

Respecting Life

Core Activity

“Life Is . . .”

1. Instruct your students to take out a piece of paper and a pen or a pencil. Have them read the chapter introduction and the section “Human Life Is Sacred,” on pages 306–307 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*.

2. Mention that you are going to read twelve sentences in which the last word is missing. Explain that the students are to write down the first word that comes to mind to complete each sentence. Ask them to use a different word for each sentence. Tell them to number their papers 1–12 down the left side, and write their answers beside the appropriate numbers. Note that there will be time for sharing later in the class.

3. Begin reading the statements listed here, allowing time after each sentence for the students to write their responses. Read each statement a few times, and tell the class when you are going to move to the next sentence.

1. Life is . . .
2. I was created because . . .
3. The best thing about my life is . . .
4. The biggest challenge of life is . . .
5. Life is . . .
6. My life is . . .
7. I see God’s work in my life when . . .
8. In my life I will . . .
9. Life is . . .
10. I see others not valuing life when . . .
11. Being created in God’s image means . . .
12. Life is . . .

4. Invite the students to share a few of the words they used to complete the sentences. Remind the class that we are to respect others and what they have to say, so this is not a time to debate, to laugh at, or to question what people share. Write on the board the words that the students share.

5. Ask the young people to identify the words on the board that they think best express what life is. Also invite them to point out words they like but had not thought of before.

6. Invite the students to spend a few minutes quietly looking at their own lists of words and see whether those lists match what they learned from the *CFH* reading about the value of life.

7. Share with the students these ideas in your own words:

- Respecting and valuing life to its fullest is not always easy. For instance, most of us find it difficult to value the life of someone convicted of murder, or of someone who has caused great pain for us or those we love. We may also find it challenging to value a new life if it will change our own lives in a way we don't feel we are ready for. We are called, however, to work to value life at all its stages.

8. Conclude by noting that the content of this activity is drawn from chapter 28 of the *CFH*. Encourage the students to read and review the chapter in the next few days. Then invite the students to pray for those who face life-and-death situations, and pray that you all may grow in valuing the gift of life. Consider using these words:

- Loving and gracious God, we give you thanks and praise for the gift of this day and all the days that follow. Help us to see the value of the life you have given, not only to us but also to all your children. Send your spirit of wisdom and courage to guide us in making decisions that hold sacred every moment we have. We pray for those who face difficult issues of life and death. Guide each of us with compassion to choose life always. We lift up for healing those who have suffered a loss; help them to realize that your love is ever present and that your generosity is unceasing. Amen.

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

Core Activity Extension

“Life Is . . .” Letter

Invite your students to revisit the statement “Life is . . .” Ask them to write a brief letter to an imaginary person who is struggling with the issue of valuing life—such as someone who supports the death penalty, is considering an abortion, or is contemplating euthanasia. The letter should begin with the statement “Life is . . .” and should explain why valuing life is necessary even when a person finds it difficult to see its value. Encourage the students to use the *CFH* as a resource. Assure them that the letter will not be shared with the class. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Additional Activities

Promoting a Culture of Life

1. Tell the students that Pope John Paul II often talked about promoting a culture of life. Let them know that the class is going to look at a variety of human activities and for each activity ask the question, “Does this promote a culture of life or a culture of death?” Explain that in their analysis, they are to ask the following questions:

- What actions promote a culture of life: good ones or evil ones? What actions promote a culture of death?
- When the pope talked about a culture of life, was he talking only about killing?



2. Distribute the handout “Promoting a Culture of Life” (Document #: TX003201). Ask the students to work with a partner, and to approach each item on the handout by asking, “Does this action show ‘profound respect for the dignity of the human person’ (CFH, pp. 306–307)?” Allow 5 minutes for them to complete the handout.

3. Review the pairs’ answers as a class. Ask how telling a lie promotes death or why visiting a nursing home promotes life. Acknowledge that promoting life is more than just being “for” or “against” something. Promoting life means working with all our actions, words, thoughts, and values together to choose life.

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

The Words We Use

To explore the secular culture’s different perspectives on abortion, have the students reflect on the meanings and implications of some of the slogans and terms that surround the debate about that issue—such as *pro-child*, *pro-choice*, *pro-life*, and *pro-abortion*. Ask them what is implied by each slogan or term. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Delve Deeper

Choose one of the many life issues presented on pages 308–317 of the *CFH*, and have your students investigate it further. Ask them to address questions such as these:

- What are the questions surrounding this particular issue?
- Where does the Church stand on this issue?
- How can we effect change with regard to this issue?
- What will be our first step toward effecting change?

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

Stories of Compassion

1. Invite your students to recall a time they felt compassion toward another person. Ask them to describe the event in writing, by answering the following questions:

- How old were you?
- What moved you to compassion?
- What was it like to feel compassion?

2. Ask your students to reflect on the following questions:

- In the past week, when have you noticed someone experiencing compassion and offering assistance to others?
- Whom among those you know personally would you describe as a person of compassion?

Ask your students to think of an example of that person's compassion toward others and to share that example with a partner. Caution them to respect the privacy of those involved by not revealing names and details in their descriptions.

3. Conclude by inviting each student to name one way he or she can be more compassionate toward others.

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

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