

Formation in Christian Chastity + Grade 3

Dear Parents,

The Church states with confidence that parents are the primary educators of their children. This is most true when we speak of the religious education of your children. This teaching flows from the natural bond that exists between parent and child, and from the very basis of our faith. You know your child best. While many parents seek the assistance of others to impart some of the systematic elements of education in faith, in Catholic schools or in parish religious education programs, you retain the primary duty to form your children in the faith. From you, your children will learn their first prayers, and with you they will first experience the worship of God. They also need to learn from you how to live responsibly in this world. This program is intended to assist parents in the formation of their children in the virtue of chastity.

Why Chastity?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) introduces the discussion of chastity by calling it a “vocation”. (See CCC #2337 ff) Chastity is the virtue whereby we regulate our use of sexual activity in accord with our state in life. We want to emphasize the good elements of the Christian life that are ours as followers of Jesus Christ. Every disciple observes chastity, though the manner of how it is observed varies according to our state in life. The married person, the priest or religious, and the young person all observe chastity, though in different ways. For example, a young person practices chastity by remaining pure in all of their relationships. A married couple observes a holy life in their exclusive commitment to each other. Priests and religious dedicate themselves exclusively to God. We want our children to grow up with a proper, healthy and holy understanding of themselves and their gift of human sexuality.

How will this program work?

This program is based on the premise that parents know their children, where they are in their own personal development, and can best judge when their child is ready for specific lessons or information. The natural innocence of young children may be protected in this way. During the first four grades, parents will be the teachers. For each year, we will provide a series of ideas and recommendations for you to review with your children. These will outline some of the basic concepts that are building blocks to understanding a chaste life and one that looks forward to a holy family life for their future. In later grades (5 to 8), we will assist parents with some classroom activity to support part of what they will be teaching at home.

What can parents teach to Third Graders?

The basic theme is the mystery of the triune God. It starts with the basic teachings of God as the Trinity of Persons, and moves to the mystery of the human family. A listing of the teaching points follows, and concludes with some ideas of how you might present these concepts.

God is a community of persons, not unlike a family.

- There is one God and there are three persons in the one God. Each of these persons is fully God.
- We call this mystery of three persons in one God, The Most Holy Trinity.
- The three persons in the Holy Trinity are: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are a communion of Persons, in a sense, the first family and have loved each other perfectly from all eternity.
- Because God makes us in His image and likeness, He creates us to be part of a family.
- God gave us mothers and fathers, either biological or adoptive, to love us and take care of us, body and soul, and to help us become the loving persons that God wants us to be.
- When a man and a woman marry, they become husband and wife and can begin a new family.
- Children are the greatest gifts that God can give to a family.

- As children, we show our love through obedience to God and our parents.
- Our grandparents and other relatives also love us and help us to be who God wants us to be.
- As God's children, we are called to be part of a larger family, the Church.
- This loving family of God includes the Blessed Mother, the holy angels, all human beings in heaven (the saints), and the holy souls in Purgatory.
- We should pray to God our loving Father, the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, our Guardian Angel, and the saints in heaven, to give us the grace to live good and holy lives in our families.

Teaching Examples

(1) Share the story of St. Patrick with your child, and how he used a 3-leaf clover to help explain the mystery of the Trinity to the King of Ireland. As a young man, Patrick was captured as a slave and taken from his home to Ireland. Later he escaped and returned home, eventually to study for the Priesthood. His desire was to return to the Irish and bring them the Catholic faith. Years later he did return. When meeting with the King, he told him how God was one divine nature and three persons. The shamrock or clover helped to show this as it had three distinct petals, but formed a single whole shamrock.

(2) Speak about family life. Together look at your child's family photo album with pictures of them as a baby and at their baptism. You could help the child to create a family tree with the names of your extended family.

(3) Praying the Hail Mary, with reference to the Holy Family, and the prayer: Angel of God. Use this prayer invoking your child's guardian angel to explain how God watches over them, and how others in their life also serve to protect them, e.g. parents, teachers, police, firemen, school crossing guards, etc.

Thank you for taking seriously your responsibility as the primary educator of your child in the all-important area of chastity education!

Prayerfully,
Fr. Patrick and Mrs. Viles