

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

Catechetical Session Junior/Senior High School Lesson Plan D



Theme: Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Gathering

The first purpose of the opening movement of each session is to establish a sense of welcome and hospitality. The second purpose is to begin the session with the young person's human experience. A Bible should be enthroned prominently in the room. Gather around the Word for prayer.

Prior to this session, collect pictures and photographs of a wide variety of people. Cut out pictures from newspapers, magazines, the internet, and other sources. Tape each picture to a piece of sturdy paper so you can hold up individual pictures to show the class.

Try to include pictures of people the young people will likely view positively and people they will likely view less positively. Examples include pictures of a newborn, an elderly person, a prisoner, a homeless person, a rich person, a movie star, a famous athlete, a pop music star, people of various ethnic backgrounds, people of various colors.

Beginning with the people the young people will likely view more positively, hold up the pictures one at a time. Ask the young people to use their imaginations to name a positive or good characteristic about each person. Below is a sample of what the list might look like. Write the list (lefthand column below only) on newsprint or the dry erase board.

Picture	Positive Quality
New born baby	sweet and cuddly
Shakira	popular, good singer
LeBron James	great athlete
Angelina Jolie	Actress, do-gooder
A fireman	Saves lives
Old person	wise
A homeless person	kind to others
Prisoner	Helpful to other prisoners

Sadaam Hussein supportive father (There may
be no response to this kind of
picture)

As you hold up pictures of the people the students view "less positively" (prisoners, homeless people), note that they will be slower about naming positive qualities. Make note of this. Point out that it is not easy to see the good in some people, even though there is some good in every person. Sin is a part of all our lives and some people turn to sin in significant ways. ***Nonetheless, Catholic Christians believe that all people are created by God with goodness and holiness. We believe each person is a precious child of God from before we are born through the end of our lives.***

Note: Older students may have an easier time thinking of possible good things about the last few pictures. To make it more difficult, you might do this activity "rapid response" style where students have only 5 seconds to name as many positive qualities as possible before moving on to the next picture. Afterwards, you can compare how easy/difficult it was to come up with the good qualities.

Opening Prayer

**Let us pray.
Spirit of all life and goodness,
We praise you for the beauty of your people.
Help us to see the sacred in every person and to treat them accordingly
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Students are seated. Catechist takes Bible from enthronement and proclaims reading. Be sure reading is marked in advance.

Scripture Reading & Faith Sharing

Proclaim the reading (Genesis 1:26-31):

A reading from the Book of Genesis...

After the reading a brief period of silence follows. Then, the catechist asks the young people these or similar questions:

- What is God telling us about human beings?
- What does this reading tell us about God?

After the student's initial response, read the reading again.

A reading from the Book of Genesis...

Ask the following or similar discussion questions:

- What does it mean that humans are created in God's image?
- Name a quality in yourself that is of God's image.
- If we are made in God's image, why do some people commit evil acts?

Faithful Citizenship Reading and Discussion

The catechist makes a transition from reflection on the Scripture to discussion on the teaching of the Church.

We believe that every human being is good in his or her own way because every person was created by God in His image. Therefore, even people who may seem mean or unappealing must be treated with kindness. The weakest people in our world must be given special attention by Christians because sometimes they are forgotten or mistreated, especially unborn children, old people, and people who are terminally ill. Human life is sacred. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Direct attacks on innocent persons are never morally acceptable, at any stage or in any condition.

-- *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility* (no. 44)

Ask the following or similar discussion questions to spark discussion:

- What is this quote saying?
- According to Church teaching, do all these people have the same dignity?
 - an unborn child
 - a doctor
 - a homeless person
 - a World Trade Center victim on 9/11/01
 - a terrorist
- Are there people or groups of people in the United States who are not treated with the respect they deserve? Who are they? Why are they treated as they are? What can you do?
- What does your school do to ensure that students are treated with respect? What do you think your school or teachers need to do better in order to ensure that all students are treated with respect?
- What can you or your class do to show you believe that every person is created in goodness and holiness by God? See "Putting Faith into Action," found in the Parish and School Leaders section of the Faithful Citizenship website, for suggestions on implementing an action plan. Some ideas to consider include:

- Participate in a local pro-life march or anti-hunger walk-a-thon, or a Catholic "lobby day" organized by your state Catholic conference.
- Invite a local legislator to the class to talk about how he or she works to protect human life and dignity.
- Volunteer to organize activities at a nursing home one day per month.
- Establish a pen pal relationship with a class or youth group from a parish in another part of the world.
- Visit the web pages of various departments of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (www.usccb.org) to learn more about public policy issues of concern and then write a letter to a legislator about one of these issues.
- Contact your parish social concerns coordinator or your diocesan social action director for additional ideas.

Closing Prayer

Return to the adult gathering or return to the prayer circle.

Return to the pictures used in the opening exercise. Respectfully place the pictures in the middle of your prayer space near the Bible. After all have gathered in silence, proclaim the reading.

A Reading from the Book of Genesis...(Genesis 1:26-31)

Pause in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray.

Father of all creation,

You made humanity in your image and likeness.

May we be respectful of all your people, especially the unborn, the elderly, the sick and the poor.

Spirit of life, help us and all your people to live as the holy people you made us to be.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.