

Living Faithfully

Session Focus

This session explores the Fourth Commandment—“Honor your father and mother.”—for all participants, and for teens and adults it also explores the Sixth Commandment—“You shall not commit adultery”—and the Ninth Commandment—“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.” In essence, this session looks at ways to enrich the quality of our family relationships, and, for teens and adults, explores the Church’s view on sexuality and marriage.

Learning Objectives

This session on living faithfully guides learners of all ages to...

- Understand the importance of respect, gratitude, and helping each other out, and how these qualities are first learned in our families and from our parents
- Recognize that love, respect, gratitude, honor, obedience, and assistance are the key qualities needed to guide us in our most important and most intimate lifelong relationships
- discover that the Church has very practical lessons to teach us about living together as a family, being together in romantic relationship, and remaining committed to one another in marriage

Session Overview

Part 1. (20 minutes) Gathering & Opening Prayer Service

Part 2. (30 minutes) All Ages Learning: Joseph, Son of Jacob

Part 3. (75 minutes) In Depth Learning Experience

- Option 1. Whole Group Format: All participants remain in the same room.
- Option 2. Age Groups Format : Participants go to separate rooms for parallel learning: families with children, adolescents, adults.

Part 4. (15 minutes) Sharing Learning Experiences

Part 5. (10 minutes) Closing Prayer Service

Design Options for In-Depth Learning

Option 1. Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences. You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners

- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of leaders who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leaders to have one leader work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

Facilitation Tips for this Format:

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

Option 2. Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic. You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.
- A facilitator must guide all the of the families through each learning experience, while small group leaders move from table to table assisting.

Materials Needed

Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities
- Opening Prayer Service

- Bible

In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts
- Video projector and screen
- Pens or pencils for participants
- Newsprint, markers, masking tape

Closing

- Closing Prayer Service

Session Plan

Part 1. Gathering and Opening Prayer (30 minutes)

Preparation

Prepare a newsprint sheet or handout that lists the order of the activities or create a PowerPoint presentation that guides people through the session.

Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the handouts participants will need for the session. You can also distribute handouts for the In-Depth Learning program at the beginning of the activity.
- Invite people to share a meal; depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal instead.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using the words below or your own words.

This session on moral living explores the Fourth Commandment—“Honor your father and mother.”—for all participants, and for teens and adults it also explores the Sixth Commandment—“You shall not commit adultery”—and the Ninth Commandment—“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.” In essence, this session looks at ways to enrich the quality of our family relationships, and, for teens and adults, explore the Church’s view on sexuality and marriage.

1. Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people for the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask all members of the same family to sit together in these intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational—children, teens, parents, and grandparents—keep them together in one group.

For the In Depth Learning Experience (Part 3) organize the participants into three types of table groups or break-out sessions: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults.

2. Opening Prayer Service

Preparation

Select one person to read the Scripture story of the Boy Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:39-52).

Gather

Lord God, from you every family in Heaven and on earth takes its name.

Father, you are love and life.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman,
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of Divine Charity,
grant that each family on earth may become for each successive generation
a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that your grace may guide
the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives
for the good of their families and of all the families in the world.

Grant that the young may find in the family
solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love.

Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage,
may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials
through which our families sometimes pass.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her worldwide mission
in the family and through the family.

Through Christ our Lord
who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life
for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Listen

Ask the reader to proclaim Luke 2:29-52, the Boy Jesus in the Temple

Respond

Leader: Let us all pray for families, particularly those who lead our families: for wives and mothers, for fathers and husbands.

Women: As mothers and wives, watch over us, Lord, and keep our families safe, like the mother eagle who guards her young.

Men: O God, you spoke to Elijah not as a rushing wind but as a still, small voice. Help all fathers and husbands to find you in everything as small and ordinary as this and to share faith in you with their kids, no matter their age.

Women: We teach our little ones to stand and walk, carefully coaxing balance, then jump in when we can to teach them balance in work, in friendship, in serving others.

Men: O God, you trusted Noah with the care of your creatures while they weathered the storm. Help all fathers and husbands protect those they love, during tempests and travel, in pools and parks. Be the extra eyes they need to keep their family safe and guide all men through their fears.

Women: As wives and mothers, we deliver our children once, in joy and pain, then deliver them a hundred times more—to school, to practices, to doctors' appointments.

Men: O God, as a father you put young Jesus under Joseph's care. Give all fathers love enough, patience enough, to help their families in whatever ways they can.

Women: Guide our families Lord, and keep them upright, falling neither into harm nor selfishness.

Men: God of us all, you've stuck with humanity for the long haul. Grace all fathers and husbands with a taste of your stamina. Make them strong enough to stay the course and gentle enough to know your care.

Women: We congregate as wives, moms, and family, whispering about worries and passing on what works, sharing wisdom from Grandma or Oprah, stories heard in parking lots or bleachers.

All: Teach us, Lord, to lead with our love instead of our fears, trusting that you are there beside us.

Go Forth

Lord God, thank you for calling us into a special relationship with you. Open our ears that we may hear your words. Open our hearts that we may treasure your love for us. Give us the courage to live healthy family lives, and to remain faithful and true in our relationships. Amen.

Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: Joseph, Son of Jacob (30 minutes)

The focus of the All Ages Learning Experience is help participants see a connection between an Old Testament family (Joseph and his brothers, sons of Jacob) and their own. This story will launch participants into the first part of their in-depth learning which addresses the Fourth Commandment and centers on the quality of family living.

Preparation

Decide how you will present the story of Joseph, Son of David in a dramatic fashion

Gather necessary props and costumes for the presentation of the story

Present the story of Joseph, Son of David (based on Genesis 37 – Genesis 50). Using the summary below, don't just read the story, but present it in some dramatic form or another:

- Create a dramatic play or skit from the text.
- Have persons mime the action while the story is read aloud.
- Get volunteers to act out the parts in an impromptu fashion as the story is read aloud.
- Using pictures or video, create a PowerPoint presentation to be shown while the story is read aloud.
- Provide a copy of the story to each table group and designate one person from each table to read the story aloud.

In your own words, or using the words below, share the following story.

Once upon a time there was a man named Abraham. Abraham married Sarah and they had a son named Isaac. Isaac married Rebekah, and they had twin sons named Esau and Jacob. Esau, the older

twin, was supposed to inherit his father's property and authority, but Jacob tricked him out of both. Jacob married Leah and Rachel and had twelve sons and one daughter. One of his younger sons was Joseph. Joseph was his favorite son. One day, when Joseph was seventeen, Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful coat of many colors. Joseph's eleven brothers saw that Jacob loved Joseph the best, and they hated Joseph for it.

Joseph had dreams that seemed to mean that one day his brothers would bow down to his authority. He shared these dreams with his brothers who, in turn, hated him even more. The brothers decided something had to be done with Joseph and his dreams. They wanted to kill him, but they thought it would be better just to sell him to a group of Ishmaelites who were traveling to Egypt. When the Ishmaelites arrived in Egypt with Joseph, they sold him to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials.

Joseph did very well as a servant in the house of Potiphar. Joseph was very good-looking, and Potiphar's wife noticed him. She tried to seduce Joseph, but he resisted. She became angry with Joseph and lied to Potiphar by telling him that Joseph had attacked her. Potiphar believed the lie and threw Joseph in prison. While in prison, Joseph successfully interpreted the dreams of two prisoners. Two years passed, and Pharaoh started to have dreams that were troubling him. Someone told Pharaoh about Joseph, so he ordered Joseph to be brought to him. Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams, and Joseph successfully interpreted Pharaoh's dreams to mean that there would be seven years of prosperity in Egypt followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh saw that Joseph was filled with the spirit of God, so he made Joseph second in command of the entire kingdom of Egypt. Joseph was to oversee and manage the years of prosperity to assure that there would be enough food saved for the coming years of famine. Joseph did his job well, and there was plenty of food in Egypt during the seven years of famine. People came from all over the world to buy food in Egypt during the famine.

The famine also reached the land of Canaan where Jacob and the rest of Joseph's family lived. Jacob sent ten of Joseph's brothers to Egypt to buy grain, but he did not send Benjamin, Joseph's closest brother, because he feared that he might lose Benjamin as he lost Joseph. When Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt, they came to him to buy grain. Joseph recognized them, but they did not recognize him.

Joseph treated his brothers harshly and questioned them at length. He ordered that one of the brothers, Simeon, be held in prison until the others returned home to bring Benjamin back with them. Joseph overheard his brothers say, "We are paying the penalty for the way we treated our brother Joseph. Joseph pleaded with us, and we would not listen. In the same way, we are pleading with this Egyptian official, and he will not listen to us."

The brothers returned to Canaan and convinced Jacob to allow them to bring Benjamin to Egypt. The brothers promised that they would bring Benjamin home unharmed. When they arrived in Egypt, Joseph prepared a meal for them. Joseph was deeply moved to see his beloved brother Benjamin again. He wept privately with tears of joy. When it was time for the brothers to leave, Joseph ordered a servant to secretly put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack. The brothers left, and Joseph ordered his servant to capture them and bring them back. He accused Benjamin of stealing the silver cup and ordered him to be held in prison. Judah, Joseph's older brother, stepped forward and pleaded with Joseph to let Benjamin return home. He told Joseph that he had promised his

father that Benjamin would return home unharmed. Judah offered to be put in prison in Benjamin's place.

Joseph was so touched that he could no longer stand it. He revealed himself to his brothers and assured them that they were forgiven for selling him into Egypt. He said it was God's plan for him to come to Egypt before them to preserve life. The brothers returned home and told Jacob all that they had seen. Jacob then journeyed to Egypt with his whole family. When Joseph saw his father, he embraced him for a long time and wept for joy. Pharaoh allowed Jacob's family to settle in the best land in Egypt. Joseph brought Jacob before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh (Jim Merhaut, *Your Catholic Family*, pp. 37-38).

After the story has been presented, invite participants into intergenerational table groups to discuss the following questions. Allow children to answer first, followed by teens, then adults.

- What short-comings or faults do you see in the Old Testament family presented in this story?
- What strengths or positive characteristics do you see in the family?
- In what ways is your family like, or not like, Joseph and his family?

Invite a few people representing children, teens, and adults to share with the larger groups any comments they may have about the connection between their family and the story of Joseph, Son of Jacob.

Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience (75-80 minutes)

Important Note: Part of this in-depth learning experience deals with the sensitive topic of human sexuality. In order to address the topic effectively and adequately, it must be done in a developmentally appropriate manner. Therefore, we provide only the Age Group learning format for this session. Also, the adolescent in-depth learning experiences in this session are designed so that parents and teens remain together for learning.

Families with Children Learning Experience:

Preparation

Create a video from films and television sitcoms that show scenes of families with children interacting with each other. Put together three or four scenes of 2-4 minutes each.

Materials Needed

- Handouts #1, #2, #3, #4, one for each family
- Video as described above, video player and projector
- Projection screen
- Pencils
- Ordinary paper
- Newsprint pieces

1. The Fourth Commandment

In your own words, or the words below communicate the following:

Can anyone tell me what the Fourth Commandment is? “Honor your father and mother.” In one short sentence, this commandment tells us how important our families are.

Our families, especially our parents, teach us a great deal. From them we first learn about right and wrong, how to get along with one another, live together under one roof, and how to love one another. Our families are our first teachers when it comes to respect, gratitude, and helping one another out.

The Fourth Commandment, “Honor your father and mother”, challenges children to learn these things from their parents and elders at home: love, respect, gratitude, honor, obedience, and assistance. These are the tools we all need to live as Christians in the world.

The Fourth Commandment challenges parents to teach these traits to their children and to each other. Why? Because these are the things best learned at home.

Ask participants to work in family groups using Handout #1: Things We Learn at Home. With parents and children working together, have them write a definition and a home example for each of these traits: love, respect, gratitude, honor, obedience, and assistance.

2. What is a Healthy, Whole Family?

Show the video that you have prepared. Ask the participants to pay close attention to family and parent-child interaction as they watch the video. The purpose is to get participants thinking about various kinds of family interaction.

Invite participants into family groups. Ask them to discuss what they saw in the video using these questions:

- What did you see that was positive family interaction? Why do you consider it positive?
- What did you see that was negative family interaction? Why?

Give each family a piece of blank paper and a piece of newsprint. On the piece of paper, have the family make a list of five things that make for a healthy, whole family. A parent should write these items on the paper.

When the family has completed their list, have them use their newsprint and markers to create a symbol for each of the five items on their list. Ask them to be creative and artistic with the symbols, but not to use words. Their goal is to make the symbol clear enough for others to recognize its meaning.

When finished ask each family to pair with another family and share their newsprint. See if they can guess the family strength behind each symbol.

3. Our Family's Strengths

Participants will now reflect on how they perceive their own family.

Give each family a copy of Handout #2: Our Family's Strengths. Instruct each person to choose a different initial for each family member. Select one person in the family to read each statement out loud. After each statement, allow each family member to write their initial on the line where it indicates their perception of that family strength.

Offer an example so that everyone understands the instructions.

Remind participants to give each person a turn, to listen carefully without interrupting, and to ask questions for clarification only. Note that each person is free to share as much or as little as she or he desires.

4. Characteristics of a Healthy, Whole Family

Give each participant a copy of Handout #3: Characteristics of Strong Families.

Using your own words, or the words below, give a brief presentation on the characteristics of healthy, whole families. Ask participants to use Handout #3 to follow along with your presentation. (NOTE: Since this handout is also used for families with adolescents, you should offer a brief summary of each characteristic in order to keep your presentation short. Parents can read the full handout on their own.)

One purpose of this session is to learn more about what makes a healthy family. In fact, this question has caught the interest of a number of professionals who work with families on a regular basis. Many studies have been done in recent years to identify important characteristics of families that enable them to operate effectively. These characteristics are referred to as "family strengths".

"Family strengths can be defined as those relational patterns, interpersonal skills, attitudes, competencies, values, and individual psychological characteristics that help the family to work" (USCCB, *Family Perspective* 24). Family strengths enable families to operate effectively as a system, meeting the needs of family members and the family as a whole. Family strengths lead to the overall health of a family.

Though language may vary from study to study, a number of important characteristics have been identified as family strengths. (Refer participants to Handout #3.)

The healthy family shares a sense of commitment. This means that family members are dedicated to promoting each other's welfare and happiness. They expect the family to endure. They have a sense of shared responsibility for the family, and a commitment to stay connected during times of transition, difficulty, or crisis. Commitment in the healthy family means an investment of time, energy, spirit, and heart. A healthy family also has a support system beyond the immediate family, which might include extended family, friends, and others.

The healthy family spends both quality and quantity time together sharing many areas of life. They share leisure time together and have a sense of play and humor. Time together allows relationships

and understanding to grow. Yet in healthy families there is also balance, so that togetherness does not become stifling. By sharing time together, the family develops a sense of family identity.

The healthy family is developing and using skills in good communication. Family members take the time to listen to one another. Spouses have a strong, loving relationship and are capable of sharing deep feelings with one another. The family has control over television and other electronic media which often impede good communication. Regular shared mealtimes often provide time for family communication. The family encourages individual feelings and independent thinking.

Members of healthy families appreciate one another and take the time to let one another know this in a variety of ways. Parents show affection toward their children and work to build trusting relationships in the family. Family members express their love for one another through caring, feeling responsible, showing respect, and learning to listen for the feelings of another. An environment of love, acceptance, and understanding helps children develop an inner strength for growth and development. As family members affirm and support one another, self-esteem is boosted.

The healthy family has a shared religious and moral core. Shared faith and religious practice provide a family with a common set of values and a purpose in today's world, and can be an important element in strengthening and promoting healthy family life. Sharing, love, and compassion for others are promoted. The family teaches a sense of right and wrong. There is a strong sense of family rituals and traditions. Faith is connected to daily living; in fact, the primary expression of faith for the healthy family is in daily life. They practice what they preach. The family values service to others. Parents feel responsible to "pass on the faith," but do so in positive and meaningful ways that allow for times of questioning.

The healthy family is able to cope with crisis and times of stress in a positive manner. Members of these families unite to face the challenges of a crisis by drawing on various family strengths, being able to adapt, asking for help, and accepting assistance from others. Drawing on spiritual resources, humor, and communication, the healthy family maintains a sense of hope and gratefulness, knowing that things will eventually get better. The healthy family expects problems and considers them to be a normal part of life. They admit to and seek help with problems that are beyond their own resources.

Invite questions and comments from participants when you have finished with your presentation.

Introduce the Scripture passage from Colossians by saying that the Bible also identifies some characteristics of a healthy family. What are these strengths that our faith invites us to share?

Read Colossians 3:12-17 at the bottom of the handout or ask for a volunteer to read.

“Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns, and inspired

songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:12-17).

After reading the passage, ask participants to identify some of the strengths in their family that St. Paul mentions in the passage. How do these strengths compare with the strengths that were identified through the family studies?

Ask participants to return to their family groups. Invite them to discuss the following questions. Post them on newsprint or on a PowerPoint slide for all to see.

- What are our best family strengths?
- What strengths do we need to work on?

5. Family Action Plan

Give each family a copy of Handout #4: Family Action Plan. Ask each family to identify one area to work on as a family. One member should write this down under “What we want to happen.” Continue the discussion by addressing “How we are going to do it,” and “When we will get started.”

Invite families, if they wish, to share their Action Plan with the whole group.

Adolescents Learning Experience

Activity 1. Healthy Family Living

Preparation

Create a video from films and television sitcoms that show scenes of adolescent families interacting with each other: whole families, parent/child, parent/teen, couples. Put together three or four scenes of 2-4 minutes each.

Materials Needed

- Handouts #3 and #5 for each participant
- Handout #4 for each family
- Video as described above
- Video player and projector
- Projection screen
- Newsprint
- Markers
- Pencils

1. The Fourth Commandment

In your own words, or the words below communicate the following:

Can anyone tell me what the Fourth Commandment is? “Honor your father and mother.” In one short sentence, this commandment tells us how utterly important family life is for each of us as individuals *and* for the whole community.

We learn a great deal from our families and in the homes in which we grow up. Our families teach us right from wrong, how to be in relationship with others, how to live with others, what it means to honor and obey our parents, how to express gratitude, and how to help one another out. All families teach these traits. Some do it well, and some do it poorly. Some families teach some of these traits while failing at others. No family is perfect.

The Fourth Commandment “Honor your father and mother” challenges us as children and teens to do all we can to learn these important traits at home from our elders: love, respect, gratitude, honor, obedience, assistance. Why? Because these are just the traits we need to live as Christians in the world!

The Fourth Commandment challenges us as parents to teach our children and each other these traits as best we can. Why? Because these are the traits best learned at home and in the family. They are seldom taught elsewhere, and if so, they are seldom taught effectively. Look at it this way: family upbringing *will always teach something* about these traits, for good or ill. You might as well do all you can to make it “good.”

This learning experience is designed to help you look at your family life so you can maximize your ability to teach/learn these traits of love, respect, gratitude, honor, obedience, and assistance. The more healthy and whole your family, the more effectively these traits are taught/learned.

2. What is a Healthy, Whole Family?

Show the video that you have prepared. Ask the participants to pay close attention to family, parent-child, and parent-teen interaction as they watch the video. The purpose is to get participants thinking about various kinds of family interaction.

Invite participants to form mixed-generational groups. Parents and adolescents from the same family should be in different groups.

Give each group a sheet of newsprint and a marker.

Ask groups to brainstorm a list of qualities, characteristics, or actions that they would attribute to a healthy, whole, strong family. Ask them to put a star next to the five items that the group feels are most important. Have groups post their newsprint for all to see.

Tally each newsprint to get a sense of which characteristics the group as a whole feels are most important.

3. My Family's Strengths

Participants will now reflect on how they perceive their own family.

Give each participant a copy of Handout #5: My Family's Strengths. Ask each participant to think about his or her family and decide how often each of the statements applies. Then ask them to complete the two sentences at the bottom of the handout. Refer them to the newsprint sheets to assist them with these two questions.

Ask participants to form family groups and invite them to share their responses with fellow family members. Remind participants to give each person a turn, to listen carefully without interrupting, and to ask questions for clarification only. Note that each person is free to share as much or as little as she or he desires.

Ask participants to hold onto their handouts for later use.

4. Characteristics of a Healthy, Whole Family

Give each participant a copy of Handout #3: Characteristics of Strong Families. Using your own words, or the words below, give a brief presentation on the characteristics of healthy, whole families. Ask participants to use Handout #3 to follow along with your presentation.

One purpose of this session is to learn more about what makes a healthy family. In fact, this question has caught the interest of a number of professionals who work with families on a regular basis. Many studies have been done in recent years to identify important characteristics of families that enable them to operate effectively. These characteristics are referred to as "family strengths".

"Family strengths can be defined as those relational patterns, interpersonal skills, attitudes, competencies, values, and individual psychological characteristics that help the family to work" (USCCB, *Family Perspective* 24). Family strengths enable families to operate effectively as a system meeting the needs of family members and the family as a whole. Family strengths lead to the overall health of a family.

Though language may vary from study to study, a number of important characteristics have been identified as family strengths. (Refer participants to Handout #3.)

The healthy family shares a sense of commitment. This means that family members are dedicated to promoting each other's welfare and happiness. They expect the family to endure. They have a sense of shared responsibility for the family, and a commitment to stay connected during times of transition, difficulty, or crisis. Commitment in the healthy family means an investment of time, energy, spirit, and heart. A healthy family also has a support system beyond the immediate family, which might include extended family, friends, and others.

The healthy family spends both quality and quantity time together sharing many areas of life. They share leisure time together and have a sense of play and humor. Time together allows relationships and understanding to grow. Yet in healthy families there is also balance, so that togetherness does not become stifling. By sharing time together, the family develops a sense of family identity.

The healthy family is developing and using skills in good communication. Family members take the time to listen to one another. Spouses have a strong, loving relationship and are capable of sharing deep feelings with one another. The family has control over television and other electronic media which often impede good communication. Regular shared mealtimes often provide time for family communication. The family encourages individual feelings and independent thinking.

Members of healthy families appreciate one another and take the time to let one another know this in a variety of ways. Parents show affection toward their children and work to build trusting relationships in the family. Family members express their love for one another through caring, feeling responsible, showing respect, and learning to listen for the feelings of another. An environment of love, acceptance, and understanding helps children develop an inner strength for growth and development. As family members affirm and support one another, self-esteem is boosted.

The healthy family has a shared religious and moral core. Shared faith and religious practice provide a family with a common set of values and a purpose in today's world, and can be an important element in strengthening and promoting healthy family life. Sharing, love, and compassion for others are promoted. The family teaches a sense of right and wrong. There is a strong sense of family rituals and traditions. Faith is connected to daily living; in fact, the primary expression of faith for the healthy family is in daily life. They practice what they preach. The family values service to others. Parents feel responsible to "pass on the faith," but do so in positive and meaningful ways that allow for times of questioning.

The healthy family is able to cope with crisis and times of stress in a positive manner. Members of these families unite to face the challenges of a crisis by drawing on various family strengths, being able to adapt, asking for help, and accepting assistance from others. Drawing on spiritual resources, humor, and communication, the healthy family maintains a sense of hope and gratefulness, knowing that things will eventually get better. The healthy family expects problems and considers them to be a normal part of life. They admit to and seek help with problems that are beyond their own resources.

Invite questions and comments from participants when you have finished with your presentation.

Introduce the Scripture passage from Colossians by saying that the Bible also identifies characteristics of a healthy family. What are these strengths that our faith invites us to share?

Read Colossians 3:12-17 or ask for a volunteer to read the passage.

“Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns, and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:12-17).

After reading the passage, ask participants to identify some of the strengths in their family that St. Paul mentions in the passage. How do these strengths compare with the strengths that were identified through the family studies?

Ask participants to return to their family groups. Invite them to discuss these questions:

- How did the presentation on family strengths affirm or challenge your ideas about what makes for a healthy, whole, strong family?
- With respect to your own family, what strengths were affirming that you named earlier? What strengths does your family need to work on?

5. Family Action Plan

Give each family a copy of Handout #4 Family Action Plan.

Ask each family to identify one area to work on as a family. One member should write this down under “What we want to happen.” Continue the discussion by addressing “How we are going to do it,” and “When we will get started.”

Invite a couple of families, if they wish, to share their Action Plan with the whole group.

Activity 2. Human Sexuality: Sexuality, Identity, and Maturity

Materials Needed

- Handout #8 for each participant
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Newsprint sheets
- Markers

1. It's A Family Matter

In your own words, or using the words below, communicate the following:

The book of Genesis reveals that at the very dawn of creation humanity was created in the image and likeness of God, male and female they were created. And God saw all creation, including sexually differentiated human persons, as “very good.” The good news about sex is that sex is good. But of course it carries important responsibilities.

Talking about sexuality among parents and youth can be difficult. You might feel that the other does not understand, and unsuccessful attempts to communicate are common. This learning activity will provide an opportunity to listen and learn from each other and reflect on ways your family interacts with respect to sexuality.

The sudden and dramatic changes of adolescence can be a source of excitement and energy, but also of conflict and strife among teens and their families. Adjusting to the sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors brought on by puberty is an important task for all family members.

A person's sexual identity is formed from a host of life experiences beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout life. We never stop growing sexually. This growth involves how one feels about his or her body, the sense of being masculine or feminine, how one expresses his or her sexuality, and of course, what one believes about sexuality.

Family life plays an important role in forming a person's sexual identity. In our families we had our first experiences of being and acting as a sexual person. The family climate and the family members' interactions create teachable moments where we learn basic values and behaviors about what it means to be a sexual person. These learnings either assist or hinder the journey toward sexual maturity.

Give each person a copy of Handout #8: Learning about Sex at Home. Allow time for participants to reflect upon and write their responses to the questions:

1. What have you learned from your family about giving and receiving affection? When and how is affection shared in your family?
2. What have you learned from your family about being male and female? What have you learned from your family about acceptable and non-acceptable behavior for boys and girls, women and men?
3. What are your family "rules" around privacy and modesty?
4. When and how is information about sexuality shared in your family? What does your family believe and value about sexuality? How are those values shared?

Invite family members to discuss their responses to the questions. Tell them to give each person an opportunity to talk, but each person is allowed to share as much or as little as desired.

Conclude this activity by using your own words, or the words below, to say the following:

We learn a great deal about sexuality from our families. Much of what we learn is "caught" through day-to-day living together. If you each had different answers to the reflection questions, that is to be expected, since we all have different perceptions of what is going on in the family. It's important to accept and affirm each person's experience of learning and growth in the family.

2. A Catholic Perspective

Give each participant a copy of Handout #9: A Catholic Perspective on Sexuality. Invite them to follow along as you present some of the information on the handout. In your own words, or using the words below, communicate the following:

We will now look at values and beliefs of the Catholic Church related to sexuality. The Church's teachings are based on Jesus' message of love, and they promote a respect for life in all phases. The following principles can be a guide in forming our own personal values and beliefs about sexuality.

Gender

A Catholic sees sexuality as a gift created by God. Sexuality is part of who we are as human beings. We do not need to feel embarrassed or ashamed of our sexuality.

A Catholic respects his or her own body and the bodies of others. Scripture tells us that our bodies are temples of God. As we mature, we learn about and become more comfortable with the body that God has given us. Eating healthy, exercising, and staying away from harmful substances are ways to care for our body and say thank you to God for creating us. To respect the bodies of others is to acknowledge that God is present in every person.

Roles

A Catholic recognizes and affirms the equality of males and females. Scripture tells us God created us male and female, and God saw that it was good. We believe as Christians that male and female represent two ways of being in the world, complementing the gifts of each other. Any suggestion that persons of one sex are better or more gifted than the other is a misunderstanding of God's creative purposes. We can recognize differences in males and females without developing negative stereotypes.

Expression

A Catholic builds healthy relationships through the values of commitment, faithfulness, honesty, and a concern for the other person. Each of us builds relationships with many different people through our lives. The quality of our relationships depends on the values of commitment, faithfulness, honesty, and a concern for the other person. The challenge of building healthy relationships begins with our own family (though sometimes it feels like this is the most difficult place to begin), and then extends outward to others.

A Catholic believes that sexual intercourse is an expression of love reserved for those in the permanent, life-giving commitment of marriage. Sexual intercourse (along with other acts of physical affection) is a special way in which a man and woman pledge themselves to one another and to all that their lives together will demand of them. This pledge required a serious adult commitment. Sexual intercourse is also the expression of love that God has given man and woman to share in the creation of a new life. It is only within marriage that sexual intercourse can be a sign of committed love and be open to bringing forth new life. Only in this relationship does sexual intercourse find its full meaning.

A Catholic has the right to say no to and reject sexual activity for any reason. Sexual activity is not the same as love. Sexual activity can be a loving expression of commitment, or it can be used as a means of force to violate a person's dignity and self-worth. It is wrong to pressure another person with words or actions that do not respect his/her rights.

Values and Beliefs

A Catholic believes in a loving God, who creates each person as a unique expression of love and calls us to care for and serve others. We believe that all life and all people are a part of God's creation. Therefore, we must show respect for others through our words and actions.

A Catholic believes that the gift of human sexuality carries with it the responsibility to grow into the person God created each one of us to be. This is a lifelong process of saying yes to the way God calls us to mature.

A Catholic does not see abortion as a solution to an unwanted pregnancy. The Catholic Church teaches that human life is present from the moment of conception. All life is a precious gift from

God. Regardless of the circumstances in which a child is conceived, the new life is no less a person and no less precious and deserves protection, care, and respect.

Ask participants to form family groups. Have them discuss the following questions:

- Which of the statements about what a Catholic believes or does means the most to you?
- Which statement do you find most challenging?

3. Spreading the Word

Have participants form groups of six to eight persons with a mix of parents and youth. Tell each group it has been hired to work on an advertising campaign for the Catholic Church. Their task is to spread the Church's message about sexuality to teenagers and parents. Ask each group to prepare one of the following:

- A newspaper ad
- A 30-second radio spot
- A billboard
- A TV commercial

Invite each group to share its advertisement with the other groups.

4. Talking About Sexuality

Form two groups, one group of parents and one group of youth. Ask each group to respond to the following two items and to list their answers on a sheet of newsprint. Be sure to remind them that they should reflect on the learnings from this activity and answer their questions in light of this activity, rather than in general.

Parents:

- Things I want to tell my son or daughter about sexuality...
- Things I want to ask my son or daughter about sexuality...

Youth:

- Things I want to tell my parent(s) about sexuality...
- Things I want to ask my parent(s) about sexuality...

Bring the groups back together. Ask the young people to share their responses to "Things I want to tell my parents about sexuality." When the young people are finished, parents are invited to share comments on what the youth reported.

Parents are then asked to share their responses to "Things I want to tell my son/daughter about sexuality". When finished, the young people are invited to respond.

Continue the same process with the second category: "Things I want to ask my parents (my son/daughter) about sexuality."

Conclude the session by inviting parents and youth to join their single family groups and have them discuss learning statements like,

- I learned...
- I discovered...
- I was surprised by...
- I found _____ difficult because...
- I found _____ easy because...
- This helps me understand _____ because...
- Because of what I learned, I will...

Adult Learning Experiences

Activity 1. The Family is Sacred

Materials Needed

- Handouts #6 and #7
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Newsprint sheets – one for each table group
- Markers

1. Honor the Family

Direct participants to form table groups of six to eight participants. In your own words, or the words below communicate the following:

The Fourth Commandment tells us to “Honor your father and mother.” In one short sentence, this commandment tells us how utterly important family life is for each of us as individuals *and* for the whole community.

Our families taught us a great deal while growing up. Even what they failed to teach us as children provided lessons learned later in adulthood. To a greater or lesser degree our families teach us right from wrong, how to be in relationship with others, how to live with others, what it means to honor and obey our parents, how to express gratitude, and how to help one another out. All families teach these traits to some extent. Some do it well, and some do it poorly. No family is perfect.

The Fourth Commandment, “Honor your father and mother”, may sound a bit simplistic and childish, but upon reflection the commandment challenges all of us to hand on certain crucial traits from one generation to the next: love, respect, gratitude, honor, obedience, and assistance. These are traits we all need to live as Christians in the world, and they are traits best learned at home and in the family.

Think of it this way. Family upbringing will always teach something about these traits, for good or ill. So as parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, we should do all we can to make it “good.”

Give each participant a copy of Handout #6. Invite them to take a few minutes of individual reflection to complete the questions on the handout. After sufficient time (not too long), ask participants to share

with one other person some of their responses on the handout. Tell them that they are not obligated to share anything they don't wish to talk about.

2. What the Church Teaches about Family Life

Give participants a copy of Handout #7. Tell them that it offers helpful background information on the holy and sacred nature of family life. Invite them to follow along as you share some of that information. In your own words, or the words below communicate the following:

The Church's theology recognizes the family in a special ecclesial way. We believe in the holy and sacred nature of family and household living. The words of the U.S. Bishops in their 1994 pastoral message to families, *Follow the Way of Love*, say it well:

"A family is our first community and most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us and acts in the world. The early church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a domestic church or church of the home. . . . Your domestic church is not complete by itself, of course. It should be united with and supported by the parishes and other communities within the larger Church" (p. 8).

Pope John Paul II recognized the variety of ways that families grow in faith. In his exhortation on the family, *Familiaris Consortio*, he outlined four distinct but interdependent tasks for families: form a loving community, serve life by bearing and educating children, participate in building a caring and just society, share in the life and mission of the Church. In more contemporary language, the U.S. Bishops, in their pastoral message to families, *Follow the Way of Love*, also extend four particular challenges to families: live faithfully, give life, grow in mutuality, and take time together.

Yet as you know, our practice does not always reflect the Church's vision. Families find it difficult enough to *talk* about faith and religious practice, let alone actually share faith with one another. For a great many Catholics in North America, the home is no longer viewed as a center of religious activity. *We simply must rekindle the family's desire, effort, and ability to be a center of religious activity.*

Ask participants to consider each of the four quotes on their handout in light of their own family life (they can choose either the family in which they grew up *or* the family they helped raise). Each participant should choose one quote that resonates in some way with their own family experience.

Place participants into four groups according to the quote that they have chosen. If some groups are large, break them into smaller groups. Ask each group to discuss the quote, why it resonates with their own experience, and, as a group, come up with a creative, idealistic expression for how families might live the message expressed in the quote. In other words, if they were to express this message on a billboard for all families to see, how can they effectively communicate the message?

- "Parents are the primary educators in the faith" (GDC #255).
- "The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called the domestic church" (CCC 2204).

- “As Christian families, you not only belong to the Church, but your daily life is a true expression of the Church” (*Follow the Way of Love*, p. 8).
- “. . . all the members make up the family, and each can make a unique contribution to creating the basic environment in which a sense of God’s loving presence is awakened and faith in Jesus Christ is confessed, encouraged, and lived” (*NDC 100-101*).

Invite some of the groups to share their “billboard expression” with the large group.

3. Sage Advice for Today’s Families

Give each participant a copy of Handout #3: Characteristics of Strong Families. Using your own words, or the words below, give a brief presentation on the characteristics of healthy, whole families. Ask participants to use Handout #3 to follow along with your presentation.

One purpose of this session is to learn more about what makes a healthy family. In fact, this question has caught the interest of a number of professionals who work with families on a regular basis. Many studies have been done in recent years to identify important characteristics of families that enable them to operate effectively. These characteristics are referred to as “family strengths”.

“Family strengths can be defined as those relational patterns, interpersonal skills, attitudes, competencies, values, and individual psychological characteristics that help the family to work” (*USCCB, Family Perspective 24*). Family strengths enable families to operate effectively as a system, meeting the needs of family members and the family as a whole. Family strengths lead to the overall health of a family.

Though language may vary from study to study, a number of important characteristics have been identified as family strengths. (Refer participants to Handout #3.)

The healthy family shares a sense of commitment. This means that family members are dedicated to promoting each other's welfare and happiness. They expect the family to endure. They have a sense of shared responsibility for the family, and a commitment to stay connected during times of transition, difficulty, or crisis. Commitment in the healthy family means an investment of time, energy, spirit, and heart. A healthy family also has a support system beyond the immediate family, which might include extended family, friends, and others.

The healthy family spends both quality and quantity time together sharing many areas of life. They share leisure time together and have a sense of play and humor. Time together allows relationships and understanding to grow. Yet in healthy families there is also balance, so that togetherness does not become stifling. By sharing time together, the family develops a sense of family identity.

The healthy family is developing and using skills in good communication. Family members take the time to listen to one another. Spouses have a strong, loving relationship and are capable of sharing deep feelings with one another. The family has control over television and other electronic media which often impede good communication. Regular shared mealtimes often provide time for family communication. The family encourages individual feelings and independent thinking.

Members of healthy families appreciate one another and take the time to let one another know this in a variety of ways. Parents show affection toward their children and work to build trusting relationships in the family. Family members express their love for one another through caring, feeling responsible, showing respect, and learning to listen for the feelings of another. An environment of love, acceptance, and understanding helps children develop an inner strength for growth and development. As family members affirm and support one another, self-esteem is boosted.

The healthy family has a shared religious and moral core. Shared faith and religious practice provide a family with a common set of values and a purpose in today's world, and can be an important element in strengthening and promoting healthy family life. Sharing, love, and compassion for others are promoted. The family teaches a sense of right and wrong. There is a strong sense of family rituals and traditions. Faith is connected to daily living; in fact, the primary expression of faith for the healthy family is in daily life. They practice what they preach. The family values service to others. Parents feel responsible to "pass on the faith," but do so in positive and meaningful ways that allow for times of questioning.

The healthy family is able to cope with crisis and times of stress in a positive manner. Members of these families unite to face the challenges of a crisis by drawing on various family strengths, being able to adapt, asking for help, and accepting assistance from others. Drawing on spiritual resources, humor, and communication, the healthy family maintains a sense of hope and gratefulness, knowing that things will eventually get better. The healthy family expects problems and considers them to be a normal part of life. They admit to and seek help with problems that are beyond their own resources.

Invite questions and comments from participants when you have finished with your presentation.

Introduce the Scripture passage from Colossians by saying that Scripture also identifies characteristics of a healthy family. What are these strengths that our faith invites us to share?

Read Colossians 3:12-17 or ask for a volunteer to read the passage.

“Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns, and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:12-17).

After reading the passage, ask participants to identify some of the strengths in their families (family of origin or current family) that St. Paul mentions in the passage. How do these strengths compare with the strengths that were identified through the family studies?

In small groups, invite the adults to discuss these questions:

- What's the best advice you could give to parents raising a young family today?
- What advice would you give them for how to share faith as a family?

Give each group a sheet of newsprint and a marker. At the top of the newsprint have them put the heading, "Sage Advice for Today's Families." Under the heading, have each group write their five best pieces of advice for raising a young family today and for sharing faith as a family.

Post the newsprint sheets around the main room where all the generations gather.

Activity Two: Human Sexuality—Imaging God's Unconditional Love

Materials Needed

- Handouts #10, #11, #12, #13
- Pen or pencil for each participant

1. Fidelity and Faithfulness

Begin by asking if anyone can recite the 6th Commandment. It states: "You shall not commit adultery."

Ask if someone can recite the 9th Commandment. It goes like this: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife."

In your own words, or using the words below, communicate the following:

Of all the commandments, perhaps the one most closely associated in the popular mind with Roman Catholics is the sixth: "You shall not commit adultery." This association is made not because Catholics violate this commandment more frequently or openly than others, but because many think it is the one that Catholic catechesis is most preoccupied with.

Still, it is not entirely prudish, even in these post-Vatican II times, to devote some attention to the sin-aspects of the moral life especially in matters of the sixth and ninth commandments. One has only to turn on the television, go to a movie, or walk by a newsstand to realize how all-consuming is our society's preoccupation with sex. Moreover, all the talk of liberation from prudish Victorian restraints notwithstanding, the sexual revolution hasn't really freed us. It has merely demeaned what God created and saw as "very good" and has enslaved us in the bargain.

Thus moral theologians and preachers render an important service in the Church by pointing out the sinfulness of engaging in sexual activity contrary to God's design. Yet there can be (and has been) a downside as well. If "sin" and "sinning" are the major focus, the moral life in general and sexuality in particular become understood largely as a series of don'ts.

Moreover, such an emphasis might foster an environment in which the overriding sentiment is not joy in following the way of holiness, but fear of the moral dangers all around, and guilt for all the

times one fails. Nowhere will that negative and guilt-ridden milieu manifest itself more than in the area of sexual morality.

By all means the reality of sin must be acknowledged. However, it is more profitable to first approach the subject positively. That is, before looking at the sins against the six and ninth commandments, we might be better served by investigating the values they uphold and the beauty and goodness they promote.

Ask the adults to form small groups of six to eight persons.

Give each person a copy of Handout #10 and invite them to complete both exercises. They are to re-write the 6th and 9th Commandments in their own words so that the full meaning is revealed to them. Point out that they are to write the commandments in first person beginning with “I” rather than “you.”

Share the example: 6th Commandment: “I will do all I can to remain true and faithful in my relationships with others.”

After sufficient time, invite participants to share their re-written Sixth and Ninth Commandments with others.

2. Marriage: An Image of Fidelity

Ask participants to read through Handout #11. You may want to point out key passages in the article to emphasize their importance.

- Marriage is characterized by two essential elements—communion and fruitfulness.
- It is a communion of persons which “wells up” from the very “fountain of divine love.”
- Marriage is also characterized by fruitfulness. The Council declares that “marriage and conjugal love” are in fact ordered to the procreation and education of children who are seen to be “the supreme gift of marriage.”
- Just as communion and procreation are the essential elements of the marriage covenant, so they are the primary means by which a married couple reflects God’s image and likeness.
- Marriage is an apt image of God’s relationship with His chosen people.
- Marriage as a symbol of God’s covenant with His people carries over into the New Testament, only here it comes to symbolize the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Pass out Handout #12. In your own words, or using the words below, communicate the following:

The married couple represents an image of the Trinity. Their bond of love unites them and makes them one. How does the life of a married couple continually live and nurture this unity? In other words, how can spouses develop a spirituality of marriage? We suggest at least three responses to this question:

1. Their daily lives reveal God to each other. They each experience God through the intimacy of marital love, and through their permanent commitment they become grace to each other.

2. Their marriage reaches beyond itself. Their relationship remains fundamentally open—to children, to family, to the community, and beyond. They give each other strength to serve the needs of others and participate in the transformation of the world.
3. While imperfect, their love is still sacred. They know that God remains present and faithful to them amidst their chaos, busyness, and shortcomings. Further, they know that grace is revealed in their brokenness, for that's when the need for God is made clear.

Invite participants to engage in one or both of these exercises.

Exercise One

Whether you are married or not, take a few minutes to reflect upon and then discuss these questions:

- Are there additional characteristics you might add to this list?
- Of the married couples you know, who exhibits some or all of these characteristics? Just how do they do so?

Exercise Two

If you are married, discuss this additional question with your beloved:

- Are any of these three characteristics present in your marriage today? If so, how are they lived out?

3. The Enduring Challenge to the Sacrament of Marriage

Give participants a copy of Handout #13 to read. You may want to point out key passages in the article.

- As God ordained it, marriage is meant to reflect the profound communion and creative love of God.
- In like manner, sexuality is sacred because the sexual act is the unique manifestation of married love, being both an expression of the love that unites the couple and the way of sharing in God's creative work.
- The profound challenge facing marriage and sexuality in our contemporary culture is this: an attitude that ridicules the claim that the sexual act must be reserved to marriage, dismissing such an idea as oddly quaint and hopelessly old-fashioned.
- "Covet" is defined as "to want something ardently." Desire in itself is not wrong. However, in Catholic moral teaching "coveting" is understood as "lust" or "disordered desire."
- Most of us know this tug of war from personal experience. Hence the ninth commandment is set before us like a traffic barricade, warning us not to go down that fatal road.
- The union which God intended, the marriage covenant between a man and a woman, is much different.

- *Choosing* to live according to the order which God intended and which is marked out for us by the commandments puts us on the way of life. This decision and its implementation is facilitated by the virtue of chastity.
- What is chastity? It might be described as a quality that enables a person to achieve personal integration. Specifically, it enables a person to manage that “tug of war,” so that he or she can master the sexual appetite and direct his or her sexuality only to the end that God intended.
- Chastity is also a gift. Hence, one must pray to receive it (cf. CCC 2520-24). In this way, gradually and at times with slips and falls, one eventually arrives at that purity which puts us on the path of life and brings us to our goal, to see God.
- The pure of heart see as God sees. Thus, one who is chaste can “perceive the human body—ours and our neighbor’s—as a temple of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of divine beauty” (CCC #2519), for that is how God sees it.

Invite participants to discuss in small groups the items found on the bottom of Handout #13.

In light of the information you just read (or heard), consider the following questions:

Bring to mind a married couple whom you know who truly reflects God’s unconditional love and fidelity for the world and Christ’s love for the Church. Without revealing the couple’s identity, what characteristics do you see in that couple that show the quality of their love?

In light of the information presented here, if you had just one sentence to say something of meaning to the following people, what would you say to each one:

- A TV sitcom producer
- A couple living together outside of marriage
- A young teen who dresses provocatively
- A teen idol (such as rock or athletic star)
- A person who frequents pornographic web sites
- Other:

Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (15 minutes)

Advanced Preparation

In the main gathering room, post the newsprint sheets developed by the adults from their in-depth learning experience: “Sage Advice for Today’s Families.”

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. As participants re-enter the main room, ask them to quietly read the newsprint sheets that were developed by the adults in their in-depth learning experience: “Sage Advice for Today’s Families.”

Then ask the participants to rejoin their intergenerational groups from the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask groups to engage in conversation with each other using the following discussion questions. Ask children and teens to share first, then the adults.

- Are there any pieces of advice posted on the newsprint sheets that you don't understand? (If so, one of the adults should clarify.)
- Which pieces of advice do you think will be most helpful to your family?
- Are there any pieces of advice you would add to the lists?

Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (10 minutes)

Preparation

Select one person to read the Gospel story, "Breakfast on the Beach" from John 21.

Gather

Let us conclude our session with a Gospel story about Jesus and his friends gathered for a special meal. As you listen to the story, remember that Jesus and his disciples lived together for three years or more. They were like family. So in a sense, this is a story of a family meal and a special time for the "family" to heal and reconcile.

Listen

"Breakfast on the Beach" from John 21:1-19

Respond

Our response is: We seek your guidance, O God.

So that we learn how to truly love one another in our families each day...

We seek your guidance, O God.

So that we grow in respect for each other while living under one roof...

We seek your guidance, O God.

So that we express our gratitude to each other for all the good deeds done and for simply being...

We seek your guidance, O God.

So that we honor and obey our parents and grandparents to the best of our abilities...

We seek your guidance, O God.

So that we offer genuine care and assistance to one another in times of hardship and struggle...

We seek your guidance, O God.

So that we grow in our commitment to each other as a family...

We seek your guidance, O God.

So that we spend good, quality time together, and that we grow in our ability to communicate with one another...

We seek your guidance, O God.

So that we grow in faith together as a family...
We seek your guidance, O God.

So that we develop a healthy respect and understand of the gift of sexuality...
We seek your guidance, O God.

Go Forth

O God, we are grateful for the rich wisdom embedded in all your commandments. You tell us to honor our mothers and fathers, and in turn we learn what it means to be a healthy and whole family. You warn us against unfaithfulness and infidelity, and in turn we learn how to appreciate the extraordinary gift of our sexuality. For all this we are truly grateful, and even more so knowing that you are there to guide us on each step of our journey. Amen.