

Sources of Moral Truth

Core Activity

Church Law Rooted in the Old Law and in the New Law

1. Assign the students to read about the five Precepts of the Church in the section “Church Law,” on pages 280–283 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*.



2. Distribute the handout “The Precepts of the Church” (Document #: TX003200), Bibles, and copies of the *CFH*. Tell the students they may work alone or in groups of their own choosing. Provide them with the following instructions in your own words:

- You are on a quest to uncover the roots of the five examples of Church laws on the handout. You might be able to uncover only one or two roots, or you might discover several. Try to discover the roots of all five examples, and write down as many as you come up with.
- You might find in the Old Testament some roots of the Old Law of the Ten Commandments. You might discover in the New Testament some roots of the New Law of Jesus Christ. Some Church precepts might have roots both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament; others might have roots in one or in the other.
- You can use the *CFH* and the Bible in your search.
- If you find a root in the Old Law, write on the handout either the place in the Old Testament where you found it or which Commandment you think it is.
- If you find a root in the New Law, write on the handout a few words to describe the New Testament story that it comes from, or the book, chapter, and verse of the New Testament passage that contains it.

3. While the students are working, you can give them hints: for example, you might tell them the location of the Ten Commandments in Scripture (Exod. 20:1–17 and Deut. 5:1–21), where the Beatitudes are listed (Matt. 5:1–12), or a suggestion about the loaves and the fishes, the Last Supper, or the Emmaus story in relation to the Eucharist.

4. When everyone is done with the handout, write the numbers 1–5 on the board. Next to each number, print a large “O” and a large “N,” with enough space to the right of each letter for a number of check marks.

Record the students’ findings on precepts 1 through 5, by placing a check mark to the right of the large “O” when anyone suggests a root in the Old Law and to the right of the large “N” when anyone suggests a root in the New Law.

Invite someone advocating a particular root to explain why. Invite others to add reasons if they think of more.

5. Close by suggesting to the students that when they hear about a Church precept, they investigate its roots: the Old Law of the Ten Commandments, or the New Law of Jesus Christ revealed in the New Testament. Explain this statement too: “The Ten Commandments are a special expression of natural law, making perfectly clear through God’s Revelation what he had already placed in the human heart” (*CFH*, p. 278).

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

Core Activity Extension

Examining a Pastoral Statement

For students who are ready for an extra challenge, get a copy of a recent pastoral statement from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Invite the students to seek out the roots of the statement in the Old Law and in the New Law.

Additional Activities

Forming Your Conscience

1. Invite the students to read the Live It! article “Top Ten Ways for Forming Your Conscience,” on page 284 of the *CFH*. Then instruct them to list each of the ten ways for forming the conscience, in their own words down the left side of a piece of paper. When they are done, ask for volunteers to share their translations.

2. Direct the students to assign each way of forming their conscience a number between 1 and 10, corresponding with how often they take advantage of it (1 = never; 10 = frequently). Tell them to write the numbers to the left of their translations. Let them know that their papers are confidential and will not be shared with the class.

3. Ask the students to write down one way they can make better use of each method of forming their conscience, using the space they have left on the right side of their paper. Encourage them to be creative and specific. For example, instead of writing just “go to Mass more” for the first method, they could write “go to 9:30 Mass with my family and try to pay attention during the entire Mass.”

4. Lead the students in sharing the suggestions they have come up with. List their suggestions on the board.

5. As a class, commit to one of the suggestions everyone can do each time you gather. Follow up on that commitment every time you meet.

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

Recipes of Love

A recipe is like a set of laws: it contains the things that have to be done to get a certain result. Distribute an index card or, better yet, a blank recipe card to each student. Invite everyone to create a recipe by listing the ingredients needed to lead a life of love and the instructions for making those ingredients come together well. Consider posting the completed “recipes” on a bulletin board, adding them to your school’s Web site, or using them to create a recipe book. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Media Watch

After polling the students about their favorite television shows, record one or more of those shows. Watch the recording as a class, stopping it at any point where a moral decision has been made. Ask how the decision would have been affected if the person making it had checked in with Scripture and Tradition. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

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