

Theology of the Body
SUPPLEMENTAL CURRICULUM
(Updated Fall 2024)

CHAPTER ONE
What is love?

Objective: To help students understand that we are created in the image of God who is love, and that there are different kinds of love.

Key Concepts

We can say not only that God *loves*, but that the very *being* of God is love. God lives in Himself a mystery of personal, loving communion as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In this communion of persons, God the Father is the lover, God the Son is the beloved, and the love between them is so real that it is actually another person—the Holy Spirit. St. Augustine referred to the Holy Trinity as “Lover, Loved and Love.”

Since we are created in the image and likeness of God, we, too, are called to love. Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.

Human persons experience love in four basic forms: familial love, friendship, romantic love and charity.

The first love we experience is the affection that exists between parents and children and other members of the family. The Greeks called this love *storge*. Jesus taught us to call God “our Father.” (Matthew 6:9)

As we grow, we get to know other people and experience the love of friendship, which is based on mutual interests and a sincere desire for each other’s well-being. The Greeks called this love *philia*. Jesus said to his disciples, “I call you friends.” (John 15:15)

As we get older, we may experience romantic attraction, which is God’s way of leading most men and women to marriage. The Greeks called this love *eros*. John the Baptist referred to Jesus as the bridegroom. (John 3:29)

To be truly human, these three loves must be infused with the virtue of charity, the sacrificial love which seeks to give of oneself for the good of another. The Greeks called this love *agape*. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him may not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Our mind and will are gifts from God that enable us to exercise the virtue of charity, making us capable of giving of ourselves for the true good of another person.

CHAPTER TWO
God’s love for us

Objective: To familiarize the students with key Scriptural texts which express God's love for his people as a Bridegroom for his bride.

Key Concepts

God's love for us can be compared to many different human realities: Creator/creature, king/subject, shepherd/sheep, father/child. But the image most frequently found in Scripture that the inspired writers used to convey God's love for his people is that of a Bridegroom for his bride.

In the Old Testament, the central image of a husband's love for his wife expresses the exclusive and everlasting covenant that God desired to make with the people of Israel.

Song of Songs 4:9-10

You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!

Isaiah 54: 5-6

For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.

Isaiah 62: 4-5

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

Jeremiah 2:2

Thus says the Lord, I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me into the wilderness, in a land not sown.

Hosea 2:14,16

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her... And in that day, says the Lord, you will call me, 'My husband,' and no longer will you call me, 'My Ba'al.'"

The covenant between God and His people finds its definitive fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom who loves and gives Himself as the Saviour of humanity, uniting it to Himself as His body. (Saint John Paul II, Familiaris consortio, 13)

John 3:29-30

He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full. He must increase, but I must decrease.

Jesus Christ showed the full extent of His love when He gave His life on the cross for His bride, the Church.

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Revelation 21:2, 9

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband....'Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.'

CHAPTER THREE

Loving Human Life

Objective: To give students a deeper understanding of the basis and importance of respect for human life from conception until natural death, and to explain the moral evil involved in abortion and euthanasia.

Key Concepts

Because we are created in the image and likeness of God, all human beings share the same personal dignity and the same supernatural destiny.

God creates every human being, and we have a special responsibility to safeguard human life when it is particularly fragile, at its beginning and at its end.

Human life begins at conception, when 23 chromosomes from the mother join with 23 chromosomes from the father. The process of prenatal development shows us the humanity of the unborn child.

We are called to respect and protect the life of every human being from the moment of conception until the moment of natural death. Since God is the author of human life, we do not have the authority to take the life of an innocent human being through actions like abortion and euthanasia.

Induced abortion refers to the directly intended killing of a child in his or her mother's womb. It is a gravely immoral act and is never justified.

There have been over 63 million surgical abortions performed in the United States since the Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand in its 1973 decision *Roe v. Wade*. In June 2022, the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Indiana's new state law (August 2023) has made abortion illegal in most circumstances while providing significantly increased funding for pregnant mothers in need.

Chemical abortions have now become much more common in our country (63% of all abortions are chemical abortions, as of 2023¹), and it is possible to reverse the process if an intervention is made before the second set of pills is taken.

The Catholic Church takes seriously its responsibility to provide concrete support to pregnant and parenting moms in need and also to facilitate healing and reconciliation for anyone who has been involved in an abortion.

Besides taking the life of an innocent human being, abortion often results in serious emotional and psychological problems for the mother and also affects the father and other family members. Abortion also increases a woman's risk of developing breast cancer.

¹ <https://www.guttmacher.org/2024/03/medication-abortion-accounted-63-all-us-abortions-2023-increase-53-2020>

Adoption is the loving choice to make when a couple cannot responsibly raise their own child. A woman who chooses to place her baby for adoption can choose the parents for her child. There are approximately 1 million couples in the U.S. waiting to adopt a child.

Euthanasia refers to an act or omission which is directly intended to kill a person to relieve their suffering. Assisted suicide refers to the directly intended killing of oneself when assisted by another person who provides the means of death.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide are always morally wrong because they contradict the dignity of the human person and respect for God's authority over life and death.

Modern medicine can provide palliative care for seriously ill patients which cares for the whole person and addresses his or her physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Respect for human life also requires us to show great love and care for the elderly. Grandparents in particular have a special place in family life, as witnesses to the past and a source of wisdom for the young.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Saints: Heroic witnesses to love

Objective: To inform and inspire the students with the lives of men and women who lived their vocation to love in a heroic way.

Key Concepts

All baptized Christians are called to holiness by their participation in the life of Christ, expressed in love of God and love of neighbor.

Every canonized saint is a person who has lived the vocation to love to a heroic degree. Some saints are particularly inspiring witnesses of heroic human love and the virtue of chastity.

Spouses and parents are called to pursue holiness in the midst of their ordinary family lives. There have been many married saints.

Our Lady, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint Monica, and Saint Gianna Molla were all wives and mothers.

Saint Joseph, Saint Louis IX, Saint Thomas More, and St. Isidore were all husbands and fathers.

The parents of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Saints Zélie and Louis Martin, were the first married couple canonized together in the same ceremony in 2015.

Saint Maria Goretti and Blessed Marie-Clémentine Anuarite Nengapeta's heroic examples show us that forgiveness is more powerful than sin.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe's life and death show us heroic charity in action in the total gift of self in imitation of Christ, by laying down one's life out of love of neighbor.

Saints Augustine and Mary of Egypt are particular examples of saints who did not always live lives of purity but through the grace of God were able to embrace the virtue of chastity.

"Only from the saints, only from God, does true revolution come, the definitive way to change the world." (Pope Benedict XVI)

CHAPTER FIVE

Created Male and Female

Objective: To present the complementarity of man and woman and to address the phenomena of gender incongruence and same sex attraction in the context of God's plan.

Key Concepts

Our sexuality is a gift from God that goes to the heart of our identity as persons created in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity: “God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).

Sexuality is not just about a person's “private parts,” but rather, encompasses the whole person. “Sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person—body, emotions, and soul—and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love” (St. John Paul II, Familiaris consortio, #37).

God created man and woman to be a gift for one another. The differences between the sexes are complementary, meaning they are designed to “go together,” like pieces of a puzzle.

Gender ideology is the false notion that our gender is not rooted in our biological sex, or the mistaken belief that we can change our sex. The concept of “gender transitioning” stands in radical opposition to a proper understanding of the nature of the human person and cannot serve the authentic flourishing of any individual.

It is not a sin to experience gender dysphoria. Individuals who experience gender dysphoria should be accompanied with love and compassion and any underlying issues which may be contributing to their distress should be addressed. Gender stereotypes can contribute to gender dysphoria.

In God's plan, the body is meant to reveal the person, and this complementarity between man and woman is “written” right into the male body and the female body, which are designed to fit together.

While men and women are *both* created in the image and likeness of God, with the same personal dignity and the same supernatural destiny, they also *become* the image of God by living *with* and *for* each other out of love.

Man and woman image God not only as individuals, but also in communion with one another. The most basic form of the communion of persons is the vocation of marriage, in which a man and woman make a complete gift of themselves to one another, out of love, for life.

Sexual union is designed by God to be the most intimate sign of the total, mutual gift of self that a man and woman make to one another in marriage. This mutual gift makes possible the conception of child, who is literally the two of them, husband and wife, in one flesh, with 23 chromosomes from each parent.

Marriage is meant to be a symbol of the Holy Trinity, in which the love between the Father and the Son—the Lover and the Beloved—is so really it is actually another person. In the same way, through the privilege of procreation, the love between husband and wife can literally become “personified” in the gift of their child.

Some people experience sexual attraction for persons of the same sex. Such feelings can be transitory, meaning experienced for a certain period of time such as adolescence.

For some people, same sex attraction can be deep-seated and even permanent. Most medical professionals believe that sexual orientation involves a complex mixture of biology, psychology, and environmental factors. Although it is a disordered desire, it is not a sin to experience a same sex attraction. Most people experience it as a burden and not something that they have chosen.

Like all men and women, people with same sex attraction are called to live the virtue of chastity. COURAGE and Eden Invitation are Catholic ministries which express in a special way the love of the Church for men and women who experience same sex attraction.

While two men or two women can have a close, chaste friendship, marriage can only exist between a man and a woman.

CHAPTER SIX

Sensitive topics: Girls Only, Guys Only

Objective: To provide a supportive setting in which to address and answer questions and concerns that are more specific to each sex.

(This session should be presented in separate single gender settings, with a male instructor for the boys and a female instructor for the girls.)

Key Concepts

“Sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person—body, emotions and soul—and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love.”
(Saint John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 37).

All men are called to fatherhood and all women are called to motherhood, but it manifests itself in different ways depending on the particular person’s vocation.

A man is meant to use his strength and skill to serve others, especially women and children. In providing for and protecting others, men are called to imitate the love that God the Father has for all humanity and that Jesus Christ the Bridegroom has for his bride, the Church.

A woman is meant to receive love in order to love in return, and God entrusts the human being to her in a special way. In welcoming and nurturing others, women are called to imitate the love that Mary has for her Son and that the Church has for her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

Beauty is one of the attributes of God, and women in a special way bear witness to the power of beauty to attract our attention. We should be critical of the superficial beauty standards set by society and ask God for the grace to see ourselves as He sees us.

Some teens experience body image issues and they should be accompanied with love and compassion. Any underlying issues which might be contributing to their distress should be addressed.

“Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness...Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love.” (CCC #2521-2522).

Modesty means dressing, speaking, and acting in a way that is attractive but does not draw attention to one’s sex appeal or arouse sexual desire in another person. Both sexes have an obligation to respect each other through modesty and discipline.

Rather than lead a person to the gift of self in love, stimulating oneself through masturbation turns a person in on him/herself and is always morally wrong.

Pornography portrays individuals as objects to be lusted after rather than as persons to be respected and loved. Both sexes are likely to watch porn, not just boys.

It is important to be aware that some teen literature, television shows, movies, music, internet and social media sites, and apps contain content designed to arouse the desire for sex and should be avoided.

Whatever is put online cannot be erased. Great care should be taken with social media sites and it is never right to send or request inappropriate images.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Married Love: Free, Total, Faithful, Fruitful

Objective: To present and explain the essential characteristics of marriage as a free, total, faithful and fruitful gift of self between a man and woman.

Key Concepts

Marriage is an intimate community of life and love willed by God Himself.

Marriage calls for a unity of two kinds of love with which God loves humanity— eros and agape, that is, attraction/desire and self-giving/sacrifice. Just like God desires an intimate union with us and always gives Himself for our good, so spouses are called to show both kinds of love toward each other.

In marriage, God calls a man and woman to make a complete gift of themselves to one another with these two kinds of love. This mutual gift of self is meant to be free, total, faithful and fruitful.

The gift of self made by a man and woman in marriage must be free, not coerced or forced; it must be total and without reservation, including all of the elements of the person; it must remain faithful and exclusive until death, and it must be open to life.

These characteristics are reflected in the questions that the bride and groom are asked to answer during the wedding ceremony before they say their vows. While they are asked the questions together, each person must answer the questions individually: “Have you come here to enter into Marriage without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly?

Are you prepared, as you follow the path of Marriage, to love and honor each other for as long as you both shall live?

Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church?”

Marriage is characterized by unity and indissolubility. This means that marriage is constituted by a total, mutual gift of self between one man and one woman for life.

The indissolubility of marriage is rooted in the total, personal self-giving of spouses and is required for the good of the children. Indissolubility is also a fruit, a sign and a requirement of the absolutely faithful love that God has for humanity and that Christ has for his Bride, the Church.

Sexual intercourse is intended by God to be the most intimate sign of the complete gift of self that a man and woman make to one another in marriage. The mutual gift of self is not meant to remain closed in on itself, but rather, makes the spouses capable of the greatest possible gift—becoming cooperators with God in giving life to a new human person.

Sexual intercourse has twin meanings or purposes in God's plan that are joined together, like two sides of the same coin. We must respect the inseparable connection between love-giving and life-giving that God has inscribed in the gift of sexual intercourse.

God calls spouses to a free, generous and responsible cooperation in transmitting the gift of human life.

Contraception refers to any action which suppresses the life-giving potential of sexual intercourse. It contradicts that meaning of sex as a sign of total self-giving because it withholds the gift of fertility from one's spouse, and is morally wrong.

When procreation is not possible, married life does not lose its value, but becomes the occasion for spouses to practice spiritual parenthood in service to the human person in other life-giving ways.

The mutual gift of self in marriage manifests itself in many ways in the daily life of a husband and wife.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Game Plan For Living Our Call to Love

Objective: To present and discuss a detailed age-appropriate “game plan” to help the students to be able to live the virtue of chastity and express self-giving love now and in their teen years.

Key Concepts

Sexual intercourse is designed by God to be the most intimate sign of the mutual gift of self that a man and woman make to one another in marriage. Chastity is the virtue which helps us to respect God’s design for sex and live in accord with it.

Real friendship is based on shared values and a sincere concern about the well-being of another person. Teens should develop friendships with both girls and guys who respect them and who will help them become the person God wants them to be.

Modesty means speaking, acting and dressing in a way that is attractive but not “sexy.” Modesty also entails being conscious of what we may be communicating to someone else and making sure that we are not sitting, standing, speaking, etc.. in a sexually suggestive way.

Television shows, movies, music, websites, and apps that promote lustful attitudes should be avoided, as well as those which depict sex between people who are not married. Teens should steer clear of any kind of pornography, which portrays sexuality in a way that degrades the dignity of the person.

Teens should leave single dating to the later teen years and spend time in groups getting to know both girls and guys better. Alcohol and drugs diminish our decision-making ability and lower our resistance to pressure. Teens should also avoid situations that might lead to sexual activity, such as parties with alcohol, drugs, or no parents actively supervising.

In high school, when they have their parents’ permission to begin dating, teens should only go out with people who have the same standards as they do. They should focus on non-physical ways to show that they care about each other, such as helping each other with a hobby or doing a service project together for others.

Holding hands, brief kisses and other signs of affection are fine in dating, but actions that cause sexual arousal are morally wrong outside of marriage.

Teens should be encouraged to be open with their parents or another trusted adult about what's going on in their lives. If they are feeling confused or uncomfortable about a situation, they should be encouraged to share it with their parent(s) or with another trusted adult who is living a Christian life.

Teens should be encouraged to make time every day for ten minutes of personal prayer to God, telling Him about what is going on in their lives and asking for His guidance and strength to become the young woman or man He created them to be. Teens should also be encouraged to develop a close relationship with Mary, looking to her as a model and asking for her help to stay close to Christ.

When we sin, we need to seek forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance. In this sacrament, we encounter the mercy of God and receive the grace to resist temptation in the future.

Saint John Paul II described the Eucharist as “the sacrament of the Bridegroom and the Bride,” in which the complete gift of self that Christ made to us, his Church, on the cross is made present to us. Receiving the Eucharist regularly helps us to live out in our own lives the self-giving love that makes us like Christ.