

TOTAL CATECHESIS

Liturgy and the Sacraments

CATECHETICAL SESSIONS ON

Christian Morality

Christian Prayer

the Creed

Pray It! Study It! Live It!™ resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.

TOTAL CATECHESIS

The Total Faith™ Initiative

Total Catechesis

Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality
Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer
Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments
Catechetical Sessions on the Creed

Total Youth Ministry

Ministry Resources for Community Life
Ministry Resources for Evangelization
Ministry Resources for Justice and Service
Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care
Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship
Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development

Total Faith™ Initiative Coordinator's Manual

The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth

The Catholic Youth Bible™

Liturgy and the Sacraments

CATECHETICAL SESSIONS ON

Christian Morality

Christian Prayer

the Creed

Cheryl M. Tholcke with Eileen M. Daily and Steven C. McGlaun

Laurie Delgatto, general editor

Saint Mary's Press™

To my husband, Stephen:
Your love and support
make me a better person.

To my parents, Jim and Betty Stark:
You taught me what it means
to live a moral life.

Thanks to Stephen Tholcke, Jen Yearwood, and Tom East for sharing your
insights with me on the topics covered in this book.

—Cheryl Tholcke



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Contents

Introduction	7
1 Introduction to Christian Morality	17
2 Social Justice	33
3 Sources of Moral Truth	46
4 Honoring God	59
5 Honoring Family: An Intergenerational Session	73
6 Respecting Life	86
7 Respecting Sexuality: The Gift of Sexuality	104
8 Respecting Sexuality: The Challenge of Sexuality	117
9 Respecting Material Goods	129

10
Respecting Truth 141

11
The Moral Life 152

Acknowledgments 169

Introduction

The Total Faith™ Initiative: An Overview

In 1997 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published its blueprint for youth ministry in the twenty-first century. That document, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, highlights three goals for ministry with adolescents:

- to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today
- to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community
- to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person

In *Renewing the Vision*, the bishops describe a rich and challenging vision for Catholic youth ministry. Catechesis is at the heart of that vision; throughout the document the bishops urge the Church to guide young people toward a life of fullness in Jesus Christ, and to give them the tools that will enable them to live out that fullness as Catholic Christians. To put it simply, the bishops call young people to embrace their faith as they study it, pray it, and live it. The bishops also challenge the faith community to surround young people with love, care, and attention and to include youth throughout the life of the parish.

By addressing each of the eight components for comprehensive youth ministry as articulated in *Renewing the Vision*, the TOTAL FAITH Initiative helps communities implement that vision. It addresses those elements in a way that pays attention to the intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral needs of young people. In this renewed vision, catechesis is one component of youth ministry; it is not distinct from it.

The initiative includes a three-part series that brings to the field of youth ministry the ancient yet timeless truths of the Catholic faith. The Scriptures and Tradition are set within a framework that any parish can apply in its everyday ministry with youth. From the initial proclamation of the Good News, through evangelization and outreach to effective catechesis,

The Pillars of the Catechism and Total Catechesis

Here is how the four parts, or pillars, of the *Catechism* and the Total Catechesis manuals are related:

- The first pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the Apostles' Creed, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*.
- The second pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the seven sacraments, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*.
- The third pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the Ten Commandments, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*.
- The fourth pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the Lord's Prayer, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*.

In addition, the core text of the Total Catechesis series, *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*, follows the same structure. The Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has found the *CFH* to be in conformity with the *Catechism*.

the TOTAL FAITH Initiative seeks to root youth in and connect them to the unchanging truths of their Catholic faith—while challenging them to apply the words of the Gospel and the teachings of Tradition to their daily lives. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative includes these components:

- *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)* and the first edition of *The Catholic Youth Bible (CYB)* serve as the centerpieces of this initiative. Each book is an integrated resource for youth who are participating in the learning elements of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative.
- The **Total Youth Ministry** resource manuals address six of the components of youth ministry that are outlined in *Renewing the Vision*. The advocacy component, which is aimed primarily at the adult Church, is woven throughout the ministry resource manuals and is addressed specifically in the *TOTAL FAITH Initiative Coordinator's Manual*.
- The four catechetical manuals that comprise the **Total Catechesis** series are grounded in the content of the *CFH* and address the four pillars of the Catholic faith as outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Total Catechesis: An Overview

Using tested strategies, catechists lead the participants through creative learning experiences and then invite them to reflect on those experiences. Prayer, the Scriptures, and other elements of Christian faith are carefully integrated into every manual in the series. These four manuals correspond to the four sections of the *CFH*:

- *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*
- *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*
- *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*
- *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*

The manuals in the Total Catechesis series are Pray It! Study It! Live It!™ resources. The STUDY IT! component comprises a 45- to 60-minute core session focusing on the chapters found in the *CFH*. Optional activities, called session extensions, allow you to extend the core session to 90 minutes or longer. The PRAY IT! component offers a 10- to 15-minute prayer service on the session theme, and the LIVE IT! component suggests ways to connect the session topic to parish, community, and family life.

The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth

The *CFH* is a teen's guide to the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. This book is an integrated text for youth who are participating in the learning elements of Total Catechesis. All the sessions in the Total Catechesis manuals are linked to this handbook. Leaders in youth ministry will also find it to be a helpful resource and guide for sharing and living the faith.

The Catholic Youth Bible

The *CYB* is designed for searchers and committed Christian youth to read and to apply the Scriptures to their life. The first edition of the *CYB* is linked to sessions throughout the Total Catechesis manuals and, therefore, is considered an important student resource.

An Added Feature: CD-ROMs

Each manual is accompanied by a CD-ROM containing the full content of its activities. This feature enables you to provide materials to catechists, adult leaders, parents, and young people in a variety of delivery methods, such as e-mail, Web site posting, and photocopying. Handouts and resources are provided in both color and black-and-white versions, and the latter can be customized for the particular needs of your group. Each CD-ROM also provides video clips, hyperlinks to suggested Web sites, and a selection from *A Quiet Place Apart*, a series of guided meditations from Saint Mary's Press.

Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality: An Overview

Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality is a rich course that gives young people a solid grounding in the foundations of Christian morality to add to what they have already received in their faith community and in their family. The manual presents young people with the fundamental concerns of the moral life in a Catholic Christian context. Above all, the course is an invitation to young people to build God's Reign by loving themselves and others as God loves them. In other words, *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality* is an invitation to become holy, healthy, and happy. In doing so, the young people will bring God and the world together!

Session Outcomes

Chapter 1: "Introduction to Christian Morality"

- The learner will be introduced to the Church's teaching on morality.
- The learner will understand the meaning in Catholic Tradition of beatitude, free will, and sin.
- The learner will realize that all humans are created in the image and likeness of God.
- The learner will apply the three factors for determining the morality of individual human actions: the action itself, the intent, and the circumstances.

Chapter 2: “Social Justice”

- The learner will recognize that God calls human society to reflect the loving relationship within the Trinity.
- The learner will understand the four foundations of Catholic social teaching: the common good, political responsibility, human dignity, and solidarity.
- The learner will discover the biblical roots of social justice.
- The learner will explore the interdependent relationship between service and justice.

Chapter 3: “Sources of Moral Truth”

- The learner will recognize natural law as part of human nature.
- The learner will appreciate the relationship between the Old Law (the Ten Commandments) and the New Law (the law of the Gospel).
- The learner will be able to identify the laws, or precepts, of the Church.
- The learner will discover ways to integrate these laws with the formation of conscience.

Chapter 4: “Honoring God”

- The learner will explore what it means to put God above all things.
- The learner will realize that everyday speech is a powerful tool for serving God.
- The learner will develop strategies for observing the Sabbath.

Chapter 5: “Honoring Family: An Intergenerational Session”

- The learner will appreciate that God is the source of the mutual respect due within the family.
- The learner will understand the relationship between the child’s responsibility of respect and the parent’s duty of care.
- The learner will understand how the fourth commandment applies to the civil authority.
- The learner will understand that civil disobedience and political action are based on Catholic teachings.

Chapter 6: “Respecting Life”

- The learner will recognize that the foundation of the fifth commandment is the fact that all humans are created in the image of God.
- The learner will understand how life issues—such as capital punishment, war, abortion, genetic engineering, euthanasia, suicide, and scandal—are related to the fifth commandment.

- The learner will realize that the responsibility to respect life includes respecting her or his own health.

Chapter 7: “Respecting Sexuality: The Gift of Sexuality”

- The learner will appreciate God’s gift of sexuality.
- The learner will understand that marriage is the appropriate place for the full expression of the gift of sexuality.
- The learner will explore the value of chastity in marriage and in the single life.
- The learner will understand the reasons for the exclusive expression of sexual relations in a sacramental marriage, revealed in the sixth commandment, and the value of purity of heart, which is the basis of the ninth commandment.

Chapter 8: “Respecting Sexuality: The Challenge of Sexuality”

- The learner will understand how sexual sin separates us from God’s plan and how chastity strengthens our relationship with God.
- The learner will confront the sexual temptations of today’s culture, which affect both single and married people.
- The learner will understand the situation of the homosexual person in the context of God’s gift of sexuality.

Chapter 9: “Respecting Material Goods”

- The learner will understand the Church’s teaching on the seventh commandment with respect to stealing.
- The learner will be aware of the application of the tenth commandment to the dangers of materialism and envy.
- The learner will consider the best way to serve God through vocation, work, and wealth.

Chapter 10: “Respecting Truth”

- The learner will understand the importance of truth and the harm of lying.
- The learner will experience the power of words to make or break confidences and reputations.
- The learner will realize how important a foundation of truth is for society and how necessary reparations are when truth is violated.

Chapter 11: “The Moral Life”

- The learner will understand and learn how to cultivate the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.
- The learner will understand the value and the source of the theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity.
- The learner will appreciate the meaning and importance of forgiveness and grace in living a Christian moral life.

How to Use This Manual

You may present the materials in this manual in its entirety, or you may select sessions and activities that you think will be best for the young people with whom you work. The sessions and activities are not sequential, so you may organize them in the way that is most appropriate for your situation.

Each session begins with a brief overview, a list of expected outcomes, and a list of recommended background reading that includes corresponding *CFH* pages, related *Catechism* paragraphs, scriptural connections, and *CYB* article connections. All articles are excerpted from the first edition of the *CYB*. The next element is a suggested schedule, which is to be used as a starting point and modified according to your circumstances. A checklist of the preparation required, including all materials needed, is the next part of the presentation of every session. A complete description of the session procedure is then provided, including a core activity, session extensions, prayer experiences, and options and actions. The procedure descriptions are formatted as follows.

STUDY IT! A Core Session and Session Extensions

Each session can be expanded and customized to meet your schedule and the needs of your group. All the sessions begin with a core activity that should be used before any other activity in the session plan. Core sessions are structured for a 40- to 45-minute time frame and correspond to the content in the *CFH*. You may expand the sessions by using additional activities known as session extensions. These strategies vary in length from 10 to 60 minutes. Session extensions are intended for further development and study of the session theme and topics.

All the learning strategies in this manual are based on the praxis method of experience, analysis, and reflection, in dialogue with the Scriptures and Tradition, leading to synthesis of new learnings and insights. Variations are often suggested, including ideas for gender-specific groups and for larger or smaller groups.

Some manuals include sidebars that suggest specific *CFH* connections, and all manuals incorporate sidebars that suggest specific musical selections

from *Spirit & Song* (Portland, OR: OCP Publications, 1999). The lists in those sidebars are not exhaustive; music resources are available from a variety of music publishers, and a Bible concordance will provide additional citations if you want to add a more substantial scriptural component to a session. *The Saint Mary's Press Essential Bible Concordance* offers a simple, user-friendly index to key words in the Bible. Some of the sessions provide a list of media resources—such as print, video, and Internet—for more exploration. Family approaches provide simple, follow-up suggestions for family learning, enrichment, celebration, prayer, and service. In addition, all the activities can be enhanced by the creativity and expertise of the adult leader.

Because catechesis requires personal reflection, a Journal Activities sidebar with questions and suggestions for deeper analysis and reflection is provided in most sessions. Although those questions and suggestions may be used for oral discussion, it is recommended that they be employed to prompt a written exercise. An ongoing journal, reflection papers, or letters to themselves or God can help the participants process the material and activities, making connections to their own lives.

PRAY IT! Prayer Experiences

Each session includes opportunities and suggestions for prayer focused on the session's theme. Prayer forms include guided meditation, shared prayer, music, silence, prayers by young people, reflective reading, and experiences created by the participants. The PRAY IT! component gives the young people an opportunity to bring their insights and concerns to God in prayer. The time frame for prayer experiences varies from 5 to 20 minutes.

LIVE IT! Options and Actions

This manual can be a springboard for connections with other youth ministry experiences. Therefore all its sessions include additional strategies to support the learning process. Those activities provide good follow-up for the STUDY IT! core activities, and allow for age-appropriate assimilation of the material. They might include off-site events, intergenerational ideas, parish involvement, prayer and liturgical celebrations, service options, and social action.

Session Talk Points

To encourage and support the growth of family faith, each session offers a “take home” handout that presents talk points, to encourage ongoing conversation about the session's topics. The handout includes a summary of the session content, which is taken directly from the corresponding chapter of the *CFH*. Participants can also use the handout with small community

groups, with peer groups, and for personal reflection. With this material available on a CD-ROM, you can customize it and choose a means of delivery that works best for your situation.

Handouts and Resources

All the necessary handouts and resources for a session are found at the end of that session in the manual. They are also found on the accompanying CD-ROM, in both color and black-and-white versions. The black-and-white materials may be customized to suit your particular needs.

Teaching This Course

Preparing Yourself

Read each session or activity before you facilitate it; then use it creatively to meet the needs of the young people in your group. Knowing your audience will help you determine which strategies will work best for it. Some of the activities require preparation. Allow yourself adequate time to get ready.

All the sessions include presentations of key concepts and teachings. The session plans offer guidelines for these talks. Preparing for those presentations is vital to the success of each session. You will want to review relevant content in the *CFH* and the *Catechism*. Spend time putting these presentations together so that they are clear and hold the attention of the participants.

Standard Materials

To save time, consider gathering frequently used materials in bins and storing those bins in a place that is accessible to all staff and volunteer leaders. Here are some recommendations for organizing the bins.

Supply Bin

The following items appear frequently in the materials checklists:

- *The Catholic Youth Bible*, at least one for every two participants
- *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, at least one for every two participants
- masking tape
- cellophane tape
- washable and permanent markers (thick-line and thin-line)
- pens or pencils
- self-stick notes
- scissors
- newsprint

- blank paper, scrap paper, and notebook paper
- journals, one for each participant
- index cards
- baskets
- candles and matches
- items to create a prayer space (for example, a colored cloth, a cross, a bowl for water, and a vase for flowers)

Music Bin

Young people often find profound meaning in the music and lyrics of songs, both past and present. Also, the right music can set the appropriate mood for a prayer or an activity. Begin with a small collection of tapes or CDs in a music bin, and add to it over time. You might ask the young people to put some of their favorite music in the bin. The bin might include the following styles of music:

- *Prayerful, reflective instrumental music*, such as the kind that is available in the adult alternative section of music stores. Labels that specialize in this type of music include Windham Hill and Narada.
- *Popular songs with powerful messages*. If you are not well versed in popular music, ask the young people to offer suggestions.
- *The music of contemporary Catholic artists*. Many young people are familiar with the work of Catholic musicians such as Steve Angrisano, Sarah Hart, David W. Kauffman, Michael Mahler, Jesse Manibusan, and Danielle Rose.

Also consider including songbooks and hymnals. Many of the musical selections suggested in Total Catechesis are taken from the *Spirit & Song* hymnal, published by Oregon Catholic Press (OCP). If you wish to order copies of this hymnal, please contact OCP directly at www.ocp.org or by calling 800-548-8749. Including copies of your parish's chosen hymnal is a suitable option as well. You might also check with your liturgy or music director for recordings of parish hymns.

Some Closing Thoughts

As a catechist you have taken on an exciting and profoundly important task. We hope you find this material helpful as you invite young people into a deeper relationship with the marvelous community of faith we know as the Catholic Church. Please be assured of our continual prayers for you and the young people you serve.

Your Comments or Suggestions

Saint Mary's Press wants to know your reactions to the materials in the Total Catechesis series. We are open to all kinds of suggestions, including these:

- an alternative way to conduct an activity
- an audiovisual or other media resource that worked well with this material
- a book or an article you found helpful
- an original activity or process
- a prayer experience or service
- a helpful preparation for other leaders
- an observation about the themes or content of this material

If you have a comment or suggestion, please write to us at 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1318; call us at our toll-free number, 800-533-8095; or e-mail us at smp@smp.org. Your ideas will help improve future editions of Total Catechesis.

1 Introduction to Christian Morality

AT A GLANCE

Study It

Core Session

- ◆ What Makes an Action Moral? (45 minutes)

Session Extensions

- ◆ Created in the Image and Likeness of God (20 minutes)
- ◆ Hometown Heroes (25 minutes)

Pray It

- ◆ Called to God (15 minutes)

Live It

- ◆ The good Samaritan for today
- ◆ Maturity checklist
- ◆ Bound to goodness
- ◆ An apple a day
- ◆ Sin inside and out

Overview

Young people are more likely to be open to the challenges of living a moral life if they first understand its relationship to their free will, their happiness or beatitude, and their creation in the image of God. This introductory session on Christian morality covers the foundational concepts that underlie Christian morality in the Catholic context. The session also addresses sin in its multiple forms and the effect of sin on a person's relationship with God. Participants will learn a framework for assessing the morality of their actions.

Outcomes

- ◆ The learner will be introduced to the Church's teaching on morality.
- ◆ The learner will understand the meaning in Catholic Tradition of beatitude, free will, and sin.
- ◆ The learner will realize that all humans are created in the image and likeness of God.
- ◆ The learner will apply the three factors for determining the morality of individual human actions: the action itself, the intent, and the circumstances.

Background Reading

- ◆ This session covers pages 206–215 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*.
- ◆ For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 1691–1761 and 1846–1876 of the *Catechism*.
- ◆ Scriptural connections: Gen. 1:26–31 (Creation), Matt. 5:1–12 (the Beatitudes), Luke 10:25–37 (the good Samaritan)

- ◆ *Catholic Youth Bible* article connections: “In God’s Image” (Gen. 1:26–27), “An Upside-Down Kingdom” (Matt. 5:1–12), “A Top-Shelf Life” (Col. 3:1–4)

Study it!

Core Session

What Makes an Action Moral? (45 minutes)

Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - copies of handout 1, “Introduction to Christian Morality,” one for each participant
 - copies of handout 2, “Morally Good or Morally Suspect?” one for each small group
 - pens
 - newsprint
 - masking tape
 - markers
- Review the summary points in step 1 of this session and the relevant material on pages 206–215 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*. Be prepared to share the information with the young people.
- Create three newsprint sheets for the participants to view during the exercise:
 - The first sheet has the heading “Action” and displays these questions: Does this action promote well-being for me and for others? Does the action show respect for God, for me, and for others?
 - The second sheet has the heading “Intent” and displays these questions: What do you hope to accomplish by making this choice? What is the underlying “good” you are trying to achieve? Does that “good” reflect what God wants for you?
 - The third sheet has the heading “Circumstances” and displays these questions: What influences are causing you to consider this action? How free are you to choose not to do it?

1. Begin the session by conducting a brief presentation on Christian morality, using the bullet points below, which are taken from pages 206–215 of the *CFH*:

- When we venture into the territory of deciding between right and wrong, we are talking about morality, “the goodness or evil of human acts” (*CCC*, p. 888).
- God’s gift of free will means that we have the ability to make conscious choices.
- So our question is, “How do we live the right way?”—which for Catholics means “How does God want me to live?” Fortunately we have the Scriptures and Tradition to help answer that question.
- From the moment you were conceived, you were made in God’s image, meaning that you—and every other person on earth—are first and foremost essentially good. When we choose wisely, we are acting in accordance with our true nature. This is why doing the right thing ultimately makes us happy.
- Our source of happiness is not material success, fame, or unending hours of leisure and pleasure. Rather, what God intends for us is complete joy and a sense of well-being. Our ultimate destiny is to be eternally happy with God in heaven. Jesus gives us a glimpse of this destiny in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–26). *Beatitude* means “perfect happiness or blessedness.”
- God created us in his image with a natural desire to follow the moral law, to do good and avoid evil. At the same time, because of original sin, we are inclined toward sin, or choosing to do the wrong thing. The ability to use reason to distinguish between right and wrong is the work of our conscience. Our conscience is the interior voice that helps us to know right from wrong and then to act on that knowledge.
- But that’s where our free will comes in. We can consciously choose the truly good life. Of course, this gift of human freedom has a flip side. We are also responsible for the choices we make.
- Three factors determine the morality of any human action: (1) whether the action itself is inherently good or evil, (2) the intention of the person doing the action, and (3) the circumstances of the action. All three of these elements help determine whether a particular act is good or bad.
- When we choose to do wrong instead of doing good, we commit sin, and we hurt our relationship with our self, with others, and with God. Sin is any word that we speak, action that we perform, or desire that we have that is contrary to the law that God has inscribed in our heart at the very moment we are conceived.
- Christian morality, then, is being the person God created you to be—a person who chooses to be good. You grow into a moral person by choosing good acts, carefully examining your motives to be sure your intentions are good, and avoiding circumstances that lessen your ability to choose freely.

Mediaconnections

- ◆ Invite the participants to watch an episode of *The Andy Griffith Show*, *Leave It to Beaver*, or *Little House on the Prairie*. Although people might laugh at the way the characters dress or how old-fashioned they appear when compared with today’s TV sitcoms, moral stories happen in each episode. Offer these questions for discussion: What happened to the characters? What was the situation? What choices were possible? What choice was made? What moral lesson does the episode convey?
- ◆ Suggest that as the participants watch television this week, they look for the moral lesson in the shows they view. Although the characters might not be acting morally, invite the participants to consider this question: If I were re-writing this show to

reflect Catholic morality, what would I change?

- ◆ Suggest that when the participants hear a favorite song this week, they concentrate on the message it proclaims. Whether it is a love song or something else, ask them to consider the following questions: Does the song’s message convey a moral value? If yes, what is that moral value? If no, what moral value does it contradict? Why would you spend your time listening to something that is not in keeping with your Catholic morality?

TryThis

Instead of or in addition to using the questions on handout 2, have the participants identify some of the moral dilemmas they face in life. Perform the “action–intent–circumstances” analysis with these situations.

2. Distribute pens and divide the participants into groups of two to four. Tape the newsprint sheets on the wall. Give each group a copy of handout 2.
3. Describe the exercise to the participants as follows:
 - The goal is to explore whether particular activities are moral or not, based on an analysis of the three factors that determine the morality of any human action: the action itself, the intent, and the circumstances.
 - Handout 2 presents a series of moral dilemmas. You have an opportunity to decide whether the action is good, neutral, or bad; whether the intent is good; and whether any circumstances limit the freedom to decide.
 - The questions on the newsprint will help you make these determinations.
4. Give the groups 15 minutes to complete the handout. Consider walking through the first question to set an example of how the participants will need to proceed. Remind them when necessary to look at the questions on the newsprint.
5. When the groups have completed the handout, discuss each question in order. If the groups don't agree on the analysis of a particular situation, talk through the differences. Then have the whole group determine whether the person should do the act. Consider asking the participants for alternative actions if they determine that the person should not do the act. Then discuss those options as well. Refer to the questions on the newsprint as necessary. If participants are having trouble making a decision, explain again that the action must be good or neutral, the intent must be good, and the circumstances must not impair the freedom of the person deciding. Point out how these conditions have or have not been met.
6. Close this activity by inviting the participants to apply this analysis tool to the decisions they have to make this week. Be sure to note that the content of this session was drawn from chapter 21 of the *CFH*. Encourage the participants to read and review it in the next few days.

Session Extensions

Created in the Image and Likeness of God (20 minutes)

Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - modeling clay, a piece that fills the palm of the hand, one piece for each participant
 - newsprint
 - markers

- a tape player or a CD player
- instrumental music
- Write the following quotes on separate sheets of newsprint:
 - Of all earthly creatures, only man is “capable of knowing and loving his Creator” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 12).
 - “Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. . . . And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead” (*CCC*, no. 357).
 - “God created everything for man,¹ but man in turn was created to serve and love God and to offer all creation back to him” (*CCC*, no. 358).
 - “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27).
- 1. Introduce this activity by saying something like the following:
 - We have always heard that we are created in the image and likeness of God. Often we find that hard to believe. We do not have perfect features; we are not always as nice as we should be, and the list goes on. So how can we be created in God's image?
 - Read Genesis 1:27.
 - 2. Distribute a piece of modeling clay to each participant. Give these directions, taking your time, pausing after each bullet point, and using a gentle, low voice:
 - Close your eyes, or look at a neutral spot that won't distract you. Do not look at the clay. Allow yourself to get comfortable.
 - Think about the fact that you are created in the image and likeness of God.
 - Feel the clay in your hands. Without looking at it, move it around, squish it, squeeze it, shape it, mold it, and squish it again. Keep manipulating the clay, paying attention to how it feels, letting yourself get used to having it in your hands.
 - While you are still working the clay in your hands, think again about being made in the image of God. What does this statement mean to you? For what godly qualities are you especially grateful? What might you be able to do someday with these qualities?
 - Now stop working the clay, and open your eyes. Look at the clay in your hands. Does it look like anything in particular? Take a moment to make any small changes in it, but leave it mostly as it is.
 - Can you see whether what you have created in the clay represents who you are as a person created in the image of God? Does your clay figure reflect a current mood?

JournalACTIVITIES

- ◆ How does living a moral life help me grow into the person God intends me to become?
- ◆ What did I do this week to exercise *free will* in favor of God, to avoid *sin*, and to live a life of *beatitude*? What did I do that worked against exercising *free will* in favor of God, avoiding *sin*, and living a life of *beatitude*?
- ◆ Read these words from Pope John Paul II at the beginning of the day, and keep them in mind throughout the day. At the end of the day, answer this question: How did I see this wisdom come to life today?

To be truly free does not at all mean doing everything that pleases me, or doing what I want to do. . . . To be truly free means to use one's own freedom for what is a true good.

(Pope John Paul II, *Dilecti Amici*, quoted in *CFH*, p. 209)

TryThis

If your group is small enough or if you have enough time, invite the pairs of participants from step 3 to introduce each other to the whole group and to describe what they molded with their clay.

Draw attention to and incorporate in your remarks the quotes that you have posted on newsprint. Invite discussion by asking questions like the following to draw the participants deeper into the quotations:

- What does the first quote suggest about your responsibility to God? Is your responsibility different than that of other creatures? Why?
- This question leads to the second quote, which uses the word *dignity*. What does dignity mean to you in this context? Think about yourself in relationship to God. Does this thought shift your self-perception at all? Do you see dignity in yourself?
- Do you ever forget that all creation, including you, is a gift from God? What can you do to remind yourself of this fact?
- What does it mean to you that God created male and female in God's image? Is each man or each woman in God's image or is their combination in God's image?
- What are the implications of the answers to these questions for the way you live?

Allow 5 to 10 minutes for completion. Consider playing instrumental music while the participants are working with the clay.

3. Invite the participants to describe to a partner how their individual clay sculpture represents the reflection of God they see within themselves.

Hometown Heroes (25 minutes)

Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - copies of handout 3, "A Hometown Hero," one for each participant
 - pens or pencils
 - newsprint
 - markers

1. Invite the participants to find a partner. Distribute a copy of handout 3 and a pen or a pencil to each participant.

2. Set up the scenario by offering the following explanation:

- The hometown newspaper offers a regular feature called "Hometown Heroes," which highlights some of the town's noteworthy citizens. They are not necessarily famous, just people who are trying their best to live a good life. Some of them still live in town; others live elsewhere.
- Imagine that it is twenty years from today and that the newspaper has selected you as a subject for the next article on hometown heroes.
- Partners are to interview each other by using the handout provided. When your partner answers a question, write the response in the space provided on the handout. You will have about 5 minutes for each interview.

3. Ask the pairs to exchange handouts so that all participants have their own responses. Then conduct a brief presentation on the meaning of *beatitude*, using the bullet points below, which are taken from pages 207–209 of the *CFH*:

- The foundation of morality, of doing the right thing, is found in the first chapter of Genesis. From the moment you were conceived, you were made in God's image, meaning that you—and every other person on earth—are first and foremost essentially good. When we choose wisely, we are acting in accordance with our true nature. This is why doing the right thing ultimately makes us happy.
- Happiness is not determined by what we normally see in magazines, on television, or in the movies. Our source of happiness is not material success, fame, or unending hours of leisure and pleasure. Rather, what God intends for us is complete joy and a sense of well-being. Our ultimate destiny is to be eternally happy with God in heaven.
- *Beatitude* means "perfect happiness or blessedness."
- Being made in God's image does not make us perfect; God gave us a soul, intellect, and free will to make our own choices. Although God wants each of us to be part of the Kingdom that Jesus spoke about, free will means that we have the freedom to accept or reject God's will.
- God created us in his image with a natural desire to follow the moral law, to do good and avoid evil.

4. Have the participants respond to the presentation by brainstorming the ways a person can live *a life of beatitude*. Record their suggestions on a sheet of newsprint.

5. Ask them to review their responses to the questions that the Hometown Hero interviewer asked them. Invite them to compare their Hometown Hero answers with the ones just written on newsprint, with respect to what it means to *live a life of beatitude*. Then ask:

- Does the person you would like to be twenty years from now, as represented on your handout, look like someone who is *living a life of beatitude*?

6. Ask the participants to think again about what kind of person they will be in twenty years. Then pose the following question:

- Would you add or change anything in your interview to reflect your commitment to exercise *free will* in favor of God, to avoid *sin*, and to live a *life of beatitude*?

Allow time for the pairs to share their responses to this question.

(This activity is adapted from Marilyn Kielbasa, *Called to Live the Gospel*, pp. 23–24.)

Familyconnections

- ◆ Invite the participants to engage their mom, dad, or guardian in a conversation about their favorite music while growing up. What kinds of values did those songs address? Did the older generation listen to music that supported their Catholic values? How has music changed over the years?
- ◆ Invite participants and their families to talk about how their family tries to experience perfect happiness or blessedness, the beatitude that God calls them to share with him.
- ◆ Invite participants and their families to talk about the virtues that might help them overcome temptations to commit the seven deadly sins: pride, avarice (greed), envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth.
- ◆ Suggest a family discussion about why owning up to sin is so hard to do. Why do people blame some person or influence other than themselves when they do something wrong? What makes it so hard to admit that we made the wrong choice?

Pray!

Called to God (15 minutes)

Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - a Paschal candle
 - a tape player or a CD player
 - instrumental music
 - copies of resource 1, “Examination of Conscience,” one for each of the six volunteer readers
- Ask for six volunteers, each to read one of the statements on resource 1, “Examination of Conscience.”

1. With instrumental music playing in the background, gather the participants in a circle around the lit Paschal candle. Say something like the following:

- As we close our time together, I invite you to center yourself and to focus on your relationship with God. We have spent some time talking and reflecting on the Church’s teaching regarding morality.
- We know that morality affects every aspect of our life. God calls each of us to holiness and happiness. Living a moral life brings us closer to God and to holiness and happiness.
- God’s love is written on our heart; God’s love gives us the strength to do good and to avoid evil.
- In the Letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul offers this prayer on our behalf:

May God “grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” (3:16–17)

- Let us now turn our attention to a brief examination of conscience.
- The Paschal candle in our midst is a symbol of Christ, the light in our life, the one who leads us to God. At times, however, we step away from the light; at times our free choices pull us away from God, away from the light of Christ.

2. Have each of the six volunteers read, in order, one of the following statements from resource 1:

- For the times when I did not take care of myself; when the choices I made brought harm to my body, my mind, and my soul; and when I suffered because of my thoughts, words, or actions. *[Everyone takes a step or two back from the Paschal candle while continuing to face the candle.]*
- For the times when I hurt another person—a friend, a brother or a sister, a parent, a classmate, or a stranger on the street—or when I harmed my relationship with another person by my thoughts, words, or actions. *[Everyone takes a step or two back from the Paschal candle.]*
- For the times when I turned away from God, from the light of his Son, Jesus, and when my thoughts, words, and actions kept me from growing in my relationship with God. *[Everyone turns around and faces away from the Paschal candle.]*

The leader says the following:

- All is not lost; we can and do make choices to turn back toward the light.

The volunteers continue reading:

- For the times when I turned to God for help and to give thanks and praise for the blessings in my life, and when I tried to live a life in the manner of Jesus. *[Everyone turns back toward the candle and takes a step forward.]*
- For the times when I was a good friend or son or daughter and when I reached out to another person in love and compassion. *[Everyone takes a step or two forward.]*
- For the times when I made good decisions about myself and my life and when I said yes to becoming the person God created me to be. *[Everyone takes a step or two forward.]*

3. When the group is clustered tightly around the Paschal candle, invite the participants to raise their hands in a blessing to one another. Say the following prayer or something similar:

- O God, you have fashioned us in your image and likeness. We recognize the goodness in one another and in ourselves. Bless us as we strive to live a holy, happy, and healthy life as your Son taught us. Keep us safe from harm, and help us as we struggle to live a moral life. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Spirit & Song connections

- ◆ “Christ, Be Our Light,” by Bernadette Farrell
- ◆ “Lead Me, Lord,” by John D. Becker
- ◆ “Holy Spirit,” by Ken Canedo



Options and Actions

- **The good Samaritan for today.** Reflect on the painting of the parable of the good Samaritan on page 208 of the *CFH*, and read the parable in Luke (10:25–37). Compose a children’s book about the parable of the good Samaritan, using places and people that young children can recognize.
- **Maturity checklist.** Invite the participants to brainstorm the qualities that a mature person might possess. Some examples are the capacity to accept failure, the ability to draw out the best in people, a sense of humor, and the acceptance of personal responsibility. See whether the group can suggest at least twenty-five qualities. Using this list, create a maturity inventory that allows the participants to rate themselves on how far along they are in developing these qualities (adapted from Marilyn Kielbasa, *Called to Live the Gospel*, p. 24).
- **Bound to goodness.** Provide the participants with three different colors of embroidery thread to represent happiness with God, free will, and good moral choices. Invite them to create a bracelet or anklet by braiding the three pieces of thread to wear as a reminder of the need to turn toward God and away from sin.
- **An apple a day.** Toss an apple around the group. The first participant who catches the apple gives an example of one way a person is tempted to sin; the next person who catches the apple describes a way to avoid or resist that temptation. Give all the participants an apple to take home, and suggest that they conduct this activity with their family members.
- **Sin inside and out.** Provide each participant with a large white envelope. Invite everyone to glue pictures or words on the outside of the envelope to represent the attractive things that entice people into foolish and sinful ways. Then ask them to glue pictures or words on sheets of paper to show the evil that lurks behind those false appearances. Have them stuff the sheets into the envelopes.

Introduction to Christian Morality

This session covers pages 206–215 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*. For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 1691–1761 and 1846–1876 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Session Summary

- When we venture into the territory of deciding between right and wrong, we are talking about morality, “the goodness or evil of human acts” (*CCC*, page 888).
- God’s gift of free will means that we have the ability to make conscious choices.
- So our question is, “How do we live the right way?” which for Catholics means, “How does God want me to live?” Fortunately we have the Scriptures and Tradition to help answer that question.
- The foundation of morality, of doing the right thing, is found in the first chapter of Genesis. From the moment you were conceived, you were made in God’s image, meaning that you—and every other person on earth—are first and foremost essentially good. When we choose wisely, we are acting in accordance with our true nature. This is why doing the right thing ultimately makes us happy.
- Happiness is not determined by what we normally see in magazines, on television, or in the movies.
- Our source of happiness is not material success, fame, or unending hours of leisure and pleasure. Rather, what God intends for us is complete joy and a sense of well-being. Our ultimate destiny is to be eternally happy with God in heaven. Jesus gives us a glimpse of this destiny in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–26, NRSV). *Beatitude* means “perfect happiness or blessedness.”
- Being made in God’s image does not make us perfect; God gave us a soul, intellect, and free will to make our own choices. Although God wants each of us to be part of the Kingdom that Jesus spoke about, free will means that we have the freedom to accept or reject God’s will.
- God created us in his image with a natural desire to follow the moral law, to do good and avoid evil. At the same time, because of original sin, we are inclined toward sin, or choosing to do the wrong thing. The ability to

use reason to distinguish between right and wrong is the work of our conscience. Our conscience is the interior voice that helps us to know right from wrong and then to act on that knowledge.

- But that’s where our free will comes in. We can consciously choose the truly good life. Of course, this gift of human freedom has a flip side. We are also responsible for the choices we make.
- Three factors determine the morality of any human action: (1) whether the action itself is inherently good or evil, (2) the intention of the person doing the action, and (3) the circumstances of the action. All three of these elements help determine whether a particular act is good or bad.
- When we choose to do wrong instead of doing good, we commit sin, and we hurt our relationship with our self, with others, and with God. Sin is any word that we speak, action that we perform, or desire that we have that is contrary to the law that God has inscribed in our heart at the very moment we are conceived.
- Christian morality, then, is being the person God created you to be—a person who chooses to be good. You grow into a moral person by choosing good acts, carefully examining your motives to be sure your intentions are good, and avoiding circumstances that lessen your ability to choose freely.

(The summary point labeled CCC is from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use in the United States of America, page 888. Copyright © 1994 by the United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.)

(All summary points are taken from *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, by Brian Singer-Towns et al. [Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 2004], pages 206–215. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary’s Press. All rights reserved.)

Talk Points

- What are some of the most difficult moral issues that you face? (*CFH*, p. 215)
- How does studying and talking about morality help you to be more aware of right and wrong? Why is it important to have these discussions with other faith-filled Catholics? (*CFH*, p. 215)
- Name something that you keep doing wrong, even though you are trying to do better. Write a letter to yourself that encourages you to keep on trying and suggests a different strategy for overcoming the obstacle.
- Read a biography about someone you admire, or interview an adult whom you respect. Then write about the acts, habits, and character of that person.

Morally Good or Morally Suspect?

For each situation, determine whether the action itself is good, neutral, or bad; whether the intent is good; and whether the circumstances keep the person who is considering the action from acting freely.

1. You are wondering whether to attend a party at a friend’s house this weekend. Everyone in the school knows that no parents will be present.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong

Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good

Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

2. Because you haven’t had time to write your paper and it is late, you are wondering whether to download a paper from the Internet to hand in tomorrow as your own.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong

Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good

Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

3. Although you have been going out exclusively with the same person for two months, you are wondering if it is okay to take a walk with a new kid at school.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong

Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good

Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

4. Because your parents need you to baby-sit, you are wondering if you should call in sick at work on Friday night.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong

Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good

Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

5. Because you don’t want any part in such an activity, you are wondering whether to lie to your friend who is asking you to come with him to pick up a bag of marijuana.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong

Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good

Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

6. Because you don't want anyone at school to know that your mother is away for a month and that the housekeeper is the only adult living in the house with you, you are wondering whether to sign your mother's name on a permission slip.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong
Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good
Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

7. Because a friend of yours has been talking about suicide and is not answering the cell phone, you are wondering whether to take the family car and drive over to your friend's house, even though you don't have any way right now to contact your parents and ask for permission to use the car.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong
Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good
Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

8. Because you know that someone is going to be at the party whom you are not allowed to, or don't want to, hang out with, you are wondering whether to tell your friend that you won't be coming to her party Saturday night.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong
Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good
Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

9. You are wondering whether to tell a counselor a secret that you promised your best friend you wouldn't reveal: that your friend is bingeing and purging a couple of times a day.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong
Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good
Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

10. You are wondering whether to make a copy of a note that you saw at work in a local market. Because the manager heard a rumor that your father is passing bad checks, the note tells cashiers not to accept any checks from him. You know that he is honest.

Action itself: _____ Good _____ Neutral _____ Wrong
Intent: _____ Good _____ Not good
Circumstances: _____ Free to decide _____ Not free to decide

A Hometown Hero

Where do you live?

What kind of work do you do?

Tell me about your family.

What do you like to do?

In what activities are you involved?

What or who has been the greatest influence on your life?

In what ways do you make a difference in the life of others?

Of what are you proud?

At what do you want to get better?

What three words or phrases would you use to describe yourself?

(This handout is adapted from *Called to Live the Gospel*, by Marilyn Kielbasa [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000], page 30. Copyright © 2000 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

Examination of Conscience

Each of the six volunteers reads one of the following statements:

- For the times when I did not take care of myself; when the choices I made brought harm to my body, my mind, and my soul; and when I suffered because of my thoughts, words, or actions. *[Everyone takes a step or two back from the Paschal candle while continuing to face the candle.]*
- For the times when I hurt another person—a friend, a brother or a sister, a parent, a classmate, or a stranger on the street—or when I harmed my relationship with another person by my thoughts, words, or actions. *[Everyone takes a step or two back from the Paschal candle.]*
- For the times when I turned away from God, from the light of his Son, Jesus, and when my thoughts, words, and actions kept me from growing in my relationship with God. *[Everyone turns around, facing away from the Paschal candle.]*

The leader says the following:

- All is not lost; we can and do make choices to turn back toward the light.

The volunteers continue reading:

- For the times when I turned to God for help and to give thanks and praise for the blessings in my life, and when I tried to live a life in the manner of Jesus. *[Everyone turns back toward the candle and takes a step forward.]*
- For the times when I was a good friend or son or daughter and when I reached out to another person in love and compassion. *[Everyone takes a step or two forward.]*
- For the times when I made good decisions about myself and my life and when I said yes to becoming the person God created me to be. *[Everyone takes a step or two forward.]*