

Respecting Material Goods

Core Activity

Is It Stealing?

1. Begin by dividing the class into three groups. Explain that they will be presenting common arguments on the morality of downloading music from the Internet without paying record companies for the music.

2. Share the following directions with the groups, using your own words:
- Group 1 will argue that such downloading is not stealing and is not wrong.
 - Group 2 will argue that such downloading is stealing but is justifiable and morally acceptable.
 - Group 3 will argue that such downloading is stealing and is morally unacceptable.
 - Each group will have 3 minutes to present its argument. The other groups will not respond or interrupt while a group is presenting.
 - After all three groups have made their presentations, each group will have 2 minutes to respond to the presentations of the other groups.

Point out that this exercise is not a debate but a presentation of arguments to support the points of view assigned to the groups.

Allow the groups 10 minutes to prepare and organize the presentations. Instruct them to write down the key points of their presentations.

3. Assemble the groups for the presentations. Keep track of time, and ensure that no one interrupts the groups during their presentations. Invite all the groups to keep track of what the other groups are saying so that they can respond later. Emphasize that this exercise is not a personal debate; they must stick to the point, present their arguments, and not verbally attack the other groups.

4. After all three groups have given their presentations, give each group an opportunity to rebut the others.

5. When all three groups have presented their rebuttals, ask the first two groups the following question:

- Did the third group do an adequate job of presenting the Church's position? If yes, how so? If no, what other thoughts would you add?

6. Conduct a brief presentation on stealing, referring to the section "Respect for the Goods of Others," on pages 332–333 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*, and the material about the results of envy on pages 338–339.

7. Use the following reflection questions to help the students understand the topic of stealing from the viewpoint of the Church:

- In light of the information from the *CFH*, why is illegally downloading music wrong?
- Who gets hurt when you steal music through the Internet?
- Is stealing from someone who is wealthy more justifiable than stealing from someone who is poor? Why or why not?
- What is the difference, ethically, between stealing a package of chewing gum and stealing a car?
- How does stealing relate to cheating on a test or copying someone's homework?

8. Conclude by reiterating the Church's teaching on stealing. Challenge the students to be aware of the times when they face options that oppose that moral truth.

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

Core Activity Extension

Searching the News

As homework or class work, ask each student to find a news story about a corporation, institution, government, or individual accused of a crime such as plagiarism and embezzlement. Have each student write a brief paper describing the incident and answering the following questions:

- Who was accused?
- What crime was that person or agency accused of?
- What damage was done and who suffered because of the crime?
- Was there a conviction? If so, was any reparation or restitution required? If not, what reparation or restitution do you think would have been appropriate?

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

Additional Activities

Living in a Material World

1. Explain that the students are going to spend a little time looking at the material goods and the nonmaterial items they require to be happy.



2. Distribute the handout “Living in a Material World” (Document #: TX003202) and instruct the students to fill it out individually.

3. Poll the class to determine which three items they each ranked first and which three they each ranked last, asking someone to record those items in two lists on the board (the recorder can use slash marks to indicate duplicate responses). Note that although many of us would rank luxury material goods at the bottom of the list, we cannot ignore basic material items such as food and shelter.

4. Give a brief presentation on the use of material goods, highlighting key points from the information about almsgiving on page 334 of the *CFH* and the section “Proper Use of Wealth,” on pages 338–340.

5. Conclude by stressing the importance of recognizing what is a necessity for life and what is a luxury. Include comments such as these:

- Difficulties arise when we view luxuries as necessities and covet the luxuries that other people have. We also have to be careful not to value things over people.

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

A Preferential Option for the Poor

The Catholic Wisdom article on page 338 of the *CFH* explains the Church’s position that when we have a choice, we ought to exercise a preferential option for the poor. Invite the students to discuss some important local, state, or national political or social topic, and to decide what result would express a preferential option for the poor. Challenge the students to write a letter to an editor, send an e-mail to a legislator or city councilor, or take some other action that encourages the political or social agency to do the right thing. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Advertising Envy

Ask your students how many advertisements they see in a day that encourage them to want what their neighbors have. Make comments such as these:

- If wanting what our neighbors have is a violation of the Ninth Commandment (“You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbor,” Exod. 20:17), why do so many companies encourage it? They want to motivate people to spend their wealth with them rather than with someone else.

Invite the students to brainstorm ideas for resisting the “more, more, more” of the consumer society. Ask them to adopt one strategy for the week ahead. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Simple Living

Invite the students to read the Live It! article “Simple Living,” on page 334 of the *CFH*. Ask them to brainstorm what they can do to live more simply. Invite all to commit to one change to simplify the way they live. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

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