

saint mary's press

Leader's Guide for *Primary Source Readings in*
Christian Morality

Diana Turney

Leader's Guide for

Primary Source Readings in
Christian Morality

Leader's Guide for

Primary Source Readings in
Christian Morality

Diana Turney



saint mary's press

I would like to thank my good friends Sharon Gehbauer, Rebecca Rushing, and Georgia Skopal and my mom, Jana Barott, for their help on this book. It is because of your patience and expertise that the work came into focus. I would also like to acknowledge the members of the St. Agnes Academy community, who lovingly nurture the intellect and passion of the young women entrusted to our care. Your witness and talent are inspirational.

The publishing team included Steven McGlaun, development editor; Lorraine Kilmartin, reviewer; prepress and manufacturing coordinated by the production departments of Saint Mary's Press.

Konstantin Andy / Shutterstock, cover photo

Copyright © 2008 by Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320, www.smp.org. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to reproduce only the materials intended for distribution to the students. No other part of this manual may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

1351

ISBN 978-0-88489-990-7

Contents

Introduction	7
Chapter 1: Starting with Love	10
Chapter 2: Understanding Truth and Sin	15
Chapter 3: The First Commandment “I am the LORD your God. . . . You shall have no other gods before me.”	20
Chapter 4: The Second Commandment “You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God.” . . .	24
Chapter 5: The Third Commandment “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.”	29
Chapter 6: The Fourth Commandment “Honor your father and your mother.”	32
Chapter 7: The Fifth Commandment “You shall not murder.”.	36

Chapter 8: The Sixth Commandment	
“You shall not commit adultery.”	41
Chapter 9: The Seventh Commandment	
“You shall not steal.”.	46
Chapter 10: The Eighth Commandment	
“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”	54
Chapter 11: The Ninth Commandment	
“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”	61
Chapter 12: The Tenth Commandment	
“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”.	66
Appendix 1: Additional Resources	74
Appendix 2: Index by Topic	78
Acknowledgments.	82

Introduction

Vision

“Teacher, which of the commandments in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:36–40)

Teaching morality is no simple task. Helping students to realize that the choices they make determine the kind of people they are is not easy in a culture that defines the value of a person by looks, money, and possessions. Students may even ask why they should bother with the whole subject of morality.

What difference does it make what I choose to do when it seems no one person can make a difference and people around me just seem to live for themselves? Why should I bother with the question “What is the right thing to do?” Can anyone even say what is right? Isn’t it just a matter of opinion?

Our Catholic tradition has a great deal to offer on these questions and more. The Catholic vision of morality embraces the good news of Jesus Christ that God loves us deeply. Happiness and meaning in life is not found in being the richest or thinnest; it rests in building a relationship with God. Our choices not only affect who we are becoming, they impact our relationships with other people and God.

Selection of Documents

One goal of *Primary Source Readings in Christian Morality* is to help students realize the connection between behavior and character. Additionally, we hope students will discover that the road to authentic happiness and joy involves working on their relationship with God. These two goals are reflected in the readings chosen for *Primary Source Readings in Christian Morality*.

Each chapter in the student book contains two readings. The first reading is from either Church documents or Church leaders. This reading was selected to provide a better understanding of the chapter topic through the lens of the teaching authority of the Church. The second reading, from the writings of experienced laity and theologians, was selected to help position the chapter topic in a more concrete and real-world setting.

The organizing principle of the student book is the Ten Commandments. After two chapters of readings that introduce moral theology, the next ten chapters are readings that express the moral wisdom of the Church. Together these writings challenge the students to examine their own lives and the major moral issues facing us today. Many of the readings are difficult, but with your help the students can encounter some of the great wisdom and guidance our Church has to offer.

The Leader’s Guide

The leader’s guide provides you with ideas for showing your students the way. It takes the readings from the student book and provides varied types of activities on a wide range of issues. There is a consistent structure for each chapter and so there are several constants, yet there is also variety in activities and technique to help the students engage the content of the readings.

Summaries

In the leader's guide, the author has summarized both the Church reading and the second, "applied" reading, helping you to quickly identify readings that will be most helpful to your course.

Guiding Students Through the Readings

The student book has review questions that reinforce students' basic understanding of the readings. The author felt that students might need more assistance while they read the texts, so she has provided ideas for guiding them through the readings in ways that keep learning largely in the students' own hands. Sometimes the author assigns portions of the readings to groups. Other times she provides additional questions on handouts. Opportunities for "dialogue" with the author and for personal reflection are included to make the readings more relevant to students.

Once the students feel confident about the readings, they will be better able to discuss the implications and applications of the content through class discussion.

Additional Activities

After the activity that helps students read the texts, the author addresses the readings in many different ways. The activities bring you a variety of teaching methods and discussion ideas for engaging your students in the material. The activities are student centered, often in groups or pairs, allowing you to encourage the learning process rather than direct it.

Prayer

Each chapter offers opportunities to pray with your students in ways that relate to the chapter topic. Sometimes the author provides a full prayer service, and other times simple prayers or ideas for student-led prayer are offered.

Action Ideas

This section gives you ideas for further research or action for students. These are suggestions that you might ask students to pursue with their families, as homework, or as opportunities to deepen their personal faith life.

The Appendices

This book contains two appendices to assist you in sharing this material with your students. Appendix 1, "Additional Resources," provides suggested resources for each chapter to use in helping the students work through the material. Appendix 2, "Index by Topic," provides a breakdown of activities within the leader's guide by topics or themes. This goes beyond the division by the Ten Commandments, to provide a listing of activities that coincide with topics you may encounter during the school year.

An Invitation to Engage

Primary Source Readings in Christian Morality challenges your students to embrace the wisdom of the Church's moral tradition. It is important to remind students that their classmates bring a diversity of experience to these readings. Because issues of morality affect all of us, students will have

strong feelings about them. Neither we nor our students know who is personally affected by what issues, so it is a good general rule for us and for our students to always speak as if someone in the classroom knows this issue personally. A reminder about others' personal involvement with such issues invites us to reflect on our word choices and be thoughtful listeners during our discussions.

Starting with Love

Summaries of the Sources

Both readings in this chapter shed light on what it means to be human. Our inherent dignity rests in the fact that we are made in God's image and loved unconditionally by God. The recognition of God's love for each of us and for all of God's children is the beginning point for our moral journey.

Excerpts from *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, by the Second Vatican Council

This reading from *The Church in the Modern World* addresses what it means to be a human being. Though students may not have read this document before, they will no doubt be familiar with the concepts developed in the passage. The excerpts address these major points:

- **Human dignity.** Based on Genesis, our dignity rests in being made in the image of God. We image God in our intellect, in our will, and in being relational; we are social beings. We were made very good and holy. Because of humanity's own choosing, we introduced sin into the world and have within us an inclination toward evil, or concupiscence. We struggle individually and as a whole because although we are good, we cannot overcome sin, not by ourselves. We are a body-soul union and we are more than the sum of our parts.
- **Conscience.** Within every human person is a conscience, the ability to recognize the good and to make judgments about what is right or wrong in a given situation as part of a genuine search for truth. Conscience should be followed, but it is not infallible. Conscience can err; at times error is due to invincible ignorance, but at other times error comes from a callous disregard for truth or goodness or from a laxity of conscience resulting from habitual sin.
- **Freedom.** Contrary to an understanding of freedom as license, authentic freedom is seeking union with God. In and through the decisions we make that

are motivated by our desire to do good, we move toward God. Because our intellect and will have been damaged by sin, our freedom has been too, and so it is only through God's grace that we are able to grow in this relationship with God.

- **Death.** It is in the face of death that we acutely experience that we are a body-soul union. We fight our biological death and ultimately realize that no amount of prolonging the inevitable is going to bring about the higher life we sense and desire. The Church teaches that through Christ, we will join with God after death, restored in our wholeness, and we will live forever with God.

Excerpt from *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition*, by James F. Keenan, SJ

In the excerpt from *Moral Wisdom*, James Keenan provides three reasons why he begins his introductory course on moral theology with the topic of love—specifically, love of God—rather than the traditional starting points of truth or freedom.

The first reason rests in Scripture. Both the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus stress the need to love God above all else. The moral journey begins with the love of God. Second, the love of God is the foundation of all theology. Whether we are discussing the triune nature of God, how God redeems us through Christ, or how we are saved, love is at the heart of all of it. The third reason offered by Father Keenan for beginning with the love of God comes from human experience. Our experience of love and our desire for belonging and union confirm what is described by sacred Scripture and theological tradition. Love is what compels us; it is what makes the search for freedom or truth possible. The love of God is both the beginning and the culmination of the moral journey.

Activities

Excerpts from *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*

Guiding Students Through the Reading

For this reading, employ the jigsaw cooperative learning method:

1. Break the students into four groups. Assign each group a segment of the reading to read and study for homework (or give time in class for students to read their segment).

- Group 1: nos. 12–13
- Group 2: nos. 14–15
- Group 3: nos. 16–17
- Group 4: no. 18

2. Have group members become experts. Gather the students who read the same segment and direct them to discuss the main points of their assigned portion of the reading. They need to become “experts” on their section.

3. Form jigsaw groups. Create new groups by combining experts from each original group. Each new jigsaw group should include at least one expert on each segment of the reading. In these new groups, the experts present their segment to the group. After each segment has been presented and any clarifying questions have been addressed, the group writes a summary of the entire reading.

Excerpt from *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition*

Guiding Students Through the Reading

1. Assign the passage for homework reading. In the passage, Father Keenan describes and compares two paintings of Saint Paul’s conversion: Michelangelo’s *Conversion of St. Paul* (1542–1545), and Caravaggio’s *Conversion of Paul* (1600).

2. Locate copies of these two paintings. You can find images of these paintings at various online art galleries. Display the paintings and ask the students to compare and contrast them in light of Keenan’s comments. You may wish to make the following observations:

- ❖ In Michelangelo’s painting, God is visible and the power of God is emphasized. It draws the viewer to Paul and the impact of that power.

- ❖ In Caravaggio’s painting, God is not visible. The experience of God is an interior one that overwhelms Paul. The painting causes the viewer to think about the source of Paul’s ecstasy and thus points the viewer to God.

3. Ask the students which painting they prefer and why.

Going Deeper: Love of God, Love of Neighbor

This activity involves brainstorming obstacles to love and creating action steps to remove or lessen those obstacles. It specifically addresses how stereotyping and prejudice impact our ability to love. To introduce this activity, make the connection between love of God and love of self and neighbor. You may want to say something along these lines:

- ❖ As the readings from this chapter make clear, a moral life begins with a real love of God and a desire to respond to that love. How do we love God?

1. As a class, brainstorm ways that we love God. Students may have a hard time with this and may move immediately to how we treat others. Affirm for them that Scripture is clear that we love God in and through loving our neighbors as ourselves. It is difficult, if not impossible, to talk about an unmediated love of God; it is in and through our relationships with ourselves, each other, even creation, that we express our love of God.

2. Next, have students brainstorm the realities in their lives that make it hard to love themselves and others. Students may come up with a variety of answers (peer pressure, media, just don’t like that person, etc.). Ask them to explain their answers. If prejudice or stereotyping is not mentioned, raise the issue by asking them about stereotypes.

3. Lead your students in a discussion of the following questions:

- What are stereotypes? A stereotype is a preconceived idea or generalization about a person or group of people that does not recognize individual differences. Have students come up with some examples of stereotypes (for example, “All blondes are dumb.”).
- Stereotypes feed prejudice. What is prejudice? Prejudice is a preconceived judgment of a person or group of people based on stereotypes. The stereotype “All blondes are dumb” can lead to the prejudice “I don’t like blondes.” When prejudice is

coupled with power, it can result in discrimination: “Blondes need not apply.”

- How do stereotypes and prejudice create obstacles to relationships?
- What are some ways you see prejudice and discrimination present in our society today?

4. Return to the second brainstormed list. Have the class select one obstacle to love from the list.

5. Break the students into groups of four or five. In small groups, students will create action steps they can personally take and suggest what can be done as a school community to reduce or eradicate the issue chosen.

- On a personal level: Using prejudice as an example, how do you change your own language? How do you challenge biased language from others? How can you learn more about different cultures and peoples? How can you expand your experience of different cultures and peoples?
- As a school community: Using prejudice as an example, what can you do as a school to encourage inclusivity? What can you do to increase diversity of study in your classes? Do your teachers encourage reading authors from different cultures? Do you study history from a variety of perspectives? What kind of assemblies and speakers could you have to combat prejudice and discrimination?

6. Have the groups present their action steps for change and how they think these steps will break down barriers to relationships.

Prayer

Lead the class in prayer using handout 1-A, “Prayer Service: Life and Dignity of the Human Person.” Ask for two volunteers to be readers.

Action Ideas

- How is God expressed in art today? Have the students find examples of contemporary religious expression in visual art.
- Ask students to reflect on how they experience the presence of God in art, not limiting the art to a specific topic. Have them create a portfolio or PowerPoint presentation of songs, poetry, sculpture, paintings, photography, and so on, that speaks to them of God’s presence in the world and in their lives.
- Learn more about the causes and consequences of prejudice as well as strategies for combating it by exploring the Understanding Prejudice Web site. A link is provided at www.smp.org.

Prayer Service: Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Leader: Loving God and Creator, we praise you and give you thanks because you have made us in your image and call us to life in your embrace. Open our eyes to see your Son in each other. Breathe into us your Holy Spirit that it may strengthen us to live the life you call us to. In your most holy name we pray.

All: Amen.

Reader 1: A reading from Genesis (1:26–27):

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

The word of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm 8

Side A: O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Side B: You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

Side A: When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

Side B: Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

All: O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Reader 2:

The human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world; all of the Church's work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God's creative work and the meaning of Christ's redemptive ministry. (*The Challenge of Peace*, number 15)

[Reflect silently for a moment.]

Closing Prayer

Leader: Thank you, God, for holding us as precious in your eyes. May we realize just how wonderfully made we are, and treat ourselves with compassion. As we struggle to become whole, balanced persons, may we be guided by the knowledge that you have always loved us and will love us for eternity.

All: Amen.

(From *Teaching Manual for Growing in Christian Morality*, by Julia Ahlers, Barbara Allaire, and Carl Koch [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1996], page 166. Copyright © 1996 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

Understanding Truth and Sin

Summaries of the Sources

The readings from *The Splendor of Truth* (*Veritatis Splendor*) and “Understanding Sin Today” stress that a minimalist approach to living a moral life is deficient. Moral living involves loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as you love yourself.

Excerpt from *The Splendor of Truth* (*Veritatis Splendor*), by Pope John Paul II

John Paul II’s encyclical on fundamental moral theology, *The Splendor of Truth*, is a difficult read. His purpose in writing this document was “to set forth . . . the principles of a moral teaching based upon Sacred Scripture and the living Apostolic Tradition, and at the same time shed light on the presuppositions and consequences of dissent which that teaching has met” (no. 5). However, the excerpt for student reading is the first chapter, which is the Pope’s meditation on the dialogue between Jesus and the rich young man (Mt 19:16–21). The themes drawn from his examination of this scriptural passage are returned to again and again throughout the encyclical.

The first chapter begins with the young man’s question posed to Jesus, “What good must I do to have eternal life?” which John Paul II identifies as the question we all share: the search for meaning in life. Each section examines Jesus’s response, thus identifying the building blocks of the moral life and providing a window into some of the major themes that run throughout the encyclical: that God is central in grounding moral truth, that faith and morality are inseparable, and that the moral life is a response to God’s love preeminently through following Jesus Christ. The Pope stresses that it is the gift of God’s grace that makes the moral life possible.

Excerpts from “Understanding Sin Today,” by Richard M. Gula, SS

Sin is not just an old-fashioned idea or a stick to keep people in line. Sin is very much real and present within our lives and our world. Richard Gula in

“Understanding Sin Today” explains that while our understanding of sin has shifted, the reality of sin has not gone away. The article begins by explaining that sin has been understood for centuries as a transgression or a crime—the breaking of a rule. What makes sin a sin, then, is the rule breaking. This understanding of sin emphasizes the act itself and how that act affects the salvation of the individual actor. In contrast, Gula explains that our present understanding of sin evolves from “biblical renewal in the church and philosophical shifts within the Church and society.” Far from doing away with the idea of sin, this relational understanding, highlighting conversion and human dignity, emphasizes examining the harm done to relationships. This relational understanding also upholds personal responsibility, which expands our appreciation of the depth and nature of sin in the world today. After comparing these two models of sin, Gula defines sin in its various dimensions.

Activities

Excerpt from *The Splendor of Truth* (*Veritatis Splendor*)

Guiding Students Through the Reading

1. Ask the students to read the entire excerpt for homework, taking notes on the main ideas and writing down any questions they may have while reading.
2. The next day, divide the students into three groups, assigning each group a portion of the reading. The division of the excerpt is as follows:
 - Group 1: Section titled “Someone came to him . . .” (Mt 19:16)
 - Group 2: Section titled “Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?” (Mt 19:16)
 - Group 3: Section titled “There is only one who is good.” (Mt 19:17)
3. Each group should read and discuss the assigned passage. The group is to identify at least three major ideas in the passage to present to the class. Allow five to ten minutes for small-group discussion.

4. Going in the order of the readings, have each group present a summary of the assigned portion and the major ideas they identified, using the following questions for discussion:

- What is the relationship between faith and morality? Do you have to believe in God in order to be moral? Why or why not?
- What do you think it means to be free? When have you felt truly free?
- When truly, authentically living a moral life, you are responding to God's magnificent love. When we live our lives in this way, we are showing God's glory. How do you respond to God's love? What would you identify in your own life that demonstrates God's glory? How is your life a "thank you," an "I love you," to God?

Excerpts from "Understanding Sin Today"

Guiding Students Through the Reading

Ask the students to read the article for homework and use handout 2–A, "Understanding Sin Today," to take notes. (This handout could also be used in small-group discussion of the article.)

1. Discuss the handout with the whole class. They should have identified the following information:
 - The legal model is based upon ecclesiastical law, the Ten Commandments, and natural law.
 - What makes sin a sin is the breaking of the law.
 - The primary characteristics of the moral life are obedience and obligation. The focus of the moral life is one's self, particularly one's actions.
 - The relational model is based on biblical renewal and some philosophical shifts (emphasis on human dignity).
 - What makes sin a sin is any action or omission that hinders, violates, or breaks right relationship.
 - The primary characteristic of the moral life is personal responsibility for protecting the bonds of peace and justice. The focus of the moral life is relationships; actions as well as the realities of the heart are taken into consideration.
2. In discussing the article, you may need to clarify for the students that Gula is not stating that the law is bad or should be done away with. The relational model is not about replacing the law. What has developed is a greater recognition of why we have the law in the

first place: to safeguard and protect relationships with God, our neighbors, and ourselves. In addition, point out to the students that identifying the weakness of the legal model is in no way a statement that the faith of people who operate with this understanding is any less real or rich than the faith of someone who operates with a relational understanding. A person with either understanding of sin is moved by faith in God to live life well.

Going Deeper: The Challenge of the Moral Life

For this activity, the students will be creating skits and role-playing to examine how love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable.

1. Begin by reading aloud the following excerpt from *The Splendor of Truth*:

Love of neighbor springs from a *loving heart* which, precisely because it loves, is ready to live out *the loftiest challenges*. Jesus shows that the commandments must not be understood as a minimum limit not to be gone beyond, but rather as a path involving a moral and spiritual journey towards perfection, at the heart of which is love. (no. 15)

2. Discuss with the students what they think connects the two readings and what they think are the major challenges to living a moral life today. Summarize their discussion with the following points:
 - ❖ Christian moral living is not about following rules, or even primarily about avoiding sin. It is about living a life of authentic love, about being in right relationship.
 - ❖ Sometimes students get the impression that in living their busy lives, they are being drawn away from God or that they do not have time for God. Living our lives—school, work, friendships—is not in opposition to loving God. It is precisely in and through our lives and relationships that we express our love of God and experience God's presence.
3. Divide the students into groups of four. Distribute handout 2–B, "The Challenge of the Moral Life," and explain that they will create scenarios about relationships, which they will role-play for the class.