

Respecting Truth

Core Activity

Truth Woven into the Fabric of Life

1. Divide the class into small groups. Assign each group one of the following areas:

- friendship
- education
- family relationships
- medical care
- the buying or selling of goods and services
- sports
- news reporting
- government
- financial institutions
- relations between nations

Explain the task of each group as follows, using your own words:

- You are to create a short story of a situation involving your category in a world in which no one can trust anyone else. In that world honesty simply is not a value. People and institutions say and do whatever serves their immediate convenience or interests.

Ask each group to designate a recorder. Allow about 10 minutes for the groups to create their stories. Have one person from each group come forward and present the story.

2. Lead the students in a class discussion using the following questions:

- Which of the groups' stories resemble the world as we know it?
- Do you think honesty is emphasized enough in our world? Why or why not?
- What do you think Jesus would have said about the level of trust and honesty in our world today?

3. Ask the students to brainstorm the costs of being honest. For example, honesty can provoke criticism or punishment. Record the responses on the board.

Then ask the students to brainstorm the benefits of being honest, prompting them by asking, "Why would someone want to be honest?" Record the responses.

Next have them brainstorm the harms associated with being dishonest. Again record the responses.

Finally ask, "How do we repair the harms if we have been dishonest?" Note a few of those ideas as well.

4. Invite the students to return to their small groups, and ask them to come up with some suggestions for how the characters in their stories might change their world from one of no honesty to one of honesty. Ask, “How could the characters make amends for the harm they caused in the old world?”

5. Invite the students to consider whether the suggestions for repairing the harm in their story worlds could be used in their own lives, and to jot down some steps for fixing the hurt. Conclude by inviting a few students to share their action steps for living a more truth-filled life.

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

Core Activity Extension

The Truth That Lies Behind

As homework or class work, ask the students to read the Live It! article “Copy and Paste: Text-Message Conversation,” on page 347 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*. Have them reflect on how common half-truths and gossip are in conversations among their peers, and whether it is possible to change habits of uttering such comments. Instruct them to rewrite the conversation from the *CFH* as suggested at the end of the article, and to think about ways they can change their conversation practices to make them more honest. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Additional Activities

Praying for Strength

1. Before this prayer activity, select three volunteers, assign each of them one of the three scriptural readings named in steps 2 and 3, and give them time to practice.

2. Begin the prayer with the Sign of the Cross. Then invite the first volunteer to proclaim Ps. 119:41–48. Allow a moment for quiet reflection. Then ask the second volunteer to proclaim John 8:31–32. Again allow a moment for quiet reflection. Next offer the following comments in these or your own words:

- In the first reading, the psalmist is asking the Lord for protection from those who would taunt him for speaking the truth.
- In the reading from John’s Gospel, we hear the familiar saying “The truth will make you free!”

- On a sheet of paper, describe something you are currently struggling to be truthful about.
- Then write a short prayer asking God to give you the strength to be truthful. When you're finished, fold your paper in half.

Allow a few minutes for the students to complete their task.

3. Invite the third volunteer to proclaim Luke 6:20–22. Again allow a moment for silent reflection.

4. Invite the students to place their folded papers in an empty basket, and tell them that doing so symbolizes placing their requests before God. After all the students have placed their papers in the basket, light a candle and explain that the candle is a sign that Christ's light is shining within each of them.

5. Conclude by playing or singing a song appropriate for the topic. Check appendix A for song suggestions.

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

Where Kindness and Truth Meet

Suggest that the students each interview someone they consider tactful. Ask them to find out about a dilemma that person has faced in trying to combine kindness and truth. Then have the students share the stories they hear with the entire class, without identifying the people they have interviewed. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Which Version Is True?

Ask the students to watch the different versions of a single news story on four television networks the same night. This can be tricky to accomplish, but if they have access to cable networks, recording equipment, or the Internet, it is possible. Have them notice variations in mood, tone, attitude, details, predictions, causes or reasons, and so on. Instruct them to write a brief reflection on what they discover, answering the following questions:

- Which version do you think comes closest to the truth? Why?
- Do you trust that version more because of something about the way the story was presented or because of something about the network that presented it? Explain your answer.

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

Truth in Politics

Have the students listen to a political speech, either a contemporary one or a famous one from history, while looking at a transcript of the words. Invite the students to answer the following questions:

- What statements sound untrue?
- How does the way the politician says something affect whether people will accept the statement as truth?

- What statements seemed true when the speech was made but have since been proven false?
- How might the effect of the speech have been different if listeners had known at the time that those statements were untrue?

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

A Journal Entry

Invite each student to write a brief journal entry answering the following questions:

- Have you ever had to make a decision about whether to reveal someone's secret for her or his own good? If so, what were the circumstances?
- How did you handle that situation?
- What, if anything, do you wish you had done differently?

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