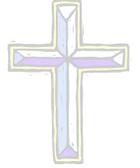


YOUR VOCATION: To make the world a better place

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality



Introduction

General aim of the lesson

This lesson seeks to stress for students the importance of accepting responsibility for making this world a better place, for seeking to overcome abortion and the injustices involved in poverty. This lesson teaches 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 our 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 specific vocations as such, and their relation to 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.

These are the things we will talk about . . .

Outline of the lesson

Opening Prayer

1. As Christians we have duty to respect the lives of all persons.
 - A) Activities of irresponsible sex outside of marriage can very often lead to pregnancy and pressure persons to have an abortion.
 - B) We must care about the lives of the children who are killed by abortion, and yet have compassion for those who have had abortions in the past.
 - C) God calls us always to choose the good. This choice is always a choice for LIFE.
2. We must also concern ourselves with actions of justice toward all persons.



Path through the lesson

Opening prayer

The “Prayer of St. Francis” is recommended for this class. To care about life is an important task, and to care about justice for the poor is not a call to class warfare, but to conversion and to peace. Copies of this prayer might be made for the students.

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to everlasting life. Amen.

Introduction to the lesson

Every serious person realizes that this world is a very flawed place. Faith suggests many of the reasons why the world made by God has so much evil in it. One is the reality of evil spirits: powerful personal beings who were very good when made by God, but became evil by their deliberate sin. Another is the reality of past deliberate sins of persons, both the original sin that wounded the world near the beginning of its history, and the many actual sins that wounded the world near the beginning of its history, and the many actual sins committed since, through the centuries, that have created an atmosphere and tone of sin in the world. Another reason is our own deliberate sins, often committed quite freely, but with certain pressure toward sin from the world as well. Popular culture often gives young people an impression that “they” (others, older people) have done dreadful things to our world, and “we” are innocent lambs whose hearts are very noble, and are simply “victims” of all the wickedness of others. Catholic teaching suggests that we ourselves have contributed, and do contribute, to what is wrong with the world, so that we have serious obligations for caring to try to heal the world we live in.

Faith teaches us that we have a duty to care for and to have compassion for others — we must show a kindness to others as we live in a world that has been wounded by the effect of so many sins. Jesus has told us that we come to eternal life by two kinds of faithfulness. First, we are called to eternal life by refusing to do evil. We do this best by keeping the commandments, so that we do not harm others: that we do not kill others, or steal from them, or hurt them by our lustful deed, or swear falsely about them. Secondly, we come to everlasting life by doing deeds of love. Scripture makes it clear that one can lose one’s soul by refusing to care about the sufferings of others and that we can be saved by caring with great love (see Matthew 25 for an account of some of the concerns we need to have).



There are also *spiritual works of mercy*. When people harm the world deeply by their sins, by creating slavery and crushing the lives of many innocent people, by forms of genocide, in which some people support one another in killing great numbers of other people, we have a duty to seek to end these sins, for the sake both of those who commit these crimes, and those who suffer them. The Gospel teaches us clearly what Pope John Paul II has said: “We are all really responsible for all!” (Encyclical, *On Social Concerns [Sollicitudo Rei Socialis]*, 1987, n.38).

1. A pro-life stand

The catechist should, with the students, read through and discuss the material on abortion. First there should be a serious effort to be clear on what abortion essentially is. It is ending the life of a very young baby. Two considerations are raised. From the very beginning, from conception, the new young human life is distinctive. The child is alive, growing, and has within himself or herself the longing for life, and the power to shape his or her own body entirely, from the genetic code written within his or her very being. All he or she will be, the color of eyes and hair, the physical foundations of life, the emotional and spiritual foundations, all are already present from the first moment. And by the time abortions take place, unborn babies are clearly human beings life we are, even in their appearance: their faces, their fingers and fingerprints, their beating hearts, their living brains. Abortion destroys innocent human life.

A) Why are there so many abortions today?

Why do people harden their hearts, and kill these wonderful little babies? The class plan spells out reasons, and shows how the world’s carelessness about honest love and pure hearts leads to such a terrible crime. This is an important section to be covered clearly.

B) Compassion is needed

This section needs attention also. So many people have had abortions that many (knowing families and friends that have had them) could not be willing to recognize abortion for what it is if honest compassion were not present also.

REFLECTION: The problem of abortion and a question of law

Both of these should be gone through thoughtfully to help the students digest the strong material that has been given. The media have made the students much more aware of “pro-choice” than of what abortion really is in itself. We should help them to understand: A) Freedom of choice is important in human life. In moral matters, people must act freely. B) We should show students as well how we cannot make something that is very bad “good” for us simply by choosing it. Real freedom is always the freedom to choose what is good and true. We are not free when we choose bad things (see Pope John Paul



II's *Veritatis Splendor*). No one really believes that it would be right to let people enslave other people, or to permit fathers and mothers to kill tiny born babies, if they "chose" to. D) We do not have the right to crush the rights of anyone, even if we choose to.

Laws should protect the right to live, and help people overcome the pressure to do very evil things that would haunt them afterwards. The slavery analogy is particularly understandable to young people. A reminder of the compassion noted above can come with this: Just as we can understand how slave owners in the South (who tried to treat slaves fairly well) might have been persuaded by social pressure to feel that having slaves was really all right, so we can understand in a way why people in fear have abortions. But neither slavery nor abortion is at all right. Each one destroys the soul of a country.

2. Caring about justice

While the killing of one-and-one-half million babies every year is the great crime against justice in our country today, there is other great injustice also. There is much failure to love strongly enough those who need mercy.

Point out how strongly the Gospels condemns those who do not even notice, and so do not have any pity on, the very poor. Go through the story of Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and recall the judgment scene in Matthew (Matthew 25:31ff). Recall how truly the Pope sums up the words of Christ in saying: "We are all really responsible for all!"

Ask the students whether they have done anything seriously to help the very poor. Do they know really poor people? Ask them if they can think of any things they could do to help them.

REFLECTION: The rich man and Lazarus

This activity should be gone through with great care. One of the reasons why temperance (or self-control), of which chastity is an integrated part, is a cardinal virtue is this: We cannot have other strong virtues if we do not have self-control. There are so many abortions because people are not chaste. There is so much injustice in the world, largely because people do not have the will and concern to struggle for justice. When we seek pleasure in unreasonable ways (in drugs, abuse of alcohol, drink, disordered sexuality), we lose the will and energy to be just and merciful. What we want is the pleasure to which we are subjected. Some people think that it is all right to be unchaste, as long as we are kind and just. But the problem is that the selfishness and lack of self-control that come with unchastity make it impossible to be just or charitable if our hearts are not chaste.

Tying things together

At the end of this lesson, it could be very useful to bring together the various parts of the lesson, as listed in the student's section.

For further reference and background the catechist should consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 544-546; 678; 2401-2414; 2419-2442; 2443-2449.