handout 2-3A.
- Identify that all things have a purpose by naming good things they can do with items like apple, sun, house, person, and body parts like nose, ears, feet, teeth.
- Identify what makes a good friend by naming that a friend always wants what is best for you.

Lesson 2:
The students will:
- Identify non-verbal communication skills by naming feelings acted out by the teacher and other students.
- Name how showing their emotions in a good ways helps us get along with others.
- Discuss how some things and people change by describing changes from a group of pictures.
- Describe and discuss how he/she is a unique and special person by naming choices they have made and ways they have grown from a baby till now.

Lesson 3:
The students will:
- Identify positive (good effects) and negative (bad effects) of peer pressure through the use of balloons, pictures and stories.
- Describe his/her uniqueness as a person who is continually growing and changing.
- Demonstrate appropriate ways to react in a stressful situation by responding to questions about stories.
- Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings by reacting to situations in pictures and stories.

Deeper:
- Demonstrate that he/she recognizes non-verbal communication skills by answering questions related to situations and/or pictures.
- Demonstrate respect for the rights and feelings of others by answering appropriate questions.
- Identify skills necessary to build enriching friendships by participating in the exercise on “Peer Pressure.”
CVOL Safe Environment Lesson Objectives
Grades 1 and 2 continued

Lesson 4:
The students will:
- Name rules that keep them safe.
- Explain what makes something public and what makes something private.
- Explain the bathing suit rule.
- Name the fact that no one has a right to touch their body without permission.

Lesson 5:
The students will:
- Name people who can help keep them safe.
- Practice detective skills to be able to help in emergency situations (review things & people as observed for homework for last lesson, describe the visitor to the classroom).
- Identify safe responses to situations where they may be separated from an adult family member or when someone unknown approaches them.
- List and role-play appropriate behaviors that assist the individual in maintaining his/her personal safety (e.g. "SAY "NO," "GET AWAY," "GO TELL").
GRADE 4

Lesson 1:
The students will:
- Demonstrate respect for the rights and feelings of others by listening to/reading the story about St. Therese Lisieux in the Catholic Safety Agent booklet and participating in the exercises.
- Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings by participating in the exercise about feelings and playing the game to determine someone’s feelings.
- Differentiate between behaviors that contribute to a positive attitude and those that contribute to a negative attitude by acting out what they read on the Feeling Cards exercise, and by naming the feeling and what caused them to feel a certain way.
- Identify self control skills by participating in the lesson on page 4 of the CSA Notebook regarding behaviors and feelings.

Lesson 2
The students will:
- Demonstrate self control skills by acting out situations that the teacher gives them to show self-control.
- Identify behaviors that may cause conflict or stress and ways of dealing with them through discussion about safe situations and situations that cause stress.
- Name appropriate ways to react in stressful situations by participating in the brainstorming session about a “stranger at the door” and discussing appropriate ways to deal with the stressful situation.
- Identify personal strengths and weaknesses and their impact on others by completing the exercises on page 6 and 7 of the CSA booklet – knowing our strengths and weaknesses.

Lesson 3
The students will:
- Name behaviors that show a positive attitude and those that show a negative attitude by listening to/reading the story about St. John Bosco and how he treated others.
- Show healthy ways to have fun by acting out (through the game of Charades) fun things they enjoy doing with a friend.
- Identify peer influence on his/her feelings, behavior, and decisions by participating in the exercise on “Peer Pressure.”
- Identify characteristics of a friend by participating in the exercise on “what is a good friend” and reading about good friends on page 9, “A Friend is Someone Who,” and page 10 of the CSA booklet.
- Name what Peer Pressure is by participating in the exercise and answering the teacher questions on peer pressure, and completing the exercise on Peer Pressure on page 11 of the CAS booklet.
CVOL Safe Environment Lesson Objectives
Grade 4 continued

Lesson 4
The students will:
- Name the steps to making appropriate decisions by completing the exercise on page 12 and 13 of the CSA booklet.
- Practice refusal skills by participating in the Safety Agent – Act 1 game.
- Identify behaviors that may cause conflict or stress and ways of dealing with them by looking at situations on the Act 1 cards and naming the proper way to handle each situation.

Lesson 5
The students will:
- Demonstrate the ability to accept responsibility and consequences for their actions by participating in the Act – 2 Situation Cards – “Stressful Situations.”
- List and role-play appropriate alternate behaviors that enhance personal safety: SAY “NO, GET AWAY,” and GO TELL.
- Demonstrate assertiveness with respect in response to a safe situation through the group exercise with the Act – 2 Situation Cards.
- Practice communication skills by acting out ways of communication – by phone, e-mail, hand signals, and body language.

Lesson 6
The students will:
- Describe ways of preventing abuse: emotional, physical and sexual through review of previous lessons and through group discussion about the people we can rely on to keep us safe (parents, older siblings, police, firemen etc.) and family rules and guidelines for safety.
- Demonstrate assertiveness in response to an unsafe situation by practicing with the teacher, “No, Get Away!” after each situation presented.
- Name interpersonal situations that may pose a threat to his/her personal safety (secrets, bribes, tricks) by repeating each clue after the teacher: 1. They want you to keep secrets; 2. They always want to be alone with you. 3. They try to offer you bribes; 4. They always want to hang out with kids and never seem to want to be with people their own age.
- Identify ways to help others as sources of help by participating in the exercise on things that make a place or situation safe.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
FOR PARENTS
Dear Parents,

**Catholic Vision of Love (CVOL)** is an important part of our diocesan efforts to help our young people understand Catholic teaching on **chastity**, **human sexuality** and **family life**. CVOL is designed to assist you in fulfilling your responsibility as the primary educator regarding this sensitive topic.

We have received many phone calls from parents asking us about the **Silver Ring Thing** a well-known chastity education program, and its availability to our Catholic youth, and have partnered with personnel from **Silver Ring Thing** to produce a **Catholic Edition** of SRT that we are very excited to bring to your attention.

**Silver Ring Thing**’s 2-2½ hour stage performance incorporates high energy music, special effects, fast-paced videos, personal testimonies, and comedy all delivered in a concert-style approach with which teenagers can respond and relate. This fun-filled event captures the imagination and attention of the audience while reinforcing the message of **Catholic Vision of Love** and the importance of embracing a life of chastity.

The **Catholic Edition** of **Silver Ring Thing** includes activities and information relating to the sacraments and Catholic Church teaching regarding chastity. During the event participants may choose to receive a silver ring as a symbol of their commitment to chastity. There are priests available for anyone wishing to go to Confession afterwards.

The **Catholic Edition** of **Silver Ring Thing** usually takes place the 2nd or 3rd Friday of January and is held at Seton LaSalle High School for youth in grades 8 – 12 and their parents. The cost is minimal (usually $5 for students and adults (the ring is an additional $20). A parent meeting takes place before the start of the program.

**This is a program you don’t want to miss!** For more information on the **Catholic** version of SRT contact your pastor, youth minister or catechetical administrator or visit the website at [www.silverringthing.com](http://www.silverringthing.com). We highly encourage you to attend the **Catholic edition of Silver Ring Thing** with your child.
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

WONDER OF WONDERS

The Carnegie Science Center has a dynamic Science on the Road program one of which is Wonder of Wonders (WOW).

This program is designed to support parents (and educators) as they teach their children about reproduction and heredity. The Wonder of Wonder Program has specially-trained health science educators who use audiovisual materials to give children important, accurate, and age-appropriate information about puberty, reproduction, the development of new life, and the facts about HIV (optional).

The Diocese of Pittsburgh recommends Wonder of Wonders for use in parishes for children in grades 5 – 8. Children attending the program must be accompanied by a parent.

Parish catechetical leaders can contact the Carnegie Science Center for information about the Wonder of Wonders program and hosting it in their parish.

The Carnegie Science Center also holds a one-time Family showing of Wonder of Wonders for interested parents and children.

For more information about Wonder of Wonders, visit their website or call (412) 237-3374.
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

- RECOMMENDED INTERNET SITES

Web Sites

*Internet Safety*

- [www.cyberipline.com](http://www.cyberipline.com)
- [http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/in-the-classroom](http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/in-the-classroom)
- [http://www.nmmlp.org/](http://www.nmmlp.org/)
- [www.isafe.org](http://www.isafe.org) (for teens & parents)
- [www.idtheftcenter.org/teen/teen.html](http://www.idtheftcenter.org/teen/teen.html) (for teens)
- [www.wiredteens.org](http://www.wiredteens.org) (for teens)

*Chastity Related Sites*

- [http://www.tobinstitute.org/](http://www.tobinstitute.org/)
- [www.omsoul.com](http://www.omsoul.com)
- [www.reallove.net](http://www.reallove.net) (for teens)
- [http://www.johnpaulii.edu/](http://www.johnpaulii.edu/)
- [http://www.familyhonor.org/index.html](http://www.familyhonor.org/index.html)
- [www.pureloveclub.com](http://www.pureloveclub.com), (for teens)

*Media Awareness*

- [www.mediaandthefamily.org](http://www.mediaandthefamily.org)
- [www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca)
Catholic Parenting
→ http://www.FindingGod.org  (Loyola Press – children’s activities, etc.)
→ http://www.catholicmom.com  (Catholic Parenting)
→ http://www.crs.org  (Catholic Relief Services)

Catholic Family Focus
→ http://www.catholic.org/hf/
→ http://www.familylifecenter.net/article.asp?artId=201
→ http://www.communigate.co.uk/ne/catholichome

Catholic Adult Education
→ http://www.amm.org/chss/htm  (Free home study courses)

Faith and Spirituality
→ http://www.homefaith.com/ParentingIdeas.frame.html

For Fun
→ http://www.ewtn.com/ewtnkids/index.asp
→ http://www.gigglepotz.com/saints.htm  (saints website)

Mass and the Liturgical Year
→ http://www.cyberfaith.com
→ http://www.webelieveweb.com/home_proclaiming_faith.cfm

News and Discussion Starters for Families
→ http://www.cwnews.com/index.cfm  (Catholic World News)
→ http://www.americamagazine.org/  (America Magazine)

Resources for Learning
→ http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU.asp  (Catholic Update)
→ http://www.basiccatholic.com/index.html  (Basic Catholic.com)

**Miscellaneous**

→ [http://www.air1.com](http://www.air1.com) (Online Christian radio station)
(Site on how to bring Catholicism into the home in practical ways)
→ [http://www.silk.net/RelEd/architect.htm](http://www.silk.net/RelEd/architect.htm) (information, virtual tours and sites on Christianity’s important architectural structures such as basilicas, cathedrals, churches etc. Also a virtual tour of the Vatican)
→ [http://www.poettree.com/](http://www.poettree.com/) (300 verbatim scripture songs – learn scripture through music)

• **RECOMMENDED PRINT MATERIAL**

**Books**

→ *The Incredible Gift!*  The Truth About Love and Sex
  by Keith & Tami Kiser

→ *Theology of Her Body*  Discovering the Beauty and Mystery of Femininity
  by Jason Evert

→ *Theology of His Body*  Discovering the Strength and Mission of Masculinity
  by Jason Evert

→ *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II’s “Gospel of the Body”* – by Christopher West

→ *Theology of the Body for Beginners: A Basic Introduction to John Paul II’s Sexual Revolution* – by Christopher West

→ *Love and Responsibility* – by Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II)

→ Real Love: Answers to Your Questions on Dating, Marriage and the Real Meaning of Sex – by Mary Beth Bonacci

→ What the Church Teaches About Sex—God’s Plan for Human Happiness
  by Robert Fastiggi

→ *Raising Courageous Kids*  Eight Steps to Practical Heroism
  by Charles A. Smith
→ **Common Sense Parenting**  
  by Ray Burke, Ph.D. & Ron Herron

→ **Raising Kids Who Care**  
  About Themselves, About Their World, About Each Other  
  by Kathleen Chesto

→ **Sharing the Faith With Your Child**  
  From Age Seven to Fourteen  
  by Mary Jo Pedersen & Joan Burney

→ **Weaving Faith and Family**  
  When You’re Hanging on by a Thread!  
  by Eileen Marx (Ave Maria Press, Inc.)

→ **Raising Kids Who Will Make a Difference**  
  by Susan V. Vogt

→ **Helping Your Family Live With Integrity, Value Simplicity, and Care for Others**  
  by Loyola Press

→ **Building Catholic Family Traditions**  
  by Paul and Leisa Thigpen (Our Sunday Visitor)

→ **The Book of Catholic Customs and Traditions**  
  Enhancing Holidays, Special Occasions, and Family Celebrations  
  by Ronda DeSola Chervin and Carla Conley (Charis Books)

→ **Building a Family**  
  A Handbook for Parenting with God  
  by Marilyn Spaw Krock (Paulist Press)

→ **Raising Faith-Filled Kids**  
  Ordinary Opportunities to Nurture Spirituality at Home  
  by Tom McGrath (Loyola Press)

→ **A Parent’s Guide to Prayer**  
  by Kathy Hendricks (Twenty-third Publications)

→ **The Religious Potential of the Child**  
  Six to Twelve Years Old  
  by Sofia Cavalletti (Liturgy Training Publications)

→ **Catholic Prayers for Every Day and All Day**  
  edited by Leonard Foley, O.F.M. and Patti Normile

→ **Celebrating Faith-Year-Round**  
  Activities for Catholic Families  
  by Mark Cronk Farrell

→ **Your Catholic Family – Simple Ways to Share the Faith at Home**  
  by Jim Merhaut

→ **Loyola Kids Book of Everyday Prayers**  
  by Catherine Odell and Margaret Savitskas

→ **Common Sense Parenting**  
  A Proven Step-by-Step Guide for Raising Responsible Kids and Creating Happy Families  
  by Raymond V. Burke, et al

→ **Common Sense Parenting of Toddlers and Preschoolers**  
  by Ann Russell, M.D.
Monthly Publications
→ “Take Out” Family Faith on the Go, - Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Company
→ “At Home with Our Faith,” - The Claretians

RECOMMENDED VIDEOS (from Diocesan Learning Media Center (412)456-3120)

♦ God Blessed Me
  (VHS video cassette, Intermediate, 47 Min.- Segmented)
  The goals of this video are: to help children encounter God’s intimate love for them; to increase students’ knowledge of the changes going on in their bodies and emotions; to give students an understanding of pregnancy and childbirth, in the context of the family; to help children develop techniques for holding their own convictions in the face of peer pressure; to help children look at God’s call for their lives.

♦ Concordia Sex Education Series: How You God To Be You
  (VHS video cassette, Intermediate, 14 Min.)
  This video explains the growth of the fetus, the birth process, nursing, twins and premature babies. Each frame speaks on a 10-year-old’s level, as a friendly conversation, with many illustrations. Best suited for the parent whose child is starting to ask questions about sexuality.

♦ Learning About Sex: How You Are Changing
  (VHS video cassette, Intermediate, 14 Min.)
  This video answers questions about sex which typical mid-elementary children raise and does so in a Christian context, developing a sense of reverence and thanks for God’s gift of our sexuality and for the miracle of reproduction. The video encourages viewers to talk with parents about the coming changes of adolescence and to trust in Jesus.

♦ Learning About Sex: Sex and the New You
  (VHS video cassette, Ages 11-14 and parents, 15 Min.)
  This video frankly and reverently explains the role of sex organs in human reproduction. It encourages young people to seek support from parents and other sympathetic adults, and from God who in Christ is enabling them to become the “new you.”

♦ In God’s Image – Teens, Babies and Marriage
  (VHS video cassette, Jr. High and parents, 18 Min.)
  We are all in the process of maturation. It is necessary that young people understand the importance of knowing themselves well before they are able to form a lasting, meaningful relationship with anyone else.
♦ In God’s Image – We’re Not Sex Objects  
(VHS video cassette, Jr. High and parents, 18 Min.)
Our children today are bombarded with sexual stimulation. Television, movies, newspapers, magazines, music and music videos, internet, and advertising often encourage sexual activity. If we want our children to believe that sexuality is good, sacred, and special, we must give them an example to follow. We need to help them understand and appreciate the virtue of chastity.

♦ In God’s Image – Guy Talk/Girl Talk  
(VHS video cassette, Jr. High and parents, 16 Min.)
Communication seems to be the all important word today in dealing with relationships of every kind. If we do not know how to communicate our feelings and thoughts or if we refuse to discuss them, then we leave the door open for all sorts of misinterpretations and assumptions, or we close the door to any meaningful relationship that might follow.

♦ In God’s Image – It’s OK To Say No  
(VHS video cassette, Jr. High and parents, 15 Min.)
As children approach their teen years, they will be constantly confronted with situations in which they must make a choice; often this involves a moral choice. Children must be aware that they are responsible for making choices between right and wrong.

♦ Teens and Sex: Deciding For Your Life  
(VHS video cassette, Teens, 30 Min.)
Ms. George and several typical teens explain that chastity is not an outdated norm in our society and not everybody is “doing it.” This video will show teens that they can choose a morality that respects their personhood and allows them to experience and enjoy life to its fullest.

♦ The Miracle of Life  
(VHS video cassette, Jr. High – Adult, 60b Min.)
A dramatic breakthrough in science and cinematography, The Miracle of Life takes you on an incredible voyage through the human body as a new life begins. World-renowned Swedish photographer Lennart Nillson presents a spectacular look at a microscopic world of beautiful colors and forms deep inside ourselves. With magnification of up to half a million times the actual size, you can see exactly what happens at the moment of conception. This program appeared on PBS’ NOVA series.

♦ Ultrasound – A Window To The Womb  
(VHS video cassette, Jr. High – Adult, 55 Min.)
Through ultrasonography, observe the unborn in their natural prenatal environment as they are “formed in their mothers’ womb.” Watch and listen to the earliest heartbeat at just four weeks following conception.
♦ In God’s Image – Consequences
  (VHS video cassette, Jr. High and parents, 22 Min.)
One of the most important lesions we can give our children is to teach them that for each action they take there is a consequence. One of the difficulties adolescents face is that they think only of today and, in line with that mentality, think they are indestructible.

♦ Safe Sex? Don’t But the Lie!
  (VHS video cassette, Jr. High – High School (39 Min.)
In a world filled with double talk and hidden messages, Buster Soaries communicates. Youth and their parents find his style compelling – his content life-challenging. “I believe today’s kids are victims in a society they did not create. How can we blame the children for unwanted pregnancies when we have told them they can do whatever they want? I believe today’s kids are intelligent enough to make wise decisions about their own futures. But, before they decide, they must have all the options, and this includes God’s plan for sex.” In Safe Sex? Don’t Buy the Lie! the world’s idea of “safe sex” is leading our kids to a poor self-image, and many unwanted pregnancies. If we don’t help these kids make wise decisions, we can count ourselves responsible for the actions of the generation we brought up.”

RESOURCES ON CHILD ABUSE

Print Materials

→ I Can’t Talk About It – A Child’s Story About Sexual Abuse
  by Doris Sanford (www.amazon.com or www.borders.com)

This book is about sexual abuse, healing and learning to trust again. Annie is vacationing at her Grandmother’s beach house when she befriends a white dove. Crying, she tells the dove whom she calls “Love” about what her father does to her. She is ashamed and frightened. Told by a young child to speak to the hearts of other young children

→ Preventing Child Sexual Abuse – Making Safe Choices
  by Mary Lentz (www.peterli.com)

This book helps parents instruct their children on the skills they need to be safe in a world where the potential for sexual abuse is a reality. Topics are: how abusers choose their victims, identifying signs of sexual abuse and practical ideas for safety of the child.

→ Promise to Protect – Pledge to Heal
  USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)
This document is the charter developed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2002.
Resources on Child Abuse continued…

Videos

→ *I Can’t Talk About It – A Child’s Story About Sexual Abuse*
11 minutes, VHS video, Franciscan Communications, 1990

This is a story about sexual abuse and healing and learning to trust again. Annie is vacationing at her Grandmother’s beach house when she befriends a white dove. Crying, she tells the dome whom she calls “Love” about what her father does to her. She is ashamed and frightened. Taken from the book by the same name, the story by Doris Sanford with pictures by Graci Evans is told by a young child to speak to the hearts of other young children.

→ *Stranger Danger: Playing It Safe*
18 minutes, VHS video, The Media Guild, 1994

This video shows children exactly what to do when approached by a stranger. Officer Dan takes children from the playground to the mall and even the home to enact potentially dangerous scenarios. Officer Dan clearly explains the safest response in each situation in an informative, non-threatening manner.
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

Your Family and Cyberspace
(Taken from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Ultimately, the best protection against internet misuse is the presence in your home of an atmosphere of prayer and the sharing of Christian values, in which concerns can be openly discussed by all family members. In this atmosphere, your continued interest and involvement in your children’s internet use will come naturally—even if you are not particularly computer savvy.

The starting point of safe internet use is to recognize that the rules you live by in the real world apply in Cyberspace, too. If you tell your children not to talk to strangers, the same applies on the Internet. Just as you ordinarily expect your children to tell you where they’re going, ask them with whom they log on when they “go out” on the Internet. You listen to your children when they talk about their friends, so listen to them when they talk about what they’re finding on the Internet.

The prospect of wrestling with a computer to make the Internet safe in the home is daunting for many parents. Here are four helpful hints:

- If possible, obtain your internet access through an ISP that excludes at least some of the inappropriate material from one of their “servers” (the computers that provide internet access). Check your yellow pages, and call to see if this service is available in your area.

- Choose an ISP that offers parental control features, and activate them. These can be used to restrict access to chat rooms, newsgroups (a small number of which account for much of the worst material), and some websites.

- Some ISPs offer the possibility of keeping a record of sites visited. If yours has this feature, keep it active. You can use it to double-check sites visited by your children when there is reason for concern.

- Be sure to install filtering software. Popular titles include CyberPatrol, CyberSitter, Net Nanny, Surfwatch, X-Stop, or Rated-PG. Remember that the methods—such as keyword screening or individual assessments—and criteria used by these software packages differ.

None of these steps guarantee that your child won’t be exposed to objectionable internet content, but they are a good start. Even in an imperfect world, they are important because they communicate your values to your children. If parents don’t care about internet use, children will presume that they need not care, either. While protection is essential, it is important to note that filtering software will also restrict the ability to carry out research on the Internet and can inadvertently prevent visits to some beneficial sites.

When it comes to computers, don’t feel self-conscious if your children are leading and you are following—enjoy their knowledge as you would their achievements in sports, music, or any other field. Actually, it might even be enriching and fun—there is a wealth of tremendous information on the Internet about faith, religion, and many other matters. Pursuing it together beats being a couch potato in front of prime-time TV!
RESOURCES FOR CATECHETICAL LEADERS
SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES REGARDING SEXUALITY

OLD TESTAMENT
(Throughout the Old Testament marriage is presented as something holy; sexuality as something good. It clearly condemns sexual acts that do not further faithful love and the procreative good—sexual acts that threaten marriage. The Old Testament clearly recognizes the dignity of wife and mother.)

♦ **Genesis, Chapters 1 & 2**
  We are not created to be isolated individuals. Chapter 1 – stresses the procreative good that later inspired writers stressed—the joy that children are to parents. Chapter 2 – stresses the need for each person to have someone with whom to share life. It calls for spousal love to be like God’s love for us—full of generosity and self-giving.

♦ **Song of Songs**
  Sex is a blessing from God. Celebrated with great joy, sexuality is a reality to be responsibly controlled. Sexual pleasure is not sought promiscuously—it is pursued only within the context of faithful and exclusive commitment (marriage).

♦ **Book of Wisdom**
  Repeatedly counsels husbands and wives to love one another truly and to be faithful to one another. Faithful, lifelong marriage is the normative context for sexual love.

NEW TESTAMENT
(Supports the teachings of the Old Testament on the goodness of sexuality and the beauty of faithful marriage and advances these teachings to a more profound level of understanding.)

♦ **Matthew 5:28**
  “Every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
  For Jesus, sexual morality is not merely a matter of external behavior, but one of a person’s internal disposition and will as well.
Scriptural References Continued…

♦ **Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21-22**
  Evil acts, coming from the heart, are what corrupt a person. These evil acts are said to include adultery, fornication and sensuality.

♦ **Ephesians 5:22-32**
  Paul stresses the goodness of marriage and of sexual union within marriage. Everything is to be experienced “in the Lord,” including sexuality and married lives. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians stresses the holiness of marriage, and its sacramental ties with the love of Christ for His Church.

♦ **1 Corinthians 6:18**
  “Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body.”
  All is transformed by Christ. Our bodies need reverence—they are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit. Sexual immorality affects us in such an intimate way that it is a sacrilegious desecration of the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

♦ **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**
  “Neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals…will inherit the kingdom of God”
  Because real/authentic love and marriage are essential for our good, sexual sins have a tragic seriousness. Like the Gospels, Paul gives a list of sexual sins and points out the seriousness of their consequences. Chaste hearts and self-control protect spousal love and the family, and nourish lasting love. Living a chase life both inside and outside of marriage is necessary for our happiness on earth and for our relationship with God.
God’s Plan for Man and Woman
For me it is a beautiful thing to observe that already in the first pages of Sacred Scripture, subsequent to the story of man’s Creation, we immediately find the definition of love and marriage. The sacred author tells us: “A man will leave his father and mother and will cleave to his wife, and they will become one flesh,” one life (Genesis 2:24-25). We are at the beginning and we are already given a prophecy of what marriage is; and this definition also remains identical in the New Testament. Marriage is this following of the other in love, thus becoming one existence, one flesh, therefore inseparable; a new life...is born from this communion of love that unites and thus also creates the future.

The Beauty of Marriage
How is it possible to communicate the beauty of marriage to the people of today? We see how many young people are reluctant to marry in church because they are afraid of finality; indeed, they are even reluctant to have a civil wedding. Today, to many young people and even to some who are not so young, definitiveness appears as a constriction, a limitation of freedom. And what they want first of all is freedom. They are afraid that in the end they might not succeed. They see so many failed marriages. They fear that this juridical form, as they understand it, will be an external weight that will extinguish love. It is essential to understand that it is not a question of a juridical bond, a burden imposed with marriage. On the contrary, depth and beauty lie precisely in finality. Only in this way can love mature to its full beauty. But how is it possible to communicate this? I think this problem is common to us all.

The Service of Love
Marriage is a Sacrament for the salvation of others: first of all for the salvation of the other, of the husband and of the wife, but also of the children, the sons and daughters, and lastly of the entire community.

Loving Exchange
Human beings were created in the image and likeness of God for love, and that complete human fulfillment only comes about when we make a sincere gift of ourselves to others. The family is the privileged setting where every person learns to give and receive love.
**Forming a Family**

There cannot be true domestic happiness unless, at the same time, there is fidelity between spouses. Marriage is an institution of natural law, which has been raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament; it is a great gift that God has given to mankind: respect it and honor it. At the same time God calls you to respect one another when you fall in love and become engaged, since conjugal life, reserved by divine ordinance to married couples, will bring happiness and peace only to the extent that you are able to build your future hopes upon chastity, both within and outside marriage... (marriage) requires a spirit of sacrifice and renunciation for the sake of a greater good, namely the love of God above all things. True love increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to ‘be there for’ the other” (*Deus Caritas Est*, no.7) and therefore will always grow in faithfulness, indissolubility and fruitfulness.

**Parents as Models**

Together with passing on the faith and the love of God, one of the greatest responsibilities of families is that of training free and responsible persons. For this reason the parents need gradually to give their children greater freedom, while remaining for some time the guardians of that freedom. If children see that their parents—and, more generally, all the adults around them—live with joy and enthusiasm, despite all difficulties, they will themselves develop that profound “joy of life” which can help them to overcome wisely the inevitable obstacles and problems which are part of life. Furthermore, when families are not closed in on themselves, children come to learn that every person is worthy of love, and that there is a basic, universal brotherhood which embraces every human being.

**Non-negotiable Principles**

As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, the principal focus of her interventions in the public arena is the protection and promotion of the dignity of the person, and she is thereby consciously drawing particular attention to principles which are not negotiable. Among these the following emerge clearly today:

- Protection of life in all its stages, from the first moment of conception until natural death;

- Recognition and promotion of the natural structure of the family—as a union between a man and a woman based on marriage—and its defense from attempts to make it juridically equivalent to radically different forms of union which is reality harm it and contribute to its destabilization, obscuring its particular character and its irreplaceable social role.

- The protection of the right of parents to educate their children.

These principles are not truths of faith, even though they receive further light and confirmation from faith; they are inscribed in human nature itself, and therefore they are common to all humanity.
Quotes from Pope Benedict XVI

The Relational Dimension of the Family
None of us gave ourselves life or singlehandedly learned how to live. All of us received from others both life itself and its basic truths, and we have been called to attain perfection in relationship and loving communion with others. The family, founded on indissoluble marriage between a man and a woman, is the expression of this relational, filial and communal aspect of life. It is the setting where men and women are enabled to be born with dignity, and to grow and develop in an integral manner.

An Act of Love
A particularly sensitive topic today is the respect due to the human embryo, which ought always to be born from an act of love and should already be treated as a person (cf. Evangelium Vitae, no.60). The progress of science and technology in the area of bioethics is transformed into a threat when human beings love the sense of their own limitations and, in practice, claim to replace God the Creator. The Encyclical Humanae Vitae reasserts clearly that human procreation must always be the fruit of the conjugal act with its twofold unitive and procreative meaning (cf. no. 12). The greatness of conjugal love in accordance with the divine plan demands it, as I recalled in the Encyclical Deus Caritas Est: Eros reduced to pure ‘sex,’ has become a commodity, a mere ‘thing’ to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity…Here we are actually dealing with a debasement of the human body” (no.5). Thanks to God, many, especially young people, are rediscovering the value of chastity, which appears more and more as a reliable guarantee of authentic love.

Family Roles
The family is irreplaceable for the personal serenity it provides and for the upbringing of children. Mothers who wish to dedicate themselves fully to bringing up their children and to the service of their family must enjoy conditions that make this possible…In effect, the role of the mother is fundamental for the future of society.

The father, for his part, has the duty to be a true father, fulfilling his indispensable responsibility and cooperating in bringing up the children. The children, for their integral growth, have a right to be able to count on their father and mother, who take care of them and accompany them on their way towards the fullness of life. Consequently there has to be intense and vigorous pastoral care of families. Moreover, it is indispensable to promote authentic family policies corresponding to the rights of the family as an essential subject in society. The family constitutes part of the good of peoples and of the whole of humanity.
**Children’s Questions**

Where we come from, who we are, and how great is our dignity. Certainly we come from our parents and we are their children, but we also come from God, who has created us in his image and called us to be his children. Consequently, at the origin of every human being there is not something haphazard or chance, but a loving plan of God. This was revealed to us by Jesus Christ, the true Son of God and a perfect man. He knows whence he came and whence all of us have come: from the love of his Father and our Father.

**Moral Values for Children**

What rules should we apply to ensure that the child follows the right path and in so doing, how should we respect his or her freedom? The problem has also become very difficult because we are no longer sure of the norms to transmit; because we no longer know what the correct use of freedom is, what is the correct way to live, what is morally correct and what instead is inadmissible. The modern spirit has lost its bearings, and this lack of bearings prevents us from being indicators of the right way to others. Indeed, the problem goes even deeper. Contemporary man is insecure about the future. Is it permissible to send someone into this uncertain future? In short, is it a good thing to be a person? This deep lack of self-assurance—plus the wish to have one’s whole life for oneself—is perhaps the deepest reason why the risk of having children appears to many to be almost unsustainable. In fact, we can transmit life in a responsible way only if we are able to pass on something more than mere biological life, and that is, a meaning that prevails even in the crises of history to come and a certainty in the hope that is stronger than the clouds that obscure the future. Unless we learn anew the foundations of life—unless we discover in a new way the certainty of faith—it will be less and less possible for us to entrust to others the gift of life and the task of an unknown future. Connected with that, finally, is also the problem of definitive decisions: can man bind himself for ever? Can he say a “yes” for his whole life? Yes, he can. He was created for this. In this very way human freedom is brought about, and thus the sacred context of marriage is also created and enlarged, becoming a family and building the future.

**Educating and Witnessing**

I address you, dear parents, to ask you first of all to remain firm for ever in your reciprocal love: this is the first great gift your children need if they are to grow up serene, acquire self-confidence and thus learn to be capable in turn of authentic and generous love. Further, your love for your children must endow you with the style and courage of a true educator, with a consistent witness of life and the necessary firmness to temper the character of the new generations, helping them to distinguish clearly between good and evil so they in turn can form solid rules of life that will sustain them in future trials. Thus, you will enrich your children with the most valuable and lasting inheritance that consists in the example of a faith lived daily.
Quotes from Pope Benedict XVI

**Time for the Children**

It is only right to thank the many married couples...who still say “yes” to (bearing) children today and accept the trials that it entails: social and financial problems, as well as worries and struggles, day after day; the dedication required to give children access to the path towards the future. In mentioning these difficulties, perhaps the reasons also become clearer why for many the risk of having children appears too great. A child needs loving attention. This means that we must give children some of our time, the time of our life. But precisely this “raw material” of life—time—seems to be ever scarcer. The time we have available barely suffices for our own lives; how could we surrender it, give it to someone else? To have time and to give time—this is for us a very concrete way to learn to give oneself, to lose oneself in order to find oneself.

**Family Instability**

In today’s world, where certain erroneous concepts concerning the human being, freedom and love are spreading, we must never tire of presenting anew the truth about the family institution, as God has desired it since creation. Unfortunately, the number of separations and divorces is increasing. They destroy family unity and create numerous problems for children, the innocent victims of these situations. In our day it is especially the stability of the family that is at risk; to safeguard it one often has to swim against the tide of the prevalent culture, and this demands patience, effort, sacrifice and the ceaseless quest for mutual understanding. Today, however, it is possible for husbands and wives to overcome their difficulties and remain faithful to their vocation with recourse to God’s support, with prayer and participating devotedly in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The unity and strength of families helps society to breathe the genuine human values and to be open to the Gospel.

**Civil Unions**

The historical period in which we live asks Christian families to witness with courageous coherence to the fact that procreation is the fruit of love. Such a witness will not fail to encourage politicians and legislators to safeguard the rights of the family. Indeed, it is well known that juridical solutions for the so-called “de facto” unions are gaining credibility; although they reject the obligations of marriage, they claim enjoyment of the same rights. Furthermore, at times there are even attempts to give marriage a new definition in order to legalize homosexual unions, attributing to them the right to adopt children.

**Homosexual Marriages**

We can...see why we do not want some things. I believe we need to see and reflect on the fact that it is not a Catholic invention that man and woman are made for each other so that humanity can go on living: all cultures know this.
**Abortion**

As far as abortion is concerned, it is part of the fifth commandment: “You shall not kill!” We have to presume this is obvious and always stress that the human person begins in the mother’s womb and remains a human person until his or her last breath. The human person must always be respected as a human person. But all this is clearer if you say it first in a positive way.

**Disruptive Legislation**

Marriage is becoming, so to speak, ever more marginalized. We are aware of the example of certain countries where legislation has been modified so that marriage is no longer defined as a bond between a man and a woman but a bond between persons; with this, obviously, the basic idea is destroyed and society from its roots becomes something quite different. The awareness that sexuality, *eros* and marriage as a union between a man and a woman as a union between a man and a woman go together—“and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24)—this knowledge is growing weaker and weaker; every type of bond seems of non-discrimination and a form of freedom due to man. Naturally, with this the indissolubility of marriage has become almost a utopian idea which many public figures seem precisely to contradict. So it is that even the family is gradually breaking up.

**De facto Couples**

…the union of a man and a woman is being put on a par with the pairing of two people of the same sex, and tacitly confirms those fallacious theories that remove from the human person all the importance of masculinity and femininity, as though it were a question of the purely biological factor. Such theories hold that man—that is, his intellect and his desire—would decide autonomously what he is or what he is not….If we tell ourselves that the Church ought not to interfere in such matters, we cannot but answer: are we not concerned with the human being” Do not believers, by virtue of the great culture of their faith, have the right to make a pronouncement on all this” Is it not their—our—duty to raise our voices to defend the human being, that creature who, precisely in the inseparable unity of body and spirit, is the image of God?

**The Ladder of Love**

Christianity, Catholicism, is not a collection of prohibitions: it is a positive option. It is very important that we look at it again because this idea has almost completely disappeared today. We have heard so much about what is not allowed that now it is time to say: we have a positive idea to offer, that man and woman are made for each other, that the scale of sexuality, *eros, agape*, indicates the level of love and it is in this way that marriage develops, first of all as a joyful and blessing-filled encounter between a man and a woman, and then, the family, which guarantees continuity among generations and through which generations are reconciled to each other and even cultures can meet.
Quotes from Pope Benedict XVI

The Home of Nazareth
Children need to be brought up in the faith, to be loved and protected. Along with their basic right to be born and to be raised in the faith, children also have the right to a home which takes as its model the home of Nazareth, and to be shielded from all dangers and threats.

Domestic Church
The language of faith is learned in homes where this faith grows and is strengthened through prayer and Christian practice.

Instilling Faith
Faith…is not merely a cultural heritage, but the constant working of the grace of God who calls and our human freedom, which can respond or not to his call. Even if no one can answer for another person, Christian parents are still called to give a credible witness of their Christian faith and hope. The need to ensure that God’s call and the good news of Christ will reach their children with the utmost clarity and authenticity. As the years pass, this gift of God which will also need to be cultivated with wisdom and gentleness, in order to instill in them a capacity for discernment. Thus, with the constant witness of their parents’ conjugal love, permeated with a living faith, and with the loving accompaniment of the Christian community, children will be helped better to appropriate the gift of their faith, to discover the deepest meaning of their own lives and to respond with joy and gratitude. The Christian family passes on the faith when parents teach their children to pray and when they pray with them (cf. Familiaris Consortio, no. 60); when they lead them to the sacraments and gradually introduce them to the life of the Church; when all join in reading the Bible, letting the light of faith shine on their family life and praising God as our Father.

Instilling Love
Anyone who knows he is loved is in turn prompted to love. It is the Lord himself, who loved us first, who asks us to place at the center of our lives love for him and for the people he has loved. It is especially adolescents and young people, who feel within them the pressing call to love, who need to be freed from the widespread prejudice that Christianity, with its commandments and prohibitions, sets too many obstacles in the path of the joy of love and, in particular, prevents people from fully enjoying the happiness that men and women find in their love for one another. On the contrary, Christian faith and ethics do not wish to stifle love but to make it healthy, strong and truly free: this is the exact meaning of the Ten Commandments, which are not a series of “no’s” but a great “yes” to love and to life.
**Family Prayer**

Only faith in Christ and only sharing the faith of the Church saves the family; and on the other hand, only if the family is saved can the Church also survive. For the time being, I do not have an effective recipe for this, but it seems to me that we should always bear it in mind. We must therefore do all that favors the family: family circles, family catechesis, and we must teach prayer in the family. This seems to me to be very important: wherever people pray together the Lord makes himself present with that power which can also dissolve “sclerosis” of the heart, that hardness of heart which, according to the Lord, is the real reason for divorce. Nothing else, only the Lord’s presence, helps us to truly relive what the Creator wanted at the outset and which the Redeemer renewed. Teach family prayer and thus invite people to pray with the Church and then seek all the other ways.

**Sunday**

Dear parents! I ask you to help your children to grow in faith, I ask you to accompany them on their journey towards First communion, a journey which continues beyond that day, and to keep accompanying them as they make their way to Jesus and with Jesus. Please, go with your children to Church and take part in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration! You will see that this is not time lost; rather, it is the very thing that can keep your family truly united and centered. Sunday becomes more beautiful, the whole week becomes more beautiful, when you go to Sunday Mass together.

**Prayer for Families**

The family…is the “cradle” of life and of every vocation. We are well aware that the family founded on marriage is the natural environment in which to bear and raise children and thereby guarantee the future of all of humanity. However, we also know that marriage is going through a deep crisis and today must face numerous challenges. It is consequently necessary to defend, help, safeguard and value it in its unrepeateable uniqueness. If this commitment is in the first place the duty of spouses, it is also a priority duty of the Church and of every public institution to support the family by means of pastoral and political initiatives that take into account the real needs of married couples, of the elderly and of the new generations. A peaceful family atmosphere, illumined by faith and the holy fear of God, also nurtures the budding and blossoming of vocation to the service of the Gospel… Dear brothers and sisters, let us pray that through a constant effort to promote life and the family institution, our communities may be places of communion and hope in which, despite the many difficulties, the great “yes” to authentic love and to the reality of the human being and the family is renewed in accordance with God’s original plan.