

Parents First

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2223)

Church Teaching *Cain and Abel*

In the Bible, the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4) gives us an example of the difference between the children of the world and the children of God. Cain is the older and presumably stronger brother, but he is a man of weak faith who tries to hold onto the best things of this world while still grasping for heaven. He attempts to offer a sacrifice to God from his harvest, but is only willing to give of the leftovers after he has taken the best parts for himself. He is the typical man of the world who desires things that are passing: fame, wealth, worldly power, and physical prowess. Once gained, the world teaches us that we ought to use these in order to dominate others and to meet our own personal goals. According to the world, even sexuality is for the sake of our own enjoyment; a mere plaything to be used at our discretion.

At the same time, Abel, the younger

brother, shows us that when we achieve great things, the truly strong person is the one who has the fortitude to offer it on the altar of sacrifice for the greater glory of God. The passage teaches us that the Children of God are people of virtue. The person with the gift of fame is called upon to use it to spread the Gospel, the one with wealth, to lift up the poor, the one with knowledge, to instruct the ignorant, the physically strong person to protect the weak (CCC 2444). The passage also shows us that the only rewards that we can expect from the world are resentment and death. The Church teaching on this is clear: we cannot do these things alone, we are too weak. In order to be strong for others we must first be attached to Christ (CCC 1811). Then it is not we who triumph over the world but Him in us (Gal 2:20).

Children of God are People of virtue.

Growing in Virtue

Students often describe their junior year as their most difficult. While prudence helps us to make appropriate judgments, fortitude is the actual courage needed to carry them out. Unfortunately, the only way to grow in fortitude is to do difficult things. This means learning self-discipline, working hard, and setting strong boundaries. Statistics also show that good examples and influences also help in this regard. Be certain that you encourage your teenage child to build up relationships with other teens that are good examples of virtuous behavior.

Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and his Church (CCC1814). Yet, faith is more than just intellectual belief. It means acting on that

belief. Parents can greatly aid their children at this stage by giving them an adult apprenticeship in prayer, communal worship, and works of mercy. This requires both a personal relationship with Jesus and integration into the community of believers at your parish.



Culture Alert...

- On average, music videos contain 93 sexual situations per hour, including an average of eleven "hard-core" scenes depicting behaviors such as intercourse and oral sex. www.TroubledTeens.com

Guidelines for Answering Questions

- Ask for more information before answering, (i.e. “Why do you ask?”, or “Tell me more.”) Your child’s response will provide you with insight, context and time to think.
- Pause to ask God for the wisdom and grace to provide an appropriate answer.
- Phrase your answer in the context of your family’s Catholic values (i.e. “When you are grown and married...” or “As Catholics, we believe...”).
- If you don’t know the answer, say “That’s a great question but I’m not sure of the exact answer. I will look it up and get back to you later today.” Make sure to follow up later with an answer.

Example: Why does the Catholic Church say contraception is wrong?

Know the context of the question i.e. “Did they read something or hear their peers talking about it?” “Are they experiencing some peer pressure?” “Did they see something on TV or the computer?” The information your child provides to these questions will help frame your answer in a way that is meaningful to them.

Possible Responses:

- “In order to best understand the Catholic Church’s teaching on contraception, let’s review what the Church teaches about sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is gift from God, designed by God and created for a purpose. God’s purpose for intercourse is two-fold; unitive – designed to bring husband and wife closer together physically, emotionally and spiritually; AND procreative – open to creating new life.”
- “By God’s design every act of sexual intercourse between husband and wife should be both unitive and procreative.”
- “Contraceptives come in many forms (pills, shots, condoms, etc.) but they all have one specific purpose- to prevent or stop conception, to prevent new life.”
- “When a couple uses contraception they go against God’s purpose for sexual intercourse by preventing the possibility of new life and by not fully accepting the other person as God created them.”
- “Using contraception is a refusal to accept the gift of sexual intercourse as God intends it, and such a refusal can bring with it the negative consequences of sin like guilt, fear, separation from God and loved ones, etc.”

Practical Suggestions



- Your teen is likely driving now, spending less time at home and more time with friends. It is difficult to be present and involved in your teen’s life if they are never home. One way to keep your teen and their friends close to home is to make your house *the* place to hang out.
- Stock up on your teen’s favorite foods; invest in a larger TV or the latest gaming system and the party’s on.
- It will take some sacrifice on your part: spending Friday or Saturday night at home to chaperone, but it will be well worth the effort.
- You’ll get to know your teen and their friends even better and you’ll be showing them in a very real and meaningful way that you are there for them.

“Frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps to give Christians the necessary graces to lead a life of virtue” (CCC 1469).



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Parent Resources

- *Theology of His Body: Discovering the Strength and Mission of Masculinity and Theology of Her Body: Discovering the Beauty and Mystery of Femininity*, 2 books published as one, Ascension Press, 2009
- *Theology of the Body for Teens: High School Edition*, Ascension Press, 2006
- Family Life Media Center: <http://www.archomaha.org/pastoral/flo/media.html>. Select resources

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