

Living a Moral Life ~ Hope Expectations for Junior Classes

By the end of grade 6, it is our hope that students will be individuals who:

- ❖ Seek to grow in their understanding of the depth and breadth of the Decalogue and the moral teachings of Jesus;
- ❖ Apply Catholic moral teaching to moral decisions they face in their own lives;
- ❖ Acknowledge their own human weakness and reflect on their sins as the first step in seeking forgiveness and God's grace for their ongoing conversion;
- ❖ Appreciate Catholic moral teaching as a valid, authoritative interpretation of scripture that addresses contemporary moral issues to guide moral decision-making.

ML 1.1 Describe the basic principles of the Church's teaching concerning Natural Moral Law (the law God has written on our hearts – Hebrews 8:10) and explain how it is the foundation prepared by God for the revealed Law of Scripture (i.e. Old Law, New Law) and the formulation of human civil laws. [CCC nos. 1905-1927; 1954-1960] The passage from Hebrews states the Natural Moral Law as: "I will establish a New Covenant with the house of Israel...I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." [Hebrew 8:8-10] **Ask your students what this means. Ask them to draw a picture of what this means.** Human society cannot be organized unless it has some people who are given authority to lead and work toward caring for the good of all. The foundation of such authority lies in human nature. [CCC 1898] **Discuss with students how authority works in the classroom. Discuss with students how authority works in the school. How does authority work in their family?** This authority required comes from God; God gives people gifts of leadership to use to order society. [CCC1899] Authority must act for the common good, that is, the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily." [CCC1906] The common good assumes *respect for the person*; that is, public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person. [CCC1907] The common good requires *social well-being and development* of the group itself. There may be conflicting interests but the function of authority is to ensure what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on. [CCC 1908] The common good requires *peace*, that is, stability and security of a just order. [CCC1909] **Look through the newspaper for examples where authority is being used for the common good [municipal elections show democracy, city is working to keep roads and water in good shape, police are keeping the peace] and where it is failing the common good [Is one country invading another one? , Is there a virus (i.e., some crisis in African countries) being responded to in the same way as if it was taking place in North America, If our water source became contaminated, would it take the same amount of time to fix it as it does in northern Indigenous communities?]** This is the foundation prepared by God for the revealed Law of Scripture and the formulation of human civil laws. The "divine and natural" law shows us the way to follow so as to practice the good and attain our end. ...The natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given this light or law at the time of creation. [CCC1955] **Ask students how do you know when it is right to do something and wrong to do something else. THIS is ONLY PART ONE of this expectation.**

ML 1.1: Part Two Describe the basic principles of the Church’s teaching concerning Natural Moral Law (the law God has written on our hearts – Hebrews 8:10) and explain how it is the foundation prepared by God for the revealed Law of Scripture (i.e. Old Law, New Law) and the formulation of human civil laws.

We participate in the wisdom and goodness of the Creator who gives us mastery over our acts and the ability to govern ourselves with a view to “the true and the good.” The natural law expresses the original moral sense which enables us to discern by reason what is the good and the evil, what is the truth and the lie. [CCC 1954] In the first part of this expectation we invited the students to think about how they know what is good and what is not good. Remind them of this conversation/discussion. God created us with a conscience – the part of us where the natural moral law is written on our hearts. We have the capacity to know good and evil. We need to grow in our understanding of good and evil because sometimes situations are not black and white, there are situations with grey areas. So we need to develop our understanding of good and bad. Ask your students, “When you were younger, how did your parents teach you about when something is good and when something is bad?” Your parents probably wanted to teach you about bad things that could harm you. For example, your parents probably taught you to hold their hand when you were crossing the street so you did not move into traffic and get hit. What other ways did your parents teach you about good and bad?

Decisions that govern our moral life get a bit more complicated as we grow older. Discuss with students how living a good life hinges upon our desire for God. We all want to go to heaven once we die. In order for that to happen, we need to live a good life, a moral life. So for example, it is good to tell the truth. If we start to tell lies, it can become a habit. The habit can form our character and people will learn that we don’t always tell the truth and so they will not always believe what we say. So making the choice/decision to always tell the truth has a long term effect in our lives. It is the same with the development of human civil laws. The laws are usually put in place to keep everyone safe and confident about how to act. So following the laws is good, usually. Breaking the law is not good, usually. However, abortion is a law that allows a mother to end her baby’s life. So law does not always follow the moral truth. [CCC 1960] Ask your class to come up with five laws that keep everyone safe.

What happens when people break the laws, how does it cause confusion and potentially unsafe conditions? When someone fails to do the right thing, if they know that they are not doing the right thing, they are sinning. They may have to suffer the consequences of breaking the law – i.e. pay a fine / go to jail. They also suffer spiritual consequences of breaking the law and ought to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, to seek forgiveness for their sin.

ML 1.2: Explain through example, how God’s gift of human reason promotes human dignity (reason and conscience i.e. natural law, working together to help us discern what is good and what is evil) and identify ways we can use reason to participate in the wisdom and goodness of Creation (i.e. care of the created universe, natural and human sciences, human development and building of communities, etc.). [CCC 1954-1960] “We participate in the wisdom and goodness of God who gives us mastery over our acts and the ability to govern ourselves with a view of the true and the good. The natural law expresses the original moral sense which enables us to discern by reason the good and the evil, the truth and the lie.” [CCC 1954] “The natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given this light or law at creation.” [CCC 1955] Explain to students that when God made us he wrote a

natural law on our hearts. This law helps us to make choices between what is good and what is not good. This law is a gift called human reason and it promotes human dignity. We are made in the image and likeness of God. Everyone is made in the image and likeness of God and ought to be treated with dignity. We have dignity because we are made in God's image. Anything done to dismiss or mistreat another person is against natural law and is not good. We can use the gift of reason in many ways. What are the things that you have learned are the right things to do when you think about Creation?

What are the things that you have learned are the right things to do when you think about your relationships with your family? When you think about your relationships with your friends, your acquaintances, with strangers? WWJD – is always a hint about how human reason should respond when in doubt? But if you don't know Jesus, then you may not be sure what he would do? So we have to get to know Jesus better.

ML 1.3: Articulate the Church's teaching concerning the Fourth & Fifth Commandments – "Honour your father and mother; You shall not kill" and apply these to the moral issues facing society today (e.g., sanctity of human life – abortion and euthanasia, dignity of the human person, social living conditions; honouring parents – disobedience, stubbornness, disrespectful words and actions, scorning, angrily talking back, refusing to participate in household responsibilities, striking or cursing parents, stealing from parents, etc.) [CCC 2196-2257; 2258-2330] "The fourth commandment shows us the order of [love.] God has willed that, after God, we should honour our parents to whom we owe life and who have handed onto us the knowledge of God." [CCC 2197] "This commandment is expressed in positive terms of duties to be fulfilled. It introduces the subsequent commandments which are concerned with particular respect for life, marriage, earthly good and speech. It constitutes one of the foundations of the social doctrine of the Church. The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal [everyone has a mother and a father.] ...It requires honour, affection and gratitude toward elders and ancestors. Finally, it extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country and to those who administer or govern it." [CCC 2198-2199] **Once upon a time, in our culture obedience to parents was a given. It is no longer so. Relationships with parents have been undermined by the media. It would be good to explain to students that we are called by God to this teaching. We are not living the commandment when we are disobedient, stubborn, disrespectful with our words or actions, being scornful, talking back, and refusing to participate in household responsibilities. It is part of being a member of a household that individuals have responsibilities in the care of the household and its members. We ought never hit or curse at our parents. We ought never to steal from our parents. All of these actions break the fourth commandment of God. It is not enough to honour our mother and father on Mother's Day and Father's Day. The honour should be every day and it is highlighted on those special days. If we do not do it every day, then it has no *real* meaning on the special days. The fifth commandment is probably less of a problem for Grade six students. You shall not kill. "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator." [CCC 2258] To explain this concept, speak to your students **about November** being the month of remembrance. We take time to remember all the people who have gone to heaven before us. God is the only one who remembers everyone,**

living or dead, always. God never FORGETS us, that is how sacred human life is. Read to your class the story of Cain and Abel – Genesis 3: 1-16. Ask the students to explain the story and the lesson it teaches. There are many moral issues facing us today: intentional homicide, abortion, euthanasia, social living conditions that allow a disease to spread, etc. “The fifth commandment forbids direct and intentional killing as gravely sinful.” [CCC 2268] Even though in our country abortion is legal, it is against God’s law.

Abortion is the killing of babies in the womb. Euthanasia is killing a person because he/she is handicapped, sick or dying. All human life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception to the natural end of life. From womb to tomb. Many people are surprised and disheartened by the slow response of richer governments to the [HIV crisis in African countries.] We have a responsibility to help our brothers and sisters with the technologies we have. You can also talk about how sometimes we can kill someone’s spirit by speaking unkindly to him/her.

ML 2.1: Examine a selection of Scripture passages and summarize what Jesus taught his disciples to help form their conscience (live in accordance to God’s will – Matt. 5-7: Beatitudes, Sermon on the Mount; instructions on becoming a disciple and servant – Matt. 25: Thy will be done – the Garden of Gethsemane: Matt. 26: 36-46). [CCC nos. 1783-1785] In the Catechism it says “In the formation of conscience, the Word of God is the light for our path; we must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice.” [CCC 1785] The passages that belong to the Sermon on the Mount include the Beatitudes and many other teachings that Jesus gave his followers. [This Sermon is also available in Luke’s gospel but it does not happen on the Mount but on a plane.] Jesus taught his disciples many lessons to help them form their conscience and to live according to God’s will. The Beatitudes explain how to live blessed lives. There is a passage about being salt and light for the world. Jesus gives a talk concerning anger, adultery (being unfaithful in committed relationships), divorce, swearing oaths, retaliation, love of enemies, almsgiving, prayer, fasting, treasures, serving two masters, about worry, judging others, profaning the holy, the golden rule, the narrow gate, false prophets, self-deception, and hearers and doers. **To tie this to Advent, I would read the three chapters of Matthew’s gospel a section at a time/lesson and ask: “What is Jesus trying to teach his disciples and us about forming their/our conscience?”** Read the passage then invite your students to discuss the passage i.e., 5:1-12 and decide as a group what lesson is Jesus teaching. If you have a smart board – you may want to put the passage up on the board so the class can use the board as a reference point. You could build an Advent Road – and place stepping stones in Advent preparation – on the stepping stones write one lesson that Jesus teaches and ask the class to work on the lesson as disciples on the road to Bethlehem. I would only ask for one lesson from the whole Beatitudes so you can go back to the passage later in the year. Which lesson do most students feel they need to practice during Advent? And as the days pass, the road to Bethlehem is formed and students are closer disciples to Jesus. [These are all the passages that can be selected for the Advent Road: 5:1-12; 5:13-14; 5:21-26; 5:27-30; 5:33-37; 5:38-42; 5:43-48; 6:1-4; 6:5-14; 6:16-18; 6:19-21; 6:22-23; 6:24; 6:25-34; 7:1-5; 7:6; 7:7-11; 7:12; 7:13-14; 7:15-20; 7:21-23; 7:24-29] **We can come back to the other passages given later in the year.**

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ML 2.2: With reference to the Church’s moral teachings, define the meaning of conscience (see: *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16) and the process of “conscience formation” and explain using examples how an informed conscience can be helped when making good moral decisions (to judge and act with knowledge). [CCC 1749-1785] Conscience is a gift that God has given us to help make decisions and choices that are moral – good and to avoid decisions and choices that are immoral – wrong/sinful/evil. The natural law has been written on our hearts by God. “Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he/she is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he/she says and does, humans are obliged to follow faithfully what he/she knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his/her conscience that humans perceive and recognize the prescriptions of the divine law.” [CCC 1778] **Ask the students how do you know when something is right or wrong? Draw out of their experiences examples of right and wrong actions. Ask them, “who taught you right from wrong?”** Usually students will identify their parents as their first teachers of these lessons. **Ask the class to identify how a person can form their conscience once they become their age. There are many ways to inform our conscience – pray; read the bible; do research about the action; look at the more than 2000 years of Church teaching (if it is appropriate); ask other people who live a good life; exam their conscience regularly to be sure they are making good choices; etc...they may also have some good ideas about who or how to form their conscience. We want to steer them away from “if it feels good, do it.” There is a default action – do the most loving thing. The law of love trumps all else. Not making love but doing the loving action.**

ML 2.3: Apply a Catholic model of moral decision-making (i.e. SEE, JUDGE, and ACT) to ethical issues that arise at school or in the world (bullying, fighting, failing to do homework, and disrespecting authority). [CCC 1749-1785] See handout that is attached. Invite students to work through the ethical issues as groups using the handout and the issues above or ones that the students identify.

ML 3.1: Locate and examine gospel passages to identify how Jesus called individuals to holiness and guided them in the moral life (e.g. Matt. 19:16-26 – the rich young man, Jn. 4:1-26 – the Samaritan woman, Mk. 10: 35-45 – the disciples request for positions of honour, etc.) [CCC 2012-2016]

Divide your class into groups. Give each group one of the passages above. Invite the group to identify how Jesus called these individuals to a life of holiness. Holiness is much more than never doing something wrong. It is an attitude of humility, goodness, faithfulness, peace, joy and love. The holy person shows their holiness through witnessing to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Holiness guides us in our moral life, that is, our ability to choose what is right and good. To forgo what is wrong and evil.

ML 3.2: With reference to Catholic moral teaching, identify the characteristics of holiness and what is necessary if individuals are to “be holy” as Jesus is holy.

I would start by reviewing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit as characteristics of holiness. Read Galatians 5:22-23. If a person is living a moral life by making good moral choices, we ought to be able to see the Fruit of the Spirit as evidence. These fruit are: faithfulness, gentleness, goodness, kindness, peace, self-control, joy, love and patience. We will never be as holy as Jesus is holy, but our striving is all that is expected. When we strive to live good and holy lives, people around us are inspired to do the same. There is a popular saying, “A good example is never lost.” Ask your students, “What is necessary if individuals are to “be holy” as Jesus is holy?” They do what Jesus would do. Jesus includes everyone, the popular people and the unpopular people. Jesus focuses on people when he spends time with them, he is not distracted. Jesus heals people. Jesus teaches others how to be loving. Jesus tells the truth always. Invite your students to read the gospel of Mark (group work so all the chapters are covered – it is the shortest gospel) and ask them to list all the actions that Jesus does when he is with people. Then compare those actions with the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

ML 3.3: Explain using examples the relationship between making good moral choices, developing Christian virtues and holiness. It may be helpful to do this expectation during Lent.

I would put on the [smart] board some examples of good moral choices facing Grade 6s [you know your class’s struggles]. Ask your students what virtue(s) [respect, kindness, love, patience, compassion, justice, wisdom, hope, faith, courage, wholeness] are required to make a good moral choice and how developing the virtue is going to lead to holiness.

ML 3.4: Examine the lives of the saints and provide examples of how their lives modeled for us what it means to live a moral and holy life (e.g. St. [Brother] Andre of Montreal, Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, St. Padre Pio, St. [Mother] Teresa of Calcutta, Jean Vanier – still living). [CCC 1783-1785] Have your students research these famous Catholic people and

have them explain how these people lived a good and holy life. Ask them to find one thing that these holy people did that the students themselves can do, to model their lives on these saints. I.e. St. Brother Andre was a porter, and when he opened the door he greeted the person on the outside of the door as though he/she were Jesus. We can all open doors with the same intention.