
CHAPTER 32

The Moral Life

Core Activity

Virtue-al Reality



1. Before class make a copy of the handout “*Virtue-al Reality*” (Document #: TX003203) and cut it apart as scored.

2. Begin the activity by dividing the class into four small groups and providing the following explanation in your own words:

- You are all going to participate in a new reality television show called *Virtue-al Reality*. Each group will be assigned a situation they might encounter on a Friday evening and will have to determine what risks, temptations, and possible moral dilemmas they might face in that scenario. They will then be asked to draft a plan of action to help them counter those risks, temptations, and moral dilemmas before they happen.

3. Give one scenario from the handout to each small group. Have one person in each group read the scenario aloud to the group members. Ask each group to make a list of the risks, temptations, and moral dilemmas they might face in that scenario.

4. Invite the students to keep the things they have listed in mind as they listen to a brief presentation on the themes of the moral life, cardinal virtues, and theological virtues. Use the material from pages 351–355 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)* for that presentation.

5. List the cardinal and theological virtues on the board, on newsprint, or on an overhead. Invite the groups to go through their lists of risks, temptations, and moral dilemmas, and determine which of the displayed virtues might help them face those situations. Ask each group to list those virtues on a sheet of newsprint and share them with the class. If there seem to be any gaps, make suggestions.

6. Describe the next task of the groups as follows, in your own words:

- Each group is to develop a plan for connecting with some of those virtues before going to a party with friends. You should identify a number of ways to work on the virtues before going out. For example, you might work on prudence by thinking or talking through how the evening is expected to unfold, so that you can avoid acting on impulse by not being caught off guard.

- You should come up with a practical source of each virtue you might need for the evening, and make a plan for how to connect with each of those virtues before the evening's activities get under way.

Give the groups about 10 minutes to prepare their plans.

7. Invite the groups to share how they expect their scenarios to unfold, what risks they expect to face, and how they are going to make the virtues a reality in their lives before the scenario begins.

8. Close with a few questions about how the groups' suggestions can be put into practice in the students' daily lives.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Core Activity Extension

The Theological Virtues

As homework or class work, ask the students to form in their minds a visual image of one of the theological virtues. Then invite them to create an artistic representation of the virtue they have pictured. Tell them they have the freedom to develop whatever they would like—a picture, sculpture, poem, story, song, or whatever else. Invite any students who are interested to share their images with the class. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Additional Activities

A Labyrinth of Grace and Forgiveness



Distribute the handout "My Labyrinth of Grace and Forgiveness" (Document #: TX003204). Tell the students that they will need a pen or a pencil to trace their way through the labyrinth. Guide them in the process with the following instructions:

- With this labyrinth serving as a metaphor for life's journey of grace and forgiveness, we will journey slowly, the way pilgrims once journeyed to sacred places. Please do not go any faster than I guide you.
- When we get to a turn [indicate the turns on the labyrinth on the hand-out], you should not take it until I talk about it. It is the turns that will be the focus of our reflection. Feel free to make a little note at each turn to remind you of how it felt there.

- Labyrinths have been used in many ways for spiritual growth. Today we are going to use this one to reflect on the twists and turns of our lives.
- We begin this journey created in the image and likeness of God and thus “are capable of knowing God and freely returning God’s love” (*CFH*, p. 65). Enter the labyrinth from the bottom.
- We rapidly reach a turn that can represent Original Sin. Original sin is “the sin by which the first humans disobeyed God and thereby lost their original holiness and became subject to death. Original Sin is transmitted to every person born into the world” (*CFH*, p. 493). As we trace through that first outer curve, think about what it means to be with Original Sin.
- In time we reach another turn. This represents the gift of grace and forgiveness we received at Baptism. We travel along this part of the path supported by the grace of the Holy Spirit.
- Eventually we come to another turn. This turn symbolizes a decision to sin in some way.
- At the next turn, we are introduced to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Through the Sacrament we experience a sign of God’s forgiveness. The sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit then carries us along again for some time.
- Ever struggling with our human frailty, we come to another turn, and again we choose sin. We are older now and face more temptations.
- But this time things look brighter. We come to the next turn quickly and think we may have this sin thing beaten. We choose to receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation soon after sinning. Maybe feeling more empowered, we feel we can ward off sin by receiving the Sacrament. We may even be more aware of God’s grace all around us.
- But suddenly another turn appears, and we sin again. Surprised by how easy it is to fall, we feel that this path is longer than the last one. However, despite the habitual nature of our sins, we are certain of the grace offered in the Sacraments.
- Finally breaking the habit of sin we are in, we come to another turn that offers forgiveness and grace. This turn into grace brings us to the center of the journey, to the present moment. Here we rest in the knowledge of God’s grace.
- Resting in the center of this journey, we know we will eventually re-enter the twists and turns of life. We may fear the possibility of sinning again, but we are now certain that God’s forgiveness and grace are always available.
- Rather than tracing the future on this labyrinth, lift your pens or pencils and return your attention to the room. Use the metaphor of the labyrinth to give you hope when you are experiencing dark moments. Reconciliation and grace may be just around the corner.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Closer to God

Invite the students to identify an event or a moment when they experienced faith, hope, or charity. Ask the students to acknowledge that gift of virtue by writing to one or more of the people who have been instruments of it in their lives. Their message can be a thank-you note for helping them get closer to God. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Grace and Good Works

Ask the students if anyone has ever suggested that they can earn their way into heaven. Then have the class read the Live It! article “Grace and Works,” on page 358 of the *CFH*. Encourage the students to discuss how that reading changes their thinking, if at all. Ask if it will change the way they approach doing good works in the future. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

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