

8th Grade Study Guide- Middle School Home Study ("Living the Creed")

Session 1: Baptism & Confirmation

- Introduction
 - Most of us are familiar with the word "sacrament." We participate in sacramental rites often as Catholics. But do we understand what a sacrament is—and what it means for us and our everyday lives?
- Main Points
 - 3 Groups of Sacraments
 - Sacraments of Initiation- Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist
 - Sacraments of Healing- Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick
 - Sacraments of Service- Marriage and Holy Orders
 - Baptism- gateway to the Christian life. Through Baptism the soul passes through Christ's death and Resurrection and experiences the death of the old self and rebirth as a child of God
 - Effects of Baptism- Forgiveness of sins, Made into a new creature filled with Christ's spirit, Incorporated into the Church, Indelible spiritual mark, made citizens and heirs of heaven
 - Confirmation
 - Perfects the grace of Baptism
 - Gives the Holy Spirit to root us more deeply in Christ and its Church's mission
 - It strengthens us to bear witness to Christ in the world
- Discussion Questions
 - Why is getting Baptized so important?
 - How do you think your relationship with God will grow after you get Confirmed?
 - What can you do to make receiving the sacraments a more important part of your prayer life?
 - How do the graces you receive through the sacraments help you in your every day life at school and help you develop a closer relationship with God?
- Catechism- #1213
- YouCat: #172-178, 193-207
- Scripture
 - Matthew 28:18-20
 - Romans 6:3-6
 - John 3:5
 - Mark 1:8
 - Acts 2:1-4
 - Matthew 3:13-17

Session 2: The Eucharist

- Introduction
 - It looks like bread and wine, yet it is called the Real Presence of Jesus. It is also called the Eucharist, but many Catholics would struggle to explain what that word means. What do Catholics really believe about the Body and Blood, and why has it become the center point of the Catholic Mass?
- Main Points
 - Eucharist is the real presence of Jesus. The bread and wine at Mass is changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. The outward appearance of bread and wine stay the same, but underneath those appearances of bread and wine, Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist
 - Eucharist as sacrifice. The Mass makes present Christ's sacrifice on the cross in order to apply the fruit of the sacrifice to our lives. At every Mass we are called to join our lives in union with Christ's gift of Himself to the Father
 - Eucharist as Communion. Jesus loves us so much that He desires to come to us in Holy Communion. When we receive the Eucharist, we are receiving the very Body and Blood of Jesus into our souls. It's important to take time to thank Jesus after receiving Him in Communion.
 - Not all can receive the Eucharist because some are in serious sin without Reconciliation or because of a lack of Communion with the Church
- Discussion Questions
 - What can you do to better prepare yourself spiritually to receive Jesus' Body and Blood in the Eucharist at Mass?
 - Do you sometimes doubt or have difficulty believing that the Eucharist is truly Jesus' Body and Blood? If so, do you take those doubts to God in prayer so that He can help you better understand and increase your faith?
 - Have you ever viewed the Eucharist as a sacrament of love? Jesus literally giving all of Himself to you, to draw close to you, to make Himself small and accessible to you out of pure love for you?
 - After receiving the Eucharist, you become a tabernacle with Jesus dwelling inside of you. How might Jesus expect you to act now with Him dwelling inside of you? Do you think He expects more out of you to strive for holiness and to show a greater love for others?
- YouCat: #208-223
- Scripture
 - John 6:51-58
 - Luke 22:14-23

Session 3: Walk Through the Mass

- Introduction
 - Every Sunday, Catholics gather together to celebrate the Mass. But do we understand the deeper meaning of what happens there? Now we can.
- Main Points
 - Four main parts of the Mass- Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, and Concluding Rites
 - Introductory Rites- We prepare our souls to encounter God
 - Liturgy of the Word- The Word of God is proclaimed from Sacred Scripture (Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms, and Gospels)
 - Liturgy of the Eucharist- The bread and wine are consecrated. Christ's sacrifice is made present. Jesus Himself is made present to us in the bread and wine becoming His Body and Blood. Then we receive Him Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity at Communion
 - Concluding Rites- We are sent into the world to bring Christ into our daily lives
 - Obligation to Participate in Mass on every Sunday and Holy day of Obligation.
- Discussion Questions
 - What do you think of the fact that when we go to Mass that we join the angels and saints in Heaven in worshipping God? Have you ever viewed going to Mass in this way before?
 - Before an athletic competition, athletes spend time warming up in preparation for the game. What are the Introductory Rites of the Mass preparing us for?
 - Why is it important that the Word of God is proclaimed from Scripture in the Liturgy of the Word and then a homily is preached?
 - As Dr. Sri says in the video, some people ask, "Why don't I get more out of Mass?" But a better question is, "What am I giving at Mass? What am I doing to prepare my soul for Mass?" So these are the questions we need to ask ourselves. "What am I giving at Mass? What am I doing to prepare my soul for Mass?"
- Catechism: #1326, 2181
- YouCat: #212-213, 365
- Scripture
 - Scripture references to the parts of the Mass
 - <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Biblical-Mass-Texts.htm>
 - Luke 22:19-20
 - 1 Corinthians 11:27-28

Session 4: Penance & Anointing of the Sick

- Introduction
 - Why is the Sacrament of Reconciliation essential—and potentially life-changing—for Catholics? How does the Anointing of the Sick make a difference to those who are suffering or dying?
- Main Points
 - Jesus came to reconcile us to the Father. He forgave people's sins and gave this power to men to exercise it in His name. "...He breathed on the Apostles and He said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven...'" (John 20:22-23)
 - This ministry of Reconciliation has been handed down to the Apostles' successors (Bishops and Priests) for centuries even to today. Only God can forgive sins, but he does so in a particular way through the priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - In the Sacrament of Reconciliation: our sins are forgiven, it reconciles us back with God, it reconciles us with the Church, it gives peace and serenity of conscience, and gives us greater spiritual strength to help us overcome future sin
 - To prepare to make a good confession, we should examine our consciences which means to prayerfully take the time to think about the sins that we have committed. Then we should have heartfelt contrition and tell God that we are sorry for our sins
 - Order of Confession: Tell the priest the last time you've been to confession, then we confess our sins, then the priest gives us a penance, then we say an Act of Contrition which is a prayer of sorrow for our sins, then the priest gives us absolution, then we leave the sacrament to give God thanks and to do our penance that was given to us by the priest
 - Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick- Unites us with Christ, gives us strength to endure, brings forgiveness of sins if the person is not able to receive the Sacrament of Confession, it also prepares them for passing into eternal life, and it can restore the person back to physical health if it is beneficial to their salvation
- Discussion Questions
 - What are some of the fears that people might have about going to Confession? Do you experience these same fears? How does the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) show that there is nothing to fear when it comes to confessing your sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
 - Why is it that when people sin it doesn't just affect us, but it affects others as well?
 - How does the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick give comfort to those in bad physical health or those close to death?
- YouCat: #224-247
- Scripture
 - Luke 15:11-32
 - James 5:16
 - John 20:21-23
 - 1 John 1:6-10
 - Romans 5:20
 - Luke 18:10-14
 - Matthew 14:22-36

Session 5: Matrimony & Holy Orders

- Introduction
 - More than merely a contract between two people in love, marriage was created by God as part of his plan for humanity. How we fit within that plan may depend on our view of the Sacrament of Matrimony and its profound meaning for the world.
- Main Points
 - Marriage is a covenant given by God for the good of the couple and for the procreation and upbringing of children
 - Christ raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament between the Baptized
 - When validly contracted between two baptized people, marriage is a sacrament in which couples are called to signify the union of Christ and the Church
 - The grace of the sacrament- the grace received in the sacrament of marriage helps couples in their daily lives to grow in sacrificial love and unity. The sacrament gives couples the grace they need to love each other with the love of Christ for His Church
 - Marriage has 4 key aspects that are reflected in the wedding rite: free, total, faithful, fruitful gift of oneself like Christ's sacrificial love for the Church
 - Sacrament of Holy Orders- The mission entrusted by Jesus to His Apostles continues to be carried out in the Church today through the ordained ministers- Bishops, priests, and deacons
 - Marriage and Holy Orders are sacraments of service and communion
- Discussion Questions
 - How do people view marriage today? How might this differ from what the Church teaches about marriage?
 - How is marriage between a husband and wife meant to reflect the love and bond between Christ and the Church? How is a priest's marriage to the Church meant to reflect the love and bond between Christ and the Church?
 - Who do you really live for in your family, friends, classmates, teammates, etc.? Do you live more for God and others, or do you live more for yourself?
- YouCat: #249-271
- Scripture
 - Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24
 - Genesis 2:18
 - Ephesians 5:21-33
 - Luke 9:24
 - Acts 6:1-7

Session 6: A Catholic Moral Vision

- Introduction
 - How does following the moral vision as taught by the Church lead us to whole and happy lives, especially when the world around us seems to be in moral turmoil?
- Main Points
 - Key features of the Catholic moral life: Happiness, moral law, freedom
 - Happiness- morality in the Catholic tradition is all about the pursuit of happiness. God placed in the human heart a desire for Beatitude, for true happiness found only in Him
 - Catholic morality answers the question, “What kind of life leads to true happiness?”
 - Moral law- God’s moral law flows from His Fatherly heart. God loves us so much that He revealed to us the pathway to happiness, and that pathway is found in His moral law
 - Freedom- the perfection of freedom isn’t in the ability to make choices. It’s about the ability to perform actions of excellence directed toward what is good. To be truly free we need more than good desires and good intentions, we need virtue. Virtue is the habitual disposition to do that good. It helps the person to rise above those selfish desires and give the best of himself to God and others
 - Grace- we can’t live the virtuous life solely on our own. We need God’s grace to help us. We need the Theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity to inform our moral virtues and dispose us to live in relationship
 - 3 Sources of the morality of human acts – Object (act itself), intention, and the circumstances. All three must be good for an act to be good
 - Sin- a spoken word, action, or desire contrary to God’s moral law. Mortal sin- breaks friendship with God; Venial sin- Hinders one friendship with God
 - One commits mortal sin by choosing deliberately, with full knowledge, something that is gravely contrary to God’s moral law
 - To receive God’s mercy we must acknowledge our sin, repent, and ask God for his forgiveness, and we do this especially in the case of mortal sin in the sacrament of Reconciliation
 - Conscience- The Catholic Church teaches that a person must follow his conscience which is man’s secret core in his sanctuary. There he is alone with God.
 - Our conscience can lead to making wrong choices that is why we must form our conscience with God’s word and the Church’s teaching
- Discussion Questions
 - What is moral relativism and how is it focused more on self than others?
 - How is morality not about rules, but about the happiness that God wants for us?
 - Why is it important to turn to God and pursue His plan for us to live a virtuous life?
 - Why do we need Christ’s graces to live a moral and virtuous life?
- YouCat: #280-309, 312-320
- Scripture
 - Romans 2:12-16; Romans 7:15-25a
 - 1 John 5:16-17
 - Deuteronomy 30:19
 - Psalm 119
 - Matthew 5:1-11

Session 7: A Love that Lasts – Discovering Authentic Love

- Introduction
 - There now seems to be a free-for-all idea of "love"—personally decided and self-centered—that often leads to heartbreak and unhappiness. Is that what God intends when he is called "Love" by the writers of the New Testament? What does it mean when we talk about love—and God's calling for us to love him and those around us?
- Main Points
 - We are all made to love and to be loved
 - “Man cannot live without love...his life is senseless. If love is not revealed to him. If he doesn't encounter love. If he does not experience it and make it his own. If he does not participate intimately in it.” – St. Pope John Paul II
 - Genesis 1 says that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and that's the God who is love. So we are made in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity whose very inner life is all about total self-giving love.
 - This is how we are wired and we are only going to find our fulfillment and happiness in life when we live total self-giving love in our relationship with God and the people in our lives
 - “Man...cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.”- St. John Paul II
 - Catechism: #1766- “To love is to will the good of the other”
 - Love doesn't focus on ourselves, but on the good of the other
 - Modern world views love not as self-giving, but self-getting. What do I get out of this person? It becomes more about what pleasure, benefit, feeling, etc. you get out of that relationship. This leads to people feeling like they are being used and not loved.
- Discussion Questions
 - What does St. Pope John Paul II mean when he says, “Man...cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself”?
 - Do you make your life a sincere gift to others? What are some good examples of people you've seen that have made themselves a sincere gift to others?
 - What does being made in the image and likeness of God reveal to us about how we are called to love?
- Reflection
 - Take time to examine your own life and your relationships with family and friends. How much has the world's ways affected those relationships? How much do I view those people more in terms of what they give me and what I get out of them? Or do I really live out a self-giving love that seeks what's best for them? We need to prayerfully examine how we can bring into those relationships a Christian understanding of love, so that we can live more self-giving love rather than pursuing our own self-interest.
- YouCat: #1-3, 402
- Scripture
 - 1 John 4:7-21
 - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8
 - Romans 12:2
 - 1 John 2:15-16
 - Ephesians 5:21-22,25

Session 8: A Love that Lasts – God’s Plan for Sexuality

- Introduction
 - Understanding God's truth about human sexuality can transform our lives. But are we ready to rebel against our culture’s view and understand the truth about sexual intimacy?
- Main Points
 - Our bodily self-giving in the sexual act of marital love is an expression of our complete gift of self to the other in accord with Christ’s own gift of self to the Church. This must be total, free, faithful, and fruitful
 - The Church’s teaching on sexuality isn’t just a list of rules that you aren’t allowed to do to rob you of pleasure and fulfillment in life. They are meant to keep you in accord with God’s plan for love which leads you to the love that you seek.
 - Sex is the wedding vows made flesh. The promises made on the altar between the spouses that their love will be total, free, faithful, fruitful
 - Marriage isn’t about finding the perfect person that is perfectly compatible with you. It’s about learning to love the imperfect person that you’ve chosen to marry.
 - Contraception says no to the fruitful dimension of having children and giving life, and it says no to the total love that marital love is meant to express
 - Contraception causes a person to be used in order to fulfill a sexual urge, and prevents the couple from experiencing authentic love
 - Natural Family Planning is a natural way to limit family size that allows the married couple to be in line with God’s plan for marital love that is free, total, faithful, and fruitful and to be a gift of oneself to the other.
 - When we separate pleasure from true, life-giving love in marriage, and we seek pleasure alone instead of that true, life-giving love. It leads to problems such as pre-marital sex, masturbation, homosexual acts, and pornography. This causes us to look at the opposite sex as an object of desire instead of the objects of love that God has created us to be
 - Pornography is the distortion of authentic human love
- Discussion Questions
 - Do we see sex as the most intimate physical union that two people can have that is meant to express a personal union? Do we view sex as a way to express total love, total trust, total commitment? Do we see that when the couples give their very bodies to each other they are giving their very selves to each other? Or do we approach sex merely as a physical act with someone who happens to give us pleasure?
 - Based on the video (Part 2), how are the Church’s teachings on sex like banks for a river?
 - How does pornography prevent people from experiencing authentic human love?
 - How does the interaction between the woman caught in adultery and Jesus in John 8 point us to the Sacrament of Penance?
- YouCat: #400-425, 462
- Scripture:
 - 1 John 4:7-12;
 - Matthew 5:27-32; Matthew 19:5-6
 - John 4:1-29; John 8:1-11
 - Song of Songs 1:9-17; 2:1-17

Session 9: Catholic Social Teaching – Building a Civilization of Love

- Introduction
 - The basis of the Church’s social teaching is an expression of God’s love for humanity. But how can Catholics apply that teaching to their everyday encounters and challenges?
- Main Points
 - Catholic social teaching helps us to love one another as Christ has loved us
 - To embody this message of Catholic social teaching we need to start at home by loving and being charitable towards our families.
 - Catholic social teaching is about being grateful for what you have and realizing that everything you have is a gift. When we share what we have with others then we start living Catholic social teaching.
 - Catholic social teaching is about creating a society where people have the best chance and the opportunity to be everything that God wants them to be
 - “Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you.”- St. Mother Teresa
- Discussion Questions
 - How does this statement embody Catholic social teaching: “To know Jesus is to want to make Him known”?
 - St. Mother Teresa is quoted as saying: “What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.” How can we achieve world peace by loving our family?
 - Not all poverty is material poverty. One aspect of today’s poverty can be described in a couple ways. One way by Pope Francis when he talks about a “poverty of relationships” and St. Mother Teresa describing it as a “hunger for love”? What do you think they mean by these statements about this other aspect of poverty?
 - Who are the people in your own lives that are hungering for love?
- YouCat: #323, 329
- Scripture
 - John 13:34-35
 - Matthew 22:39
 - John 13:3-17
 - Matthew 25:40

Session 10: Catholic Social Teaching – Protecting the Dignity of the Human Person

- Introduction
 - In an age when life itself seems disposable, how can we follow God’s call to protect and promote the dignity of the human person in all places and circumstances?
- Main Points
 - Everyone in the Church has the responsibility to carry on Jesus’ mission. The priests and Bishops teach the people about the truth of God and communicating his grace to us in the sacraments. The lay people take this truth and holiness out into the world by serving the poor and the sick, defending the dignity of all human life, bringing it into the workplace, our family life, our local communities, etc.
 - When we serve the poor or anyone in any kind of need. When we encounter another human being who is asking something of us we are encountering Jesus Christ
 - We want to build a “culture of life” and a “civilization of love” by living in a way that is consistently in accord with our faith in all areas of our life.
 - One way to live out Catholic social teaching is by supporting the dignity of every human life. God has made us for Himself and has given us a supernaturally oriented soul that is for him and him alone and we need to honor and respect human life as being for God and protecting it from the moment of conception until natural death
 - 2nd key area of Catholic social teaching centers on the family. The family is the fundamental or the key cell of human society where we learn how to live and to love and grow in virtue. It’s in the family that children learn the art of living
 - Politics- another key area of the Church’s social teaching. Catholics have a great opportunity and responsibility to take the Church’s social teaching and to work for a just society in the world. To create the conditions where the human person can flourish, have freedom, a proper education, and where all members of society are cared for
 - Economics- Another area of Catholic social teaching is where we shape the goods of the earth that God has given us. We produce wealth from them and we use this wealth to support ourselves and our families, but also to care for the needs of society. Everything we have is not our own, but a gift from God that we should put at the disposal of others
- Discussion Questions
 - When God asked where Cain’s brother was after he killed him, Cain responded, “I don’t know, am I my brother’s keeper?” All too often this is our own response to suffering in the modern world. Do you feel like it is your responsibility to care for the weakest members of society, or do you leave it too other people to worry about?
 - In what ways can we take care of those in need in all areas of our life: school, sports, activities, family, etc.?
 - Who are some of the greatest role models of people that live out this Catholic social teaching?
- YouCat: #280, 438-451
- Scripture
 - Matthew 25:31-46
 - Psalm 139:1-4, 13-16
 - Matthew 19:24
 - Genesis 4:9