

# Parents First

*Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2223)*

## Church Teaching *Purity of Heart*

Have you ever wanted to see the face of God? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus promises the pure of heart that they shall see the face of God. So what does this mean? It means quite literally that we shall see the face of God in Heaven but it also has implications for our lives here on earth. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2518-2527) explains that purity of heart is

*Purity of heart is the ability to see ourselves and others as the image of God and as temples of the Holy Spirit (CCC 2518).*

the ability to see ourselves and others as the image of God and as temples of the Holy Spirit. When Adam and Eve fell into sin (Gen 3), they immediately covered their bodies because they “realized that they were naked” and began to see themselves and each other as objects rather than as the beautiful creation of a loving God.

When Jesus came and died for us on the cross, He raised the dignity of the human body to a new place. The body was no longer just an object to be cast aside at death, but was now washed and made new, redeemed along with our souls and raised up on the last day. Through the practice of modesty, we can learn our own value as temples of the Holy Spirit and help others to see us as the image of God. As we become more practiced in patience, decency and discretion, we can grow to see the face of God in everyone that we meet (CCC 2533).



### Growing in Virtue

Prudence is known as the virtue of wisdom. It is also known as the prince of virtues because it governs each of the others. Aid your child in developing the ability to examine situations and properly pay attention to the world around them. As this virtue is developed, they may become more aware of how others react to them and the way that they speak, dress, and behave. Help them learn to seek good attention rather than bad attention in this regard.

Justice is the virtue of right relationship. The Church teaches that by the age of seven most children have developed, at least to a limited degree, a sense of right and wrong and the ability to practice

right reason. At this point your child should be able to have simple conversations about hypothetical situations. Asking them questions about what they should do in a given situation, gives them the practice that they need so that they can act correctly when a real situation arises.

#### Culture Alert...

High heels are sexualizing children Gregor McCoshim, a podiatrist, warned that young children should not wear heels. "The fact children can wear these is worrying. Any heel above 2cm increases the risk of twisting an ankle. Wearing them can cause strains in the back which is a potential problem for their growth and development."

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## Guidelines for Answering your Child's Questions

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- Ask for more information before answering, (i.e., "Why do you ask?", or "Tell me more"). Your child's response will provide you with insight, context and time to think.
- Pause to ask God for the wisdom and grace to provide an appropriate answer.
- Phrase your answer in the context of your family's Catholic values (i.e. "When you are grown and married..." or "As Catholics, we believe...").
- Keep your answer short and simple.

### Example: What is sex?

Know the context of the question ( see above guidelines) i.e.: did they hear something on TV, see something on the computer or are they just curious? Be aware that today's culture does not label many sexual behaviors as "sex." Remember the above key questions. The information your child provides to these questions will help frame your answer in a way that is meaningful to them.

### Possible responses:

- "The word can mean different things. It can mean your gender-male or female."
- "It is any sexualized behavior with another person (engaging in intimate contact with another's private body parts). It can also mean sexual intercourse."
- "As Catholics we believe that sexual behaviors and intercourse are a very special activity that is reserved for married couples only."
- "It is one way a married couple can show how much they love each other."
- "It is how a married couple makes a baby."

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## Practical Suggestions

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This is a good age to reinforce the virtue of modesty and the concept of privacy. At this age children may become easily

embarrassed by nudity - yours or theirs. You can use the Circle of Grace concepts to assist you in teaching a respect for privacy and to teach modesty. You can reinforce these concepts by:

- Making sure the bathroom door is closed when in use.
- Dressing and undressing should be done alone, behind a closed door.
- When discussing sexuality with your child, remind them to refrain from sharing this infor-

mation with other children or siblings.

- Remind them to talk to you about any uncomfortable feelings or situations that enter in their Circle of Grace

*Children many times mirror their parents' behavior, good and bad. They do this because they trust their parents as all-knowing and look to them for guidance .*

## Parent Resources

- Simple Truths with Mary Flo Ridley Parent Resource, DVD and study guide: A step-by-step resource for the process of establishing healthy values in the home and answering tough questions young children have about sex. <http://www.justsayyes.org/resources/>
- [display.php?cat=3](#)
- Circle of Grace Parenting and Sexuality Handout