

Teacher/Parent Outline

For High School

Time: 30-40 Minutes

Objective

To learn and understand the nature of the Catholic Church’s teaching on the dignity of human life, understanding why we believe through reason and faith that all human life deserves protection, from conception to natural death. Students will learn the concept of the “spectrum of disability” and understand ideals of human solidarity which require duties of care for all human life. We will also address current topics of particular importance to teenagers, including abortion in certain challenging ethical circumstances, social responsibilities of communities to women who face challenging pregnancies, and more.

Overview

Gather

Welcome, intro, sharing re: RLCC and Obria resources available
 (5min)

Proclaim

Veritas (30 min)

About our Organizations

Right to Life of Central California is an educational nonprofit. Our goals and mission are to teach groups within our community about the dignity of human life, to provide resources to women facing unexpected pregnancies or abortion, and to be an advocate within our community for human dignity.

Our subsidiary corporation, the Obria Medical Clinics of Central California, is a nonprofit prenatal healthcare clinic that provides women with high-quality, dignified prenatal healthcare resources regardless of ability to pay or insurance status. Parents and young people who are facing challenging circumstances and wish to seek reliable information from a faithfully pro-life perspective may reach out to either of these organizations.

Proclaim

VERITAS

Learning through Faith and Reason

- We know by *Faith* what God reveals through Scripture and Tradition.
- We know by *reason (ratio)* what we learn by abstract reasoning AND by observing the physical world (including our own natures) and drawing logical conclusions.
- Certain articles of Catholic teaching can only be learned by faith, through divine revelation:
 - o The Trinity
 - o The Eucharist
 - o The Seven Sacraments
- We can learn *ethical truths* through faith AND/OR reason.
 - o You don't need a Bible to know it's wrong to lie or murder or steal, but...
 - o The Bible/Sacred Tradition (and the Catholic Church's interpretation of their principles) are useful to teach and reinforce those principles.

Why do we teach that abortion is wrong? Reason.

- What does it mean to be human?
 - o The Spectrum of disability –
 - We enter life dependent on others.
 - Others depend on us in our time of strength.
 - We become dependent again at the end of our life.
 - Unasked-for duty to give care and attendant right to receive care are at the core of human experience.
 - We can see ourselves in others who are weak and dependent—because we all were weak and dependent.
 - Viewing others—including unborn children—as strangers imposing unreasonable demands is against nature.
- Summary: Dependence upon others, weakness, lack of development does not lessen someone's value. We owe the same care we received.
- Even for mothers who conceive in situations of assault, there is a duty of care to the child. On top of this, political communities have profound obligations of care to victims of sexual assault, but this cannot extend to eliminating an innocent human life to whom we also owe care.

Why do we teach that abortion is wrong? Faith.

- Summary
 - o The Catholic Church consistently has taught that taking innocent life is wrong.
 - o The Church consistently taught that abortion was wrong.
 - o The Church's teachings on the nature of abortion were refined over time as scientific understanding of embryology grew.



- Pagan, Jewish, and early Christian attitudes:
 - o Judaism: openness to life, opposition to ancient/Roman practices of contraception, abortion, and infanticide
 - o Roman Culture: hostility to life, openness to “exposure” (infant-abandonment/infanticide) and primitive forms of abortion and contraception
 - o Holy Scripture
 - *Pharmakeia* – repeatedly condemned in the New Testament, refers to the ancient world use of “magic potions,” often for attempted contraceptive/abortifacient purposes. Galatians 5:20 and Revelation 9:21, 18:23, 21:8 and 22:15.
 - Biblical allusions to God’s formation of the human person pre-birth: Jeremiah 1:5.
 - o Fathers of the Church
 - *Didache* – 1st C. teachings of the Apostles, condemns abortion along with infanticide and *pharmakeia*.
 - St. Augustine –
 - Thought early abortion was not homicide because he did not think that fetuses in their early development had sensation, and therefore that they lacked a soul
 - Still thought abortion was immoral as a form of contraception
- When does life begin?
 - o Aristotle (4th c. BC): 40 days after conception for boys, 80 days after conception for girls.
 - o “Quickening” had significance at Common Law (when baby is moving).
 - o Zygote forming at egg-sperm fusion not discovered until 19th c. AD.
 - o Christian uncertainty: is abortion contraception, or homicide?
- Patristic and Medieval Christianity
 - o Largely accepted Aristotle’s viewpoint on when life began.
 - o Nonetheless, viewed abortion as universally immoral, either as late contraception or early homicide.
 - o Modern Christian abortion defenders try to argue that St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas supported early abortion. While they mistakenly did not think it was homicide, they certainly did not think it was good.
- 19th Century
 - o Discovery of the formation of the zygote by uniting egg and sperm in mammals in 1820’s.
 - o Changes in US State Laws to explicitly ban abortion, activity of the American Medical Association

- Catholic Teaching responds to new developments in science
 - Definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: 1854
 - Canon Law Penalties for Participation in Abortion
- St. John Paul II
 - Clarifies the responsibility of political communities to oppose abortion in law.
 - Impermissibility of voting for legalized abortion or supporting campaigns in its favor
- Summary: Consistency and Change in Catholic Teaching
 - Consistency –
 - Value of the Human Person
 - Solidarity, sympathy, empathy, hospitality
 - Direct killing of innocents is always grievously immoral
 - Change – in response to new scientific discoveries, the Church adapted its moral judgments, and flexibly responds to new scenarios as they emerge

Send

Prayer of Support

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of being created in your image and likeness. We thank you for the strengths you have given each of us. Help us to not fear or compete with the strengths of each other, but recognize the importance of uplifting and supporting one another. We ask that you help we seek ways to support one another. We also know that we each face particular challenges. Allow us to be aware of the challenges those around us face and make an effort to help one another overcome them. Finally, we ask that you help us to always recognize the dignity of each person we encounter, to always look for ways to serve one another. Help us be the gift to one another you created us to be. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, as we pray:

Our Father who art in heaven... Hail Mary, full of grace...

Composed by John Gerardi, revised by Michelle Ferrer.

For more resources visit www.rtlcc.org

To schedule a session please contact info@righttolifeca.org or (559) 229-2229.

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